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ETHNORELIGIOUS OTHERINGS  
& *Passionate Conflicts*



Michael Magcamit

# Ethnoreligious Otherings and Passionate Conflicts

# Frontispiece



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# Ethnoreligious Otherings and Passionate Conflicts

MICHAEL MAGCAMIT

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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# Preface

“Herein lies the tragedy of the age:  
not that men are poor—all men know something of poverty;  
not that men are wicked—who is good?  
not that men are ignorant—what is Truth?  
Nay, but that men know so little of men.”

—William E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

Since the day I decided to view myself as a “free-thinking citizen of the world,” I have been constantly grappling with some unexpected paradoxes that are now pushing me to rethink my stance concerning religion and nationalism. I can summarize these paradoxes into a two-pronged question: why do religion and nationalism remain present and robust in today’s world, and how exactly do they matter to modern states and societies?

The first part of the question relates to the fact that despite my outward resistance against any form of religious and nationalist affiliation, inside, I still feel deeply embedded within the culture of the Filipino Catholic community in which I was raised. The second part is linked to the suppressed consciousness (if not, hypocrisy) that despite my fondness toward the idea of a borderless world, I still consider my birthplace and the humans residing there as my “inherent” homeland and my “own” people, especially in times of uncertainty.

While exploring plausible solutions to these contradictions, I found myself being forced to confront and set aside my gripes and biases against these phenomena, if only to gain a much better understanding of their enduring relevance and legitimacy. Admittedly, before embarking on this project, my earlier works were built around the assumption of a progressively modernizing and secularizing world and were influenced by some of the best-selling and most fashionable titles in recent times.

For instance, if twelve years ago I was asked to assess the role of religion and nationalism in the twenty-first-century world order, my response would have been a nod to Francis Fukuyama’s (1992) “end of history and the last man” thesis and similarly intimated that “it matters very little what strange thoughts occur to people in Albania or Burkina Faso,” since the endpoint of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy would be the final form of human government. Likewise, if someone had asked me to explain how violent

ethnic and religious conflicts erupt and protract, my former “hyper modernist-secularist” self would have focused entirely on what Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson (2012) referred to as “extractive economic institutions,” and interpreted those events as simple matters of “institutions, institutions, institutions.”

Nevertheless, the fieldwork that I conducted in Southeast Asia for this research has rudely awakened me to some of the huge disparities between how the actual members of certain ethnoreligious groups within pluralistic polities behave and make decisions, and how mainstream rationalist approaches predict them to think and act toward the non-members. One of my key realizations from my interactions with rival ethnoreligious communities embroiled in bloody and brutal conflicts across the region is that the emotional, symbolic, and perceptual externalities linked to religion and nationalism are just as powerful and tangible as the military and economic factors that primarily constitute orthodox theories of conflict and peacebuilding. As I have witnessed and observed first-hand, these largely ignored elements, which are often dismissed by many in the field as “non-material” and “non-rational,” play a central role in the eruption, protraction, and possible resolution of both internal and intrastate conflicts.

This is particularly relevant in the context of simultaneous “globalization” and “retribalization” of pluralistic polities across regions. Contrary to what the hyperglobalists would like us to believe, large swaths of humankind are being retribalized, where, in the words of Benjamin Barber (1992), “culture is pitted against culture, people against people, tribe against tribe.” Reducing such life-defining experiences in narrow rationalist terms not only exacerbates the fallacy that religious and nationalist cultures have all become irrelevant and obsolete, but also reinforces the inaccurate view that all contemporary polities including the more pluralistic ones are now being molded exclusively via the modernist processes of capitalism, democratization, and secularization. The different material and non-material “layers of reality” that underpin a political process, as well as the complex mechanisms in which these various layers interact, as Stuart Kaufman (2020) argued, suggest that multiple causal logics are operating at the same time. Consequently, instead of rejecting cultural sources, specifically religion and nationalism, as archaic artifacts, the distinct emergent properties of these “intangible” and “irrational” layers must be fully acknowledged while remaining mindful of the effects or constraints induced by other material layers.

Against this backdrop, I have made a 180-degree turn to re-evaluate and underscore the importance of recognizing religion and nationalism as legitimate sources and instruments of *realpolitik*. As the chapters in this book illuminate, these phenomena persist and prevail precisely because they are essentially a matter of security and survival for modern states and societies, particularly in contexts of violent protracted conflict. On the one hand, the existential needs for ontological security and physical survival of these contemporary polities make religion and nationalism indispensable to their preservation and well-being. But on

the other hand, the existential crises that can emerge from conflicting religions and incompatible nationalisms make them crucial security threats and survival issues, especially in highly pluralistic polities. Indeed, as my investigation of ethnoreligious otherings and protracted conflicts in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines reveal, religion and nationalism are intrinsically attached to not just the physical but also the emotional, symbolic, and perceptual security and survival of indivisible identities, homelands, and nation-states.

Confronted by parochial hatred, resentment, fear, and anger frequently expressed in the language of bombs and blood, many find comfort in those assimilationist flags, those awkward monuments built for the war martyrs, those arbitrary maps depicting their birthright territories, and even in those portraits of their dead leaders. Anything that would make them feel and believe that they belong—that they are worth fighting for, living for, and dying for. This book hopes to effectively convey the necessity and wisdom of explicitly accounting for these ethnoreligious emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions when explaining events that are as passionate as violent conflicts. After all, a bloody phenomenon, as Donald Horowitz (1985) put it, cannot be explained by a bloodless theory.



# Acknowledgments

“One heart is not connected to another through harmony alone.  
They are, instead, linked deeply through their wounds.  
Pain linked to pain, fragility to fragility.  
There is no silence without a cry of grief,  
no forgiveness without bloodshed,  
no acceptance without a passage through acute loss.  
That is what lies at the root of true harmony.”

—Haruki Murakami, *Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and  
His Years of Pilgrimage*

This book is dedicated to all those who have experienced and continue to live through the material and ontological violence and insecurity of ethnoreligious othering and the untold number of conflict it ignites.

I want to thank everyone who agreed to participate in this research sincerely and all the other interesting individuals from different walks of life with whom I struck a conversation throughout the project's duration. Thank you for your trust and immense courage to speak out your truth and share your lived experiences. This one is for you, your stories, and your point of views.

To my incredible research assistants, Bianca, Rusman, Krisna, and Nilar—my great companions throughout our physically and mentally taxing yet enriching field journeys—thank you all for your outstanding work and contribution to this project. I look forward to working with you again in the near future.

My deepest gratitude also goes to Lee Jones for everything he has done for me since day one, both as a mentor and a friend.

Enormous thanks also to both the European Commission Horizon 2020 Programme for funding my project on which this book is largely based (i.e., The Divine Tragedy of Securing the Sacred: Security, Religion, and Nationalism in Southeast Asia), and the Musashi University Soken Grants for funding my fieldwork in 2017 during the project's earlier phase.

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Certain sections in Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the book are based on my article, "Imagined Insecurities in Imagined Communities: Manufacturing the Ethnoreligious Others as Security Threats" published in 2020 in the *International Studies Quarterly* 64(3): 684–98.

# Contents

<i>Notes on Illustrations and Figures</i>	xi
1. Imagined Insecurities in Imagined Communities	1
2. Ethnoreligious Otherings and Passionate Conflicts: <i>Emotions, Symbols, and Perceptions</i>	24
3. Dinner with an Ex-terrorist Bomber in Jakarta: <i>Otherings and Conflicts in Indonesia</i>	47
4. The Proud Hotel Termite Inspector of Yangon: <i>Otherings and Conflicts in Myanmar</i>	76
5. Riding in Taxi with a Mosque-phobic Driver from Manila: <i>Otherings and Conflicts in the Philippines</i>	103
6. The Divine Tragedy of Securing the Sacred	131
<i>Bibliography</i>	161
<i>Index</i>	186

# Notes on Illustrations and Figures

Illustration 1. Map of Southeast Asia

ii

Figure 2.1. A three-stage ethnoreligious othering causal mechanism framework

30



# 1

## Imagined Insecurities in Imagined Communities

How does an ethnoreligious group become an existential security threat to states and societies? Hundreds of multi-ethnic and multi-religious polities inhabit contemporary international society. Out of all the existing sovereign states worldwide, more than 80 percent consist of two or more ethnoreligious communities frequently embroiled in conflicts with each other or the state itself.<sup>1</sup> Although these disputes do not always end in violent protracted conflicts, nevertheless, as the renowned conflict scholar Monica Toft noted, they usually do.<sup>2</sup> Consider the following examples from these three highly pluralistic polities in Southeast Asia:

### Indonesia

“Muslim power vanquishes the Nazarenes.” “Christians conquer Muslim pigs.” These were some of the graffiti scrawled on the walls of ruined department stores in the capital city of Ambon in Maluku, following the violent conflicts between the Muslim and Christian communities in this eastern corner of Indonesia.<sup>3</sup> For the outside observers, it was hard to imagine how a trivial argument between a Christian bus driver and a Muslim passenger that happened on January 19, 1999, could end the Ambonese people’s extraordinary practice of building mosques and churches together. In an instant, the once-respected concept of *pela-gandong*—peaceful cultural coexistence—which for generations had united the Muslims and Christians throughout Maluku got buried underneath the rubble.<sup>4</sup>

From then on, everything became a matter of a person’s ethnicity and religion. According to one account, the riots and clashes that ignited in the city on that day were characterized by “frenzied slaughter, savage mutilations, forced conversions, and the wanton destruction of property.”<sup>5</sup> Islamist militant groups and other independent radicalized Muslims from different parts of Indonesia flocked to the region to wage jihad against the “Christian enemies.” The war eventually claimed

<sup>1</sup> See Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War”; Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*.

<sup>2</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Bräuchler, “Cyberidentities at War.”

<sup>4</sup> Tom McCawley cited in Bräuchler, “Cyberidentities at War,” 123.

<sup>5</sup> Schulze, “Laskar Jihad and the Conflict in Ambon,” 57.

an estimated ten thousand lives and displaced half a million Christian and Muslim inhabitants.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, some 550 kilometers from the provincial capital, a small clash erupted between the long-term migrant Makian and the native Kao in a far-off village in Malifut on Halmahera Island on the night of August 18, 1999. After destroying the Kao village of Sosol, thousands of Makian proceeded to attack the neighboring Wangeotak village where three Kao men had been killed.<sup>7</sup> This event marked the beginning of a series of fatal collisions that brought gruesome consequences to the whole region of North Maluku. Within just a couple of months, the predominantly Christian Kao retaliated by expelling the Makian Muslims out of Malifut and destroying their villages. However, the latter used the forged letter entitled “Bloody Sosol” (allegedly sent to the Protestant Church in North Maluku by a Protestant synod from Maluku) as proof that the former had been planning to Christianize the entire province.<sup>8</sup> The said letter provoked the Muslims in the islands of Ternate and Tidore to attack the Christians who had been co-existing with them for decades.

Some of the most shocking incidents happened in the sub-districts of Tobelo and Galela, where sights of disfigured corpses, mass graves, and stories about people consuming their dead enemies’ body parts became common.<sup>9</sup> Although the eruption of violent hostility in Ambon initially had minimal effect on ethnoreligious relations in the region, the inauguration of an independent North Maluku province that coincided with these brutal events had ultimately shattered half a century of peace and stability. When the battles ended in July 2000, between 3,000 and 3,500 were killed by the warring tribes, and around 250,000 fled amid the ruins.<sup>10</sup>

## Myanmar

The 2019 United Nations (UN) report prepared by an independent international fact-finding mission exposed the details of the Burmese military’s (the *Tatmadaw*) horrific murders, rapes, torture, and indiscriminate bombing of Rohingya Muslims and other minority groups in Myanmar.<sup>11</sup> The three-person panel accused *Tatmadaw* leaders of committing “the gravest crimes under international law.” Contained in the report were horrific accounts of “women tied by their hair

<sup>6</sup> Van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia*.

<sup>7</sup> Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*.

<sup>8</sup> Bubandt, “Rumors, Pamphlets, and the Politics of Paranoia in Indonesia.”

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*.

<sup>10</sup> These figures are based from those reported in the works of Van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia*; Wilson *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*; I. N. Bhakti, S. Yanuarti, and M. Nurhasim, “Military Politics, Ethnicity and Conflict in Indonesia.”

<sup>11</sup> For full copy of the United Nations Commission Human Rights Council’s “Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar,” see <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/myanmarffm/pages/index.aspx>.

or hands to trees then raped; young children trying to flee burning houses but forced back inside; widespread use of torture with bamboo sticks, cigarettes, and hot wax; and landmines placed at the escape routes from villages, killing people as they fled the army's crackdown."<sup>12</sup> In light of these allegations, the panel recommended their prosecution in an international criminal tribunal for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war atrocities.

The months leading up to the clearance operations saw the buildup of armed forces in the Rakhine state (formerly Arakan) and sharpening of anti-Rohingya rhetoric, including by civilian leaders, which, according to the panel, suggested that the human rights catastrophe in 2017 was planned, foreseeable, and inevitable. The report confirmed that more than ten thousand Rohingya died and hundreds of thousands more fled into neighboring Bangladesh since the military campaign of ethnic cleansing began in August 2017. Despite denying the investigators access to Myanmar, the country's representative to the UN in Geneva criticized the mission's reliance on the testimonies of refugees and accounts from the non-government organizations (NGOs) working on the ground. Speaking to the council, Kyaw Moe Tun rejected the report's findings due to its "lack of balance, impartiality, and fairness."<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, in a move that stunned the international community, Myanmar's now detained State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, made the controversial decision to stand before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Two years before the most recent coup by the armed forces against Suu Kyi's government in February 2021, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate felt compelled to defend her country and the *Tatmadaw* from the genocide charges filed by Gambia's Muslim-majority state on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).<sup>14</sup> During her speech in court, The Lady denied all allegations of atrocities against the Burmese military. Instead, she claimed that her soldiers were merely responding to the terrorist attacks of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in the Rakhine state.<sup>15</sup> She also accused "impatient international actors" of attempting to undercut Myanmar's domestic criminal justice system in their "rush to externalize accountability."<sup>16</sup> Emphasizing the complexity of the situation in Rakhine, Suu Kyi argued that "genocidal intent cannot be the only hypothesis."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> UNCHR, "Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar."

<sup>13</sup> Associated Press, "Myanmar Envoy Reacts to Final Findings of UN Probe into Rohingya Crisis," <http://www.aparchive.com/metadata/youtube/ad75f8605819e8911845ceb8935952b4>.

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Questions and Answers on Gambia's Genocide Case against Myanmar before the International Court of Justice," <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/12/05/questions-and-answers-gambias-genocide-case-against-myanmar-international-court>.

<sup>15</sup> Al Jazeera, "Transcript: Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech at the ICJ in Full," <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/12/transcript-aung-san-suu-kyis-speech-at-the-icj-in-full>.

<sup>16</sup> Foreign Policy Editors, "Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi Takes the Stand," <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/12/myanmars-aung-san-suu-kyi-takes-the-stand/>.

<sup>17</sup> Safi, "Fact-checking Aung San Suu Kyi's Claims over Genocide Allegations," <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/11/factchecking-aung-san-suu-kyis-claims-over-genocide-allegations>.



To her critics, Suu Kyi's high-profile "defense of the indefensible" revealed her dual role as an apologist for ethnic cleansing and a handmaiden to genocide.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, the former human rights icon remains hugely popular in her home country, where the Rohingya are seen as illegal Bengali intruders who have no citizenship rights. The majority of Myanmar people who continue to rally behind their leader have applauded and praised Suu Kyi's actions following the international backlash, which she claimed to be the result of "a huge iceberg of misinformation."<sup>19</sup>

## The Philippines

More than fifty years ago, dozens of Muslim recruits were believed to have been summarily executed by the Philippine military while undergoing a secret commando exercise on Corregidor Island in the early hours of March 18, 1968. According to the investigations launched following the incident, the murdered soldiers were tasked to carry out Operation Merdeka, a plan that then-president Ferdinand Marcos allegedly concocted to reclaim Sabah from Malaysia.<sup>20</sup> The victims were supposed to infiltrate and destabilize the said territory by stirring and mobilizing a rebellion against the Malaysian authorities. Based on the initial reports that came out, the operation's primary rationale was to reclaim and re-annex Sabah to the Philippines after the Sulu Sultanate lost control of the region due to European colonialism.

Although the circumstances and debates surrounding the events were never fully verified and settled, the news and rumors about what is now popularly known as the Jabidah Massacre ignited the flames of Moro nationalism and secessionism that continue to persist today. The most dominant narrative accepted by the Moros was that the tragedy happened because of the decision of the Muslim trainees to withdraw from the plan once they realized that the operation would force them to kill their fellow Muslims in Sabah.<sup>21</sup> Thus, for the Moro leaders and their militant supporters in Mindanao, the cold-blooded slaughter of their Muslim brothers was concrete proof and a blunt reminder of the Catholic-centric state's profound disdain toward their Islamic vision and culture.

<sup>18</sup> Ott, "Myanmar in China's Embrace," <https://www.fpri.org/article/2020/01/myanmar-in-chinas-embrace/>.

<sup>19</sup> BBC, "Rohingya Crisis: Suu Kyi Says 'Fake News Helping Terrorists,'" <https://www.bbc.com.uk/news/world-asia-41170570>.

<sup>20</sup> Gloria, "Jabidah and Merdeka: The Inside Story," <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/jabidah-massacre-merdeka-sabah>; Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*; Mawallil, "Human Sacrifice in Corregidor: 50 Years after the Jabidah Massacre," <https://cnnphilippines.com/life/culture/2018/03/21/operation-merdeka-50-years-later.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Aljunied and Curaming, "Mediating and Consuming Memories of Violence"; Curaming and Aljunied, "Social Memory and State-Civil Society Relations in the Philippines."

The memories from this horrifying event, whether factual or fabricated, have been seized and kept alive by some of the key Moro elite actors to frame and legitimize the cause of the Bangsamoro (the Moro nation) struggle for autonomy and independence. This view was manifested in the creation of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which according to Nur Misuari, its founding leader, was inspired by the Moro students' protests after stories about the Jabidah incident came to light.<sup>22</sup> For Misuari and his followers, the massacre was the zenith of the government's series of genocidal attacks against the Muslims in Mindanao, and underscored the futility of trying to resolve the problems in Mindanao within the realm of the Philippine Republic.

The murders of the Jabidah martyrs, as some experts put it, was the "the final straw of Muslim tolerance, the beginnings of an all-out secessionist project, and a marker of unflinching defiance against injustice to be invoked from time to time."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Jabidah became the necessary epic saga that represented and recounted the Moro Muslims' historic victimhood and their dreams for a triumphant future. Even the splinter group Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) used this interpretation in grounding and justifying their call for a more aggressive armed movement through "jihad in the way of Allah" after the MNLF entered into a peace agreement with the government in 1996. Today, both groups habitually invoke the constructed "sacred" meaning and relevance of Jabidah when exhorting and mobilizing their members to continue their struggles for genuine autonomy and self-determination.<sup>24</sup>

## Relevance and Essence of the Issue

The idea that our broad day-to-day human experiences influence and shape the eruption and protraction of internal (i.e., between ethnoreligious groups) and intrastate (i.e., between a specific ethnoreligious group and a state) has often been criticized and ignored by many in International Relations (IR).<sup>25</sup> The overarching goal of making complicated matters easier to grasp and understand has compelled us to pursue theoretical and methodological parsimony based on the assumption of narrowly rational actors, and which, in turn, has inevitably sanitized the phenomena under investigation.<sup>26</sup> Rationalization and sanitization are particularly problematic when studying protracted internal and intrastate conflicts as

<sup>22</sup> See Stern, *Nur Misuari: An Authorized Biography*.

<sup>23</sup> Aljunid and Curaming, "Mediating and Consuming Memories of Violence," 231.

<sup>24</sup> Curaming and Aljunid, "Social Memory and State-Civil Society Relations in the Philippines," 91.

<sup>25</sup> Suny, "Why We Hate You"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>26</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of this issue, see Halperin, "Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution" and *Emotions in Conflict*; Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice?" and "War as Symbolic Politics"; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence and The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

these issues prevent researchers from diving into the actual experiences of the actors involved, specifically in relation to the emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions that are simultaneously being produced by and are underpinning these violent events.

Borrowing and paraphrasing Roger Petersen's views on the rationalist approach to conflict studies: The assumption that human behavior is entirely focused on maximizing a set of limited goods neglects how emotions can trigger non-optimizing tendencies and self-defeating behaviors in contexts of conflict. The assumption that narrow rationality drives outcomes disregards the potent influence of symbolic predispositions before, during, and after conflicts. The assumption that basic observable measures should always be favored and prioritized overlooks how perceptions can ignite and sustain conflicts.<sup>27</sup>

In this book, I am departing from the more mainstream practice and conventional wisdom that constitute the study of internal and intrastate conflicts in IR. This conscious effort is informed by the significant incongruence that I have personally witnessed while living and conducting fieldwork in Southeast Asia, particularly between how the actual actors involved in conflicts think and act and the theories and models of how they are expected to behave. Parallel to the studies of prominent scholars who explored the linkages between emotions and conflicts, many of the people whom I have observed and interacted with over several years have lived through the horrific violence of protracted internal and intrastate conflicts either as targets, perpetrators, or both.<sup>28</sup>

These extraordinary experiences have left powerful emotional, symbolic, and perceptual "externalities" that prevent those who have been affected (whether directly or indirectly) from valuing the lives of ethnoreligious others in the same way that they value their own lives. For those who have survived or continue to live through the violent conflicts in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines, the externalities of their experiences are "as real as the guns and money that form the basis of Western social science accounts."<sup>29</sup> Despite this, the rationalist assumption of a straightforward relationship between individual and group preferences, information collection, and belief formation has been at the crux of existing peace-building strategies. Unfortunately, conflict resolution frameworks designed based purely on rationalist approaches usually fail as they deliberately ignore the powerful emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions experienced by the actual actors involved.

As my investigation of the emotive, symbolic, and perceptual causal mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering in the succeeding chapters reveals, without a serious appreciation for these intangible yet highly crucial elements, violent

<sup>27</sup> Drawn from Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*, 13.

<sup>28</sup> Examples of these studies include Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>29</sup> Petersen, *Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*, 6.

internal and intrastate conflicts are bound to re-emerge and remain entrenched over long periods. To escape from the ensuing cycle of mass hostility, security dilemma, and chauvinist political mobilization that characterizes these conflicts, promoting ethnoreligious reconciliation initiatives anchored on emotive, symbolic, and perceptual regulation would be paramount. Pursuing peace negotiations without recognizing the need for such reconciliation and regulation efforts, to echo Stuart Kaufman is tantamount to constructing peace in the shiftest of sands.<sup>30</sup>

### **Manufacturing the Ethnoreligious Others as Security Threats**

Much of the available literature on internal and intrastate conflicts in IR have focused on determining the most relevant factors that led to their emergence and why some conflicts turned violent while others were settled without carnage. These studies can be classified into three general strands: material/rationalist, non-material/non-rationalist, and elite/instrumentalist.

The first strand explored the materialistic considerations of ethnoreligious groups within a state and emphasized the actors' "rationalist" behaviors that influenced the conflicts. These studies focused on the impact of economic development and political modernization on ethnoreligious loyalties, competitions over resources among ethnoreligious enclaves, and the security and wealth value of the territories being claimed by ethnoreligious units. Some of the principal findings suggested that: (1) disproportionate levels of development and modernization among groups could give rise to violent conflicts;<sup>31</sup> (2) that perceptions of relative economic and political disadvantages could drive groups to violently mobilize against one another;<sup>32</sup> and (3) that a group's loss of effective control over its claimed territories could fuel aggressive actions to counter the resulting insecurities.<sup>33</sup>

However, critics of material/rationalist explanations have argued that such studies overestimate the actors' economic and strategic motives and underestimate the influence of ideas and perceptions toward the individuals. Hence, they are incapable of answering why embattled ethnoreligious groups would be willing to die for their invisible gods and barren lands; or why they may choose to fight for their

<sup>30</sup> Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice?"

<sup>31</sup> For detailed discussions on the influence of unequal modernization and development on the emergence violent conflicts, see Easterly, "Can Institutions Resolve Ethnic Conflict?"; Murdoch and Sandler, "Civil Wars and Economic Growth"; Newman, "Does Modernization Breed Ethnic Political Conflict"; Spohn, "Multiple Modernity, Nationalism and Religion"; Walter, "Does Conflict Beget Conflict"; Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict*.

<sup>32</sup> Examples of these works include Collier, *Breaking the Conflict Trap*; Esteban and Ray, "A Model of Ethnic Conflict"; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, "Ethnic Polarization, Potential Conflict, and Civil Wars"; Newman, *The "New Wars" Debate*.

<sup>33</sup> Some of the influential research on this theme are Downes, "The Holy Land Divide"; Hassner, "To Halve and to Hold"; Johnson and Toft, "Grounds for War"; Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence and "Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War."*

sovereignty even when the expected arrangements would be significantly worse than the status quo conditions. The implication here is that even if material inequality is wholly eradicated through state-enforced redistributive mechanisms, those well-entrenched biases and long-standing hostilities between ethnoreligious cleavages will remain.<sup>34</sup>

Accordingly, the second strand investigated the non-material aspects of ethnoreligious groups' conditions and emphasized the actors' "non-rationalist" behaviors that motivated the conflict. These studies focused on the role of historical hatreds between the in-group and the out-group vis-à-vis the emergence of violent disputes and the role of fear in creating a security dilemma between the "us" and the "them." Some of the main findings indicated that: (1) internal and intrastate conflicts emanate from the psychological partitions simultaneously built by competing groups against each other;<sup>35</sup> and (2) that an ethnoreligious group's attempts to enhance its security and well-being cause the other group to think of the worst possible scenario by attributing offensive behaviors and aggressive motives to the former, ultimately resulting in rampant clashes.<sup>36</sup>

Contrary to the material/rationalist analyses, these non-material/non-rationalist explanations recognize the centrality of individual persons who, as collective members, can be rallied to fight for their faiths and flags. The argument is that since identity is a matter of life and death for these groups, they are inherently predisposed to seek autonomy and independence, leading to violent struggles. Critics, however, also reject the notion that internal and intrastate conflicts can be simply attributed to some intangible and unmeasurable elements of human nature despite the presence of concrete and quantifiable factors that motivate actors' interests and actions.

Hence, the third strand attempted to link the material/rationalist and non-material/non-rationalist theories together by examining elite roles in mobilizing ethnoreligious factions and emphasizing the instrumentalist functions of ethnicity and religion with respect to the conflict. These studies focused on the elites' utilization of physical inducements to mobilize group actions and exploitation of ideational incentives by influential players to consolidate group support. Some of the findings showed that: (1) both the material and non-material objects of the conflicts are a function of elite motives and interests;<sup>37</sup> and (2) that, in effect,

<sup>34</sup> For an elaborate discussion of this point, see Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Hassner, *War on Sacred Grounds*; Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*; Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Fattah and Fierke, "A Clash of Emotions"; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice?"; Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism"; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*; Ross, *Mixed Emotions*.

<sup>36</sup> The security dilemma feature of internal/intrastate conflicts is explored in-depth in Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*; Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Melander, "The Geography of Fear"; Mitzen, "Ontological Security in World Politics"; Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict"; Roe, "The Intrastate Security Dilemma"; Rose, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict."

<sup>37</sup> See Balcells, "Rivalry and Revenge"; de Juan, "A Pact with the Devil"; Fearon and Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity"; Kalyvas, "The Ontology of Political Violence" and "Ethnic Defection in Civil War"; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict."

ethnoreligious nationalism often works as a tool for preserving and legitimizing these actors' power and authority.<sup>38</sup>

One of the main implications here is that individuals and groups are passive entities easily manipulated and swayed by cunning elites to take up arms against the enemies whenever they are told to do so. Such inferences have also been rebuffed by critics who argue that ethnoreligious nationalism has a much real and more profound effect on people (whether they are the masses or the elites) who genuinely believe in the symbols and narratives of their identity. Moreover, even if ethnoreligious nationalism is only a byproduct of elite manipulation, they are still tactically bound to yield to this socially constructed reality if they wish to retain their influence.<sup>39</sup>

Despite providing valuable insights, determining the various causes of these clashes does not necessarily clarify how the very first stage of all internal and intrastate conflicts—the manufacturing of ethnoreligious others as existential security threats—gets set in motion and crystallized. Put differently, what is mostly missing are explanations on the underlying processes that link the causes to the outcome. As such, my main objective in this book is to uncover and explain the unseen, albeit existing causal mechanisms that drive state and non-state actors within territorially bounded polities to frame certain ethnoreligious groups as threats to their relative security, power, and status.

To do this, I draw on the interdisciplinary theories on critical security, religious, and nationalism studies and develop a framework that traces and elucidates how imagined insecurities are transformed into tangible security threats. This ethnoreligious othering framework, which I present and explain in detail in Chapter 2, is anchored on complementary theoretical assumptions about the respective roles of emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions in protracted internal and intrastate conflicts. Here is my two-pronged thesis:

Ethnoreligious othering comprises three constitutive structures. Each part logically extends to the next part: cultivating the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism, securitizing the ethnoreligious others using hostile symbolic predispositions, and sacralizing hostile perceptions of indivisible ethnoreligious identities, homelands, and nation-states (Thesis 1).

These causal mechanisms underpinning the process of ethnoreligious othering are the motors driving the social reengineering of the ethnoreligious others into existential security threats. They act as vessels through which the prevailing relations

<sup>38</sup> A thoughtful reflection on the instrumentalist role of ethnic/religious nationalism vis-à-vis the elite actors can be found in Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism"; Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*; Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*; Snyder and Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas."

<sup>39</sup> See Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice"; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*; Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*.

and existing arrangements between the in-group and all other out-groups are either revised or reinforced. Throughout the process, these constitutive structures of ethnoreligious othering are simultaneously generating and are being fueled by hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions. Accordingly, these elements are pivotal to reimagining all target ethnoreligious groups' "state of being" and renegotiating their respective positions in pluralistic imagined communities.

State and non-state agents from rival ethnoreligious groups routinely employ ethnoreligious othering as a defense strategy for protecting and preserving their primary security referents—identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states—in times of crisis, breakdown, and threat. For states, ethnoreligious othering is mainly about the security and survival of their polities' conceptual cohesion and territorial integrity. For ethnoreligious groups, it is primarily about the security and survival of their identities and homelands within those polities (Thesis 2).

This scenario presents crucial problems, particularly for pluralistic polities where disagreements and conflicts over the meaning of security and what survival entails do not only happen between rival ethnoreligious groups but also between states and specific target groups. The *security value* (i.e., increased security toward insiders) and the *security curse* (i.e., increased insecurity toward outsiders) which are simultaneously generated by chauvinistic ethnoreligious othering ultimately work to protect and preserve a referent group's identity, homeland, and preferred version of the territorial nation-state at the expense of the othered groups.

This condition is particularly relevant and pronounced in pluralistic polities where the "national identity" is conflated with the ethnicity and religion of the predominant group. On the one hand, the majority's ethnoreligious substructures (i.e., myths, doctrines, norms, and dogmas) heavily inform the security superstructures that are crafted by the state elites. And on the other, the security superstructures (i.e., rhetoric, policies, strategies, and institutions) that state officials end up implementing further legitimize and entrench the ethnoreligious substructures of the majority.

### **Explaining the Invisible String of Ethnoreligious Othering Using Interpretive Process Tracing Method**

To theoretically probe and empirically demonstrate my thesis and framework, I use the theory-building process-tracing method, specifically its interpretive variant. Process tracing is a within-case method applied when investigating how causal processes unfolding over time generate particular outcomes. It is intrinsically linked to the identification and theorization of causal mechanisms that help

make sense of complex processes. As Derek Beach puts it, the method “is utilized primarily when we know that there might be a relationship between a cause and an outcome, but we are in the dark regarding potential mechanisms linking the two.”<sup>40</sup> Put differently, process tracing helps us answer the question of “how did we get here.”<sup>41</sup>

In finding answers to this question, the method requires engagement in both an in-depth “soaking and probing” of the empirics of the case and a comprehensive search in the theoretical literature to “gain clues about possible mechanisms that could link cause and outcome together.”<sup>42</sup> The key essence of making a mechanism-based claim is to shift the analytical focus toward the hypothesized causal process in-between them rather than the causes and outcomes<sup>43</sup>—in the words of Ludvig Norman to “tie the explanans to the explanandum through an in-depth engagement with patterns of action and interaction.”<sup>44</sup> The main point is that the mechanisms are not causes but are “causal processes that are triggered by causes and that link them with outcomes in a productive relationship.”<sup>45</sup>

Beach outlines three fundamental steps when employing a theory-building process-tracing method.<sup>46</sup> The first step involves gathering empirical material and conducting a structured analysis of this material to build a plausible hypothetical causal mechanism in which a cause (or set of causes) is connected with an outcome. The second step involves deducing from the observable empirical material that real and actual evidence signifying an underlying plausible causal mechanism is present (or not) in the case being studied. The third and final step involves inferring that the empirical material collected is evidence of existing causal mechanism, particularly in the form of systems understanding, which requires explicit fleshing out of the causal process occurring in-between (a cause and outcome) and empirical tracing of each constituent part. The observable within-case empirical material left by the workings of a causal mechanism within an actual case, referred to as “mechanistic evidence,” is utilized to draw inferences about the presence of a mechanism in a case.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Beach, “Process-Tracing Methods in Social Science,” 19.

<sup>41</sup> See Frieden, “A Diagrammatic Approach to Evidence,” 582; Swedberg, “Theorizing in Sociology and Social Science,” 6–7.

<sup>42</sup> Beach, “Process-Tracing Methods in Social Science,” 2; see also Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences” and “Process Tracing and Historical Explanation” for a detailed discussion.

<sup>43</sup> Gerring, “Causal Mechanisms: Yes but ...”; Hedström and Ylikoski, “Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences.”

<sup>44</sup> Norman, “Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations,” 6.

<sup>45</sup> Beach, “Process-Tracing Methods in Social Science,” 2; see also, Woodward, *A Theory of Causal Explanation*.

<sup>46</sup> Beach, “Process-Tracing Methods in Social Science,” 19–20.

<sup>47</sup> For detailed discussions on mechanistic evidence, see George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*; Illari, “Mechanistic Evidence”; Mahoney, “The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences.”



When discussing the standards for ensuring reliable process tracing, the emphasis has traditionally been placed on deductive styles of inquiry, Bayesian procedures for developing and testing hypotheses, and large-N studies.<sup>48</sup> However, as Norman pointed out, these efforts “tend to exclude context-sensitive modes of inquiry that characterize interpretive research,” even when process tracing itself “is highly consonant with the interpretivist tradition of providing inductive and contextually thick accounts of meaning-making, as well as attending to the dynamics of social institutions.”<sup>49</sup> Similar to conventional process-tracing accounts, interpretive process tracing operates by seeking explanations for specific outcomes. However, what distinguishes the method is the required effort to combine the study of intersubjective meanings with causal explanations of a particular outcome.

Dissecting intersubjective social institutions as part of causal processes forces researchers adopting this method to be more mindful of the mechanisms that capture those often concealed “non-intentional” and “habitual” actions, and influence of social identities for such actions and behaviors.<sup>50</sup> With interpretive process tracing, social systems are understood via a research design intended to account for causal processes that lead to more clearly defined outcomes. As the application of the method in this study reveals, interpretive works and causal arguments should not be seen as mutually exclusive and incompatible since “a focus on mechanisms can be made to work with the meta-theoretical assumptions of interpretive research to supply casual explanations.”<sup>51</sup> In other words, the constitutive explanations produced and favored by interpretive research (through studying and categorizing the characteristics and properties of particular social systems) can be utilized to inform and illuminate how causal mechanisms generate certain outcomes.

Accordingly, the point of interpretation is not only to gain “access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live”<sup>52</sup> but as Norman argued, “to help us capture the processes through which such worlds change and how these changes condition the emergence of some social and political effects rather than others.”<sup>53</sup> Instead of focusing exclusively on the interpretations of local meanings and practices through which social institutions are constituted, interpretive process tracing supplies the missing causal explanations by combining interpretive and inductive techniques with more deductive methods.

<sup>48</sup> Hall, “Tracing the Progress of Process Tracing”; Norman, “Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations.”

<sup>49</sup> Norman, “Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations,” 4.

<sup>50</sup> See Guzzini, “Social Mechanisms as Micro-Dynamics in Constructivist Analysis”; Norman, “Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations”; Pouliot, “Practice Tracing.”

<sup>51</sup> Norman, “Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations,” 4.

<sup>52</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 24.

<sup>53</sup> Norman, “Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations,” 4.

Norman described how this approach proceeds.<sup>54</sup> First, with the accumulation of inductive and interpretive insights, a researcher's familiarization with a given context increases and, in turn, enables the identification and articulation of mechanisms engendering certain outcomes and the case-specific implications of alternative theories. Second, through this "constrained immersion" in specific contexts, the study becomes less open-ended, thereby narrowing down the range of possible outcomes in contrast to which the researcher understands the observed outcome. Third, as the investigation progresses, critical points of within-case comparison are then outlined and probed, allowing the researcher to establish why a specific outcome rather than another occurs. To this extent, the method goes beyond the implicit discussion of causal forces at the meta-theoretical level by placing causality front and center and within the scope of the actual investigation.

These methodological implications of interpretive process tracing are particularly relevant and meaningful in relation to the overarching assumptions binding much of interpretivist work: the malleability of identities as relational constructs (stimulated by certain dynamics of interactions and molded vis-à-vis the others); and the multiple self-understandings possessed by social agents (both as individuals and as collectives) actualized in particular settings.<sup>55</sup> How these relational and situational components of identities are activated and, in turn, influence social action can be examined as part and parcel of specific processes. Hence, in uncovering and explaining the causal mechanisms underpinning the process of ethnoreligious othering, using interpretive process tracing is particularly beneficial given its capacity to situate meaning making and identity formation in the context of processes unfolding over time.<sup>56</sup>

The incorporation of interpretive techniques when conducting process tracing allows the researcher to investigate situations where nascent identities, institutional roles, and practices are precipitated and induce individual and collective action. This feature of interpretive process tracing helps resolve a significant weakness in historical institutionalism and constructivist theorization: the disregard for sudden, unforeseen changes and episodes of institutional breakdown.<sup>57</sup> By overcoming the predilection toward explaining continuity and self-reinforcing dynamics of patterned social action, interpretive process tracing helps researchers uncover the processes through which social institutions unravel or collapse and

<sup>54</sup> Norman, "Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations," 5–6.

<sup>55</sup> These assertions regarding malleable and multiple identities and self-understandings and the different ways in which they can be studied using interpretive approaches are fleshed out further in Bevir and Rhodes, *Routledge Handbook of Interpretive Political Science*.

<sup>56</sup> Norman, "Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations" and "Rethinking Causal Explanation in Interpretive International Studies."

<sup>57</sup> Norman, "Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations"; see also Schmidt, "Discursive Institutionalism" and "Taking Ideas and Discourse Seriously" for a fuller account of the role of ideas and discourses vis-à-vis institutions.

where conflicts erupt from previous stages of relative peace and stability.<sup>58</sup> More specifically, the method's capacity to incorporate mechanisms rooted in habitual, non-intentional/non-rational, and norm-driven actions allows researchers to explain: how collective self-understandings emerge; the necessary conditions that activate them; and how these inform preferences, strategies, and actions.<sup>59</sup>

Following the logic of interpretive process tracing, I dig deeper into how things work "by tracing each part of the mechanism empirically using mechanistic evidence and, in particular, observing the empirical fingerprints left by the activities of entities in each part of the process."<sup>60</sup> These constituent mechanisms can be seen as systems of interlocking parts transmitting causal powers or forces between a cause(s) to an outcome, all the while ensuring that each part logically extends to the next one. Identifying the mechanisms operating in particular cases in an interpretive manner necessitates explicit accounts of "how such structures play out at the level of agents, how they are reproduced and transformed in specific situations, and how such actions, in turn, generate particular macro-level outcomes."<sup>61</sup>

Viewed this way, agency and intentionality are understood as emergent properties of the agents that need to be explained rather than assumed. Thus, with interpretive process tracing, the agents' intersubjective meanings are at the core of causal mechanisms that explain continuity and change in social institutions.<sup>62</sup> This approach can complement rather than undermine structure-level theories, given how "the effects of macro-level mechanisms are always mediated through individual behaviors and associated micro-level mechanisms."<sup>63</sup> Such an emphasis on mechanisms enables the investigation of the micro-dynamics via which social structures are either replicated or modified without building explanatory power on individual agents' intentions which have to be determined and explained.

Finally, although process tracing is a single-case method, as some interpretive causal methodologists claim, there is the possibility that the patterns detected and established within a specific context are also relevant and portable to other settings, especially when finding explanations to specific outcomes in those settings. Another way of putting this is that the contextually generated findings of particular processes can be taken outside of their context of discovery to

<sup>58</sup> Norman, "Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations" and "Rethinking Causal Explanation in Interpretive International Studies"; see also Magcamit, "Imagined Insecurities in Imagined Communities" for a recent empirical application of the method in explaining protracted violent conflicts.

<sup>59</sup> Norman, "Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations."

<sup>60</sup> Beach, "Process-Tracing Methods in Social Science," 5; see also Illari, "Mechanistic Evidence."

<sup>61</sup> Norman, "Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations," 6.

<sup>62</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*; Norman, "Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations."

<sup>63</sup> Wight, "Theorizing the Mechanisms of Conceptual and Semiotic Space," 296; see also Norman, "Rethinking Causal Explanation in Interpretive International Studies," for an updated discussion of how interpretive process tracing bolsters rather than undermines structure-level theories.

enable more generalizable inferences.<sup>64</sup> This requires the complementary use of the comparative method to determine whether similar mechanisms might be operating in disparate cases. In doing so, the particularities of a convoluted process are shed off, while the essential components are defined in analytically more general terms. Indeed, the whole operation is an exercise of conceptual abstraction that is both creative and iterative.<sup>65</sup>

### **Southeast Asia as a “Natural Laboratory” for the Comparative Examination of Ethnoreligious Otherings and Passionate Conflicts**

While generally neglected by the existing scholarship’s overwhelming focus on the Middle East and Africa, Southeast Asia presents social scientists with a “natural laboratory” for the systematic and comprehensive investigation of ethnoreligious otherings and passionate internal and intrastate conflicts. Except for Brunei and Timor-Leste, most countries in the region became fully sovereign states between 1946 and 1965 through varying modes of decolonization. Some achieved their independence by means of violent struggles and revolutions (e.g., Indonesia and Vietnam), and others resorted to either bargaining (e.g., Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore) or political pressures (e.g., Myanmar).<sup>66</sup> Notwithstanding these differences, Southeast Asia’s colonization invariably resulted in the fragmentation of indigenous populations along ethnic, religious, and linguistic cleavages.

With neither a generally accepted national vision nor a well-entrenched sense of the nation on which the embryonic central governments could be anchored, the political and intellectual elites who found themselves at the helm of postcolonial nation-state building had relied on the invention of traditions. These were largely based on the “historical experiences, political mythology, and cultural symbols of particular groups within the segmented societies.”<sup>67</sup> Consequently, the emerging successor states had to constantly compete against certain secessionist minority groups that were demanding their own sovereign rights and national territories amid the absence of a shared understanding of nation and culture. The lack of organic integration within the emerging social order, coupled with the underlying frictions between political units and national identities, made Southeast Asia home to some of the most virulent and enduring postcolonial internal and intrastate conflicts with ethnoreligious undertones.

<sup>64</sup> See Norman, “Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations” and “Rethinking Causal Explanation in Interpretive International Studies.”

<sup>65</sup> This nature of process tracing is systematically interrogated in Bennett and Checkel’s edited book, *Process Tracing*, particularly in Pouliot’s “Practice Tracing” chapter.

<sup>66</sup> Croissant and Lorenz, *Comparative Politics of Southeast Asia*.

<sup>67</sup> Eric Hobsbawm cited in Croissant and Lorenz, *Comparative Politics of Southeast Asia*, 6.

This condition has been particularly salient in the three Southeast Asian countries featured earlier—Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines. In Indonesia, the significant structural changes brought about by the Dutch occupation, the Suharto regime, and the *reformasi* era have intensified the Muslims' and Christians' hostility toward *Kristenisasi* (Christianization) and *Islamisasi* (Islamization), respectively. Along the way, ancient animosities ignited and made them suspicious of one another's motives and intentions. At the same time, historical resentments were triggered and compelled them to challenge and undermine each other's legitimacy and status. The unresolved tensions resulting from these events have frequently erupted in brutal conflicts across the archipelago and have already killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims and Christians.

In Myanmar, just six weeks after Suu Kyi's shocking appearance at The Hague, the panel of seventeen judges at the ICJ voted unanimously to order the government to take all measures within its power to prevent the military and all the other guilty parties from carrying out genocidal acts against the Rohingya Muslims. The ruling released on January 23, 2020, has effectively put the country under court oversight by ordering it to report back within four months on what steps it has taken, preserve evidence relevant to the genocide case, and submit further reports to the tribunal every six months throughout the entire duration of the case. However, the sudden overthrow of Suu Kyi and the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) Party by the *Tatmadaw* forces during a coup (led by the military commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing) has complicated the situation even further.

And in the Philippines, the Moro Muslims' struggle for freedom and self-determination in Mindanao has often been viewed as the result of deep fear, hatred, and resentment that were inherited and propagated by the predominantly Catholic state and society against Islam and the Muslim people. The annexation of the Bangsamoro homeland (i.e., Moro nation) and the accompanying systematic design to liquidate Islam and renegotiate the Islamic identity of Bangsamoro Muslims have led to one of the longest and bloodiest conflicts in human history. The prospect of a fully independent "Moro Islamic" territory being carved out of the overarching "Filipino Catholic" nation-state remains a primary source of fierce resistance against the very concept of Bangsamoro, occasionally igniting deadly clashes between state security actors and various Muslim militant groups.

The significant differences and similarities among the three countries being observed make them relevant and interesting cases for the comparative study of internal and intrastate conflicts in the region. On the one hand, despite their differences (e.g., political regimes, institutional cultures, patterns of nation-state building, and elite-civil society formation), their respective societies and states have all developed a certain degree of ethnoreligious nationalism and a tendency to adopt ethnoreligious othering as a security defense strategy. On the other hand, despite their similarities (e.g., ethnoreligious heterogeneity, deep colonial histories, and

levels of religiosity and socio-economic development), their respective societies and states have demonstrated varying intensities of ethnoreligious nationalism and differing degrees to which they exercise ethnoreligious othering. Whether the attention is placed on their similarities or differences, one crucial observed phenomenon stands out: the emergence of contrasting forms of ethnoreligious nationalism and the resulting exercise of ethnoreligious othering leading to violent protracted conflicts.

Since one of the book's central themes focuses on the impact of competing forms of ethnoreligious nationalism on otherings and conflicts, one of the main factors that I have considered when selecting the cases pertains to the relatively dominant forms of ethnoreligious nationalism across the region. In Southeast Asia, these are the ethnicized Islam (e.g., in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei), ethnicized Buddhism (e.g., in Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia), and ethnicized Christianity/Catholicism (e.g., in the Philippines, East Timor). Hence, for the purpose of this study, I have narrowed my focus on the Muslim (87.2 percent) and Christian (10 percent) groups in Indonesia, the Buddhist (87.9 percent) and Muslim (4.3 percent) factions in Myanmar, and the Catholic (83 percent) and Muslim (5 percent) communities in the Philippines.<sup>68</sup> Throughout their respective histories, the relations between the identified ethnoreligious communities and between the states and specific ethnoreligious groups in these three countries have often been tumultuous, resulting in violent internal and intrastate conflicts that occasionally arise even to this day. As such, these cases offer vital access to and opportunities for understanding the existing emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions underpinning ethnoreligious otherings and passionate conflicts in real-world settings.

Between 2017 and 2019, I conducted fieldwork in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines to gather first-hand evidence of ethnoreligious othering and how it triggers the eruption and protraction of these clashes. During this period, I facilitated semi-structured in-depth interviews and group discussions with members of the identified ethnoreligious groups (both elites and non-elites) from different provinces in these countries. On average, the interviews and focus group discussions lasted for sixty and ninety minutes respectively. Throughout my stay in the region, I carefully observed the dynamics and interactions between

<sup>68</sup> These aggregate figures are based on the 2020 data compiled by the Pew-Templeton's Global Religious Futures Project. In Indonesia, about 99 percent of the Muslims follow Sunni Islam and only one percent practice Shia Islam. Among its Christian population, around 71 percent are Protestants, and 29 percent are Catholics. Meanwhile, in Myanmar, virtually all Buddhists practice Theravada Buddhism while the majority of its Muslim population are Sunnis. Finally, in the Philippines, roughly 83 percent of its total Christian population belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, whereas most of its Muslim population also observe Sunni Islam. For an overview of the people's religious affiliations in these countries, see [http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/burma-myanmar#/?affiliations\\_religion\\_id=0&affiliations\\_year=2020&region\\_name=All%20Countries&restrictions\\_year=2016](http://www.globalreligiousfutures.org/countries/burma-myanmar#/?affiliations_religion_id=0&affiliations_year=2020&region_name=All%20Countries&restrictions_year=2016).

these communities and closely monitored the relations of each group with their respective states. By the end of my field research, a total of 194 individuals from the three countries (i.e., 65 from Indonesia, 63 from Myanmar, and 66 from the Philippines) participated in the study.

The data collected were transcribed and translated in English (where necessary) with the help of research assistants and then thematically organized, processed, and analyzed by the author. To supplement these first-hand data, I also conducted document research in the national archives in Jakarta, Yangon, and Manila. I examined various written, visual, and pictorial sources (in paper and electronic forms), including government publications, newspapers, films and videos, and diaries related to the historical relations and conflicts involving the ethnoreligious groups being observed. Following the epistemological logic of interpretive process tracing, I then methodically and comparatively examined the causal mechanisms underpinning ethnoreligious otherings and protracted conflicts in Southeast Asia using these empirical materials.

The book contributes to the existing scholarship in political science on internal and intrastate conflict and resolution in three fundamental ways. Theoretically, the development and application of the novel ethnoreligious othering framework move the discussion beyond an assessment of causes to enhancing our knowledge of the causal mechanisms that link the variety of causes identified in the literature to the emergence and recurrence of internal and intrastate conflicts.

Thematically synthesizing and analyzing the nexus between security, religion, and nationalism, on the one hand, and the linkages between emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions, on the other, significantly improve our understanding of how these interactions influence conflicts. By integrating complementary insights from the different strands of conflict theorizing within a single logic, the proposed framework links together multiple factors at every level of analysis, thereby enabling a more holistic yet still nuanced, accurate, and systematic approach to studying these events.

Empirically, the case studies' interdisciplinary scope and treatment brings debates and perspectives from psychology, sociology, and anthropology in IR, which has unduly neglected these "non-material" and "non-rational" elements in conflict and peace studies. More precisely, the proposed framework enables broader and more in-depth empirical explanations of internal and intrastate conflicts by accounting for a wide range of insights on the interlinkages between (1) hostile emotions and the cultivation of ethnoreligious nationalism, (2) hostile symbolic predispositions and the securitization of ethnoreligious others, and (3) hostile perceptions and the sacralization of ideal ethnoreligious identities, homelands, and nation-states.

These linkages underscore the view that because the "reality" in social sciences has distinct psychological, sociological, anthropological, and political layers, IR scholarship must come to terms with the fact that multiple causal logics typically

operate simultaneously.<sup>69</sup> The lessons drawn from the case studies provide realistic explanations of how internal and intrastate conflicts erupt and protract and generate reliable perspectives on how conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives can be effectively pursued.

Methodologically, the interpretive process-tracing method adopted in the construction and application of the proposed framework helps break new grounds in IR research by demonstrating the compatibility between interpretive works and causal arguments. Specifically, the theoretical and empirical discussions provided show how a focus on mechanisms can be made to work with the meta-theoretical assumptions of interpretive research to offer causal explanations for ethno-religious otherings and violent protracted conflicts. Interpretive process tracing, especially when coupled with a comparative method, can be a powerful tool for explaining multi-faceted, multi-layered processes by integrating context-specific intersubjective meanings into causal accounts.

As I demonstrate in this book, combining these two methods elevates and strengthens process-tracing explanations of otherings and conflicts. Although limited in number, the cases dissected using this dual approach offer vital reference points and valuable resources for other scholars who wish to understand these phenomena beyond the Southeast Asian context. Overall, the theoretical, methodological, and empirical insights resulting from the study help broaden the range and deepen the subject of causal processes and mechanisms currently being considered in IR research, particularly in relation to conflicts.

### **Plan of the Book**

Using the concept of ethno-religious othering, the preceding discussions in [Chapter 1](#) set forth the theoretical framework that captures the underlying dynamics and processes through which this very first stage of internal and intrastate conflict is activated. As I have argued, the reimagination and reconstruction of the othered groups into strangers and threats is driven by a three-stage ethno-religious othering causal mechanism that proceeds as follows: cultivating ethno-religious nationalism, securitizing the ethno-religious others, and sacralizing ethno-religious identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states. These constitutive structures of ethno-religious othering are the hidden motors that facilitate the recalibration of the relative security, power, and status between referent and target ethno-religious groups within pluralistic polities.

As the succeeding empirical case chapters will reveal, these underlying ethno-religious othering structures are simultaneously creating and driven by the hostile and chauvinistic emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions.

<sup>69</sup> Based on Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics."



Consequently, far from being immaterial and insignificant, these often neglected elements are central to the reinvention and renegotiation of the ethnoreligious others' state of being and position within pluralistic polities. To demonstrate and probe how the identified causal mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering work in actual cases, I examine the experiences of the "predominantly" Muslim Indonesia, Buddhist Myanmar, and Catholic Philippines with violent protracted conflicts using the interpretive process-tracing method. As I have hypothesized, ethnoreligious othering is a double-edged security defense strategy routinely employed by state and non-state agents from competing factions in times of crisis, breakdown, and threat. As the investigation of ethnoreligious othering in these three cases will show, the act of securing the "sacred" insiders through ethnoreligious othering always entails "divine tragedies," particularly on the part of the "evil" outsiders.

Chapter 2 presents the discursive construction of my proposed ethnoreligious othering framework and the propositions underpinning its three constitutive parts. Following Petersen's and Kaufman's advice, I begin my theorization of ethnoreligious othering with what psychology tells us about how people think and what sociology tells us about the social life.<sup>70</sup> To do this, I structure my framework and formulate my propositions by linking together the psychological elements of emotion, symbolic predisposition, and perception with the social phenomena of security, religion, and nationalism. Accordingly, each of my three main propositions represents and constitutes a specific stage in the ethnoreligious othering process, that is: cultivation of the hostile emotions of ethnoreligious nationalism (Proposition 1-Stage 1), securitization of ethnoreligious others using hostile symbolic predisposition (Proposition 2-Stage 2), and sacralization of hostile perceptions of ethnoreligious identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states (Proposition 3-Stage 3).

This strategy enables a more holistic, realistic, and systematic understanding of how internal and intrastate conflicts crystallize and remain entrenched by capturing and explaining the invisible causal mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering that link the variety of causes identified in the literature to these outcomes. The propositions and framework that I develop and dissect in this chapter are based on the overarching view of "social science reality" as having different strata, making deductive theories based on a single or a few variables rather inadequate. When hypothesizing and theorizing about ethnoreligious otherings and their consequent conflicts, the stratum's distinct emergent qualities under inspection must be analytically accounted for while acknowledging the restrictions imposed by the other underlying strata.<sup>71</sup> The ethnoreligious othering framework does this by placing the agents' intersubjective meanings at the core of causal mechanisms that explain

<sup>70</sup> See Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice" and "War as Symbolic Politics"; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence and The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>71</sup> See Wight, "Theorizing the Mechanisms of Conceptual and Semiotic Space"; Joseph and Wight, *Scientific Realism and International Relations*; Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics."

the eruption, protraction, and possible resolution of violent internal and intrastate conflicts.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I empirically trace each part of the ethnoreligious othering process using the mechanistic evidence I gathered from Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines. Applying interpretive process tracing, I analyze and observe these “empirical fingerprints” by treating them as the agents’ emergent properties that need to be explained rather than assumed. To do this, I provide detailed accounts of how the constitutive structures of ethnoreligious othering play out at the agents’ level, how they are replicated and altered in specific environments, and how such activities and behaviors, in turn, produce certain macro-level outcomes. As mentioned earlier, although process tracing is conventionally a single-case method, the patterns discovered within a particular setting can also be relevant and transferrable to other contexts, especially when searching for explanations for particular outcomes in those settings. Hence, in each of the three cases examined, I systematically demonstrate how the emotive, symbolic, and perceptual causal mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering facilitate the cultivation of ethnoreligious nationalisms, securitization of ethnoreligious others, and sacralization of ethnoreligious identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states.

Accordingly, I start by discussing how the cultivation of ethnoreligious nationalism (emanating from the amalgamation of ethnicized religious and ethnonationalist factors and influences) between state and non-state agents generates hostile emotions that stimulate rival factions within pluralistic polities to adopt a zero-sum security logic vis-à-vis their identity, homeland, and preferred version of the territorial nation-state (Proposition 1-Stage 1). I then proceed to explain how this zero-sum logic, in turn, motivates state and non-state agents from competing ethnoreligious groups (with the active participation and consent of their respective constituencies) to securitize the othered groups as threats to their security and survival using the hostile symbolic predispositions informed by the hostile emotions induced by ethnoreligious nationalism (Proposition 2-Stage 2).

Finally, I elucidate how state and non-state agents from rival groups sacralize their hostile perceptions of indivisible identity and homeland by ensconcing their ethnoreligious substructures into the state’s security superstructures, thereby solidifying and legitimizing their idealized version of the territorial nation-state (Proposition 3-Stage 3). By comparing the three distinct Southeast Asian cases, I illustrate how the contextually generated findings of ethnoreligious otherings and internal and intrastate conflicts can be “exported” outside of their contexts of discovery to allow more “generalizable” inferences.

Drawing on the empirical lessons from my analysis of ethnoreligious otherings and internal and interstate conflicts in Southeast Asia, I conclude the book by outlining the major theoretical and empirical findings of the present study in Chapter 6. I begin by synthesizing and integrating my central thesis and propositions with the primary evidence and results drawn from the comparative analysis

of ethnoreligious otherings and violent protracted conflicts in the region. I then discuss the disciplinary and practical implications of the outcomes and inferences derived from the study and address its limitations.

In a nutshell, I argue that because the constitutive structures underpinning ethnoreligious othering are simultaneously producing and are powered by deeply entrenched hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions, achieving durable peace and lasting settlement requires reconciliation initiatives that specifically target and tackle these elements. To do this, the chauvinistic cultivation of ethnoreligious nationalism, securitization of ethnoreligious others, and sacralization of ethnoreligious identities, homelands, and nation-states need to be recast and transformed into benign and non-threatening experiences that induce positive as opposed to negative emotional, symbolic, and perceptual externalities. Only then can we have a serious chance at breaking the wheel of violent, passionate conflict.

## Conclusion

I have three main goals in this book. The first goal is to highlight the centrality of the covert, yet concrete emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions linked to religion and nationalism in providing a more holistic and realistic understanding of internal and intrastate conflicts. As will be illustrated throughout the book, these elements are not just powerful tools for explaining why people act the way they do politically but are also vital resources that can be used to transform the actors involved and the accepted rules. As Ronald Suny put it: “They are a stimulus to action; they are fundamental to self-identification, to thinking about who we are and who the other is; they are involved in the social bonds that make groups, even whole societies, or nations, possible.”<sup>72</sup> Drawing on the lessons from my investigation of ethnoreligious otherings and protracted conflicts across Southeast Asia, I discuss the significance of emotive, symbolic, and perceptual reconciliation and regulation in facilitating inclusive and sustainable peace among the competing ethnoreligious communities observed.

Second, and relatedly, to demonstrate how the ethnoreligious othering framework developed and applied in this book can bolster and advance process-tracing explanations by systematically incorporating context-specific intersubjective meanings into causal accounts of the phenomenon under investigation. Since the underlying logic by which interpretive process tracing operates and generalizes stresses that these contextual meanings are intrinsic components of causal explanations, the causal mechanisms uncovered and explained using this approach make explanations of internal and intrastate conflicts more substantive

<sup>72</sup> Suny, “Why We Hate You,” 5.

and nuanced. As such, the method's application in this study offers valuable opportunities for refining the language necessary for rethinking future problems linked to these events and their explanations. By linking interpretive works and causal arguments together through the theoretical and empirical probing of ethno-religious otherings and prolonged conflicts, the book opens the door wider for the study of mechanisms that have been traditionally ignored in IR.

Third, and lastly, to emphasize the importance of recognizing religion and nationalism as legitimate constituents and instruments of realpolitik and the need to provide them appropriate seats at policymaking tables. The forceful resurgence of religious fundamentalism, ethnic factionalism, and nationalist impulses in the twenty-first century has exposed the limits of scholarly works built around the modernization and secularization theses. Indeed, this excessive reliance on modernist and secularist biases has often resulted in profound misrepresentation and miscalculation of political phenomena, trends, and societies in different parts of the world. As will be illuminated in the book's case chapters, religion and nationalism continue to matter because they are, and have always been, matters of security and survival for societies and states. Hence, deliberately dismissing their role and impact can only be detrimental to the goal of fostering genuine and lasting peace and security in conflict areas across regions.

## Ethnoreligious Otherings and Passionate Conflicts: *Emotions, Symbols, and Perceptions*

Since modernization and secularization have become two of the most powerful theses to shape our world's intellectual and normative history, ontological questions about the relevance and meaning of religion and nationalism have often been avoided if not dismissed. It is ironic to think how the individualistic, free-thinking atmosphere of the Enlightenment period—as exemplified by René Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* maxim—may have started to silence open and honest discussions about the enduring security utility and essence of these phenomena. As a host of scholars have lamented, our stubborn modernist and secularist habits have prevented us from fully appreciating the enduring relevance and impact of religion and nationalism, which we have labeled rather condescendingly as “non-material” and, therefore, “non-rational.”<sup>1</sup>

The likes of Auguste Comte, Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Ferdinand Toennies, Talcott Parsons, and even liberalism's fiercest critics such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel, all thought that religion and nationalism were just transitory stages within a social evolution continuum, that is, from “a traditional, communitarian, ascriptive, bourgeois or pre-rational phenomenon to rationalized and individualized class society based on achievement.”<sup>2</sup> Religious sentiments and nationalist aspirations were expected to become obsolete either by Durkheim's “liberal” post-patriotic human ideals or Marx and Engels' “illiberal” proletarian internationalism. Consequently, the military-theological system would collapse and be superseded by a modern secular system.

It was only after the fall of the Soviet Union and the demise of virtually all socialist-communist projects that the parallel development of religion and nationalism has proliferated on a worldwide scale, leading to various associated phenomena, including the growth of ethnic nationalism, revitalization of faith,

<sup>1</sup> This sentiment is well expressed in the works of Imhof, “Nationalism and the Theory of Society”; Seiple and Hoover, *Religion and Security*; Smith, *Sacred Sources of National Identity*; Thompson and Fevre, “Sociological Reflections on Nation and Nationalism.”

<sup>2</sup> Wimmer and Schiller, “Methodological Nationalism and Beyond,” 303.

resurgence of religious fundamentalism, and rise of religious nationalism.<sup>3</sup> The unforeseen events of September 11, 2001, shattered our secularist blinders even further and forced us to recognize the true strength and power of religion and nationalism vis-à-vis the workings of contemporary states and societies. Indeed, throughout history, both religion and nationalism have proved to be potent and durable engines for (re)negotiating the rules, norms, and principles of international society.<sup>4</sup> The untold numbers of people who have sacrificed and continue to offer their lives to protect their gods and nations speak to the breadth and depth of loyalty that these ideas hold even to this day. A 2018 survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre found that on average, 54 percent of adults say religion is vital to their lives. Similarly, the World Values Survey between 2010 and 2014 found that, on average, 57.1 percent of adults are very proud of their nationality.

Against this backdrop, the propositions and framework that I develop for explaining ethnoreligious otherings and violent protracted conflicts in this chapter are anchored on the critical realist philosophy of science that views reality as being stratified or “layered.” Adopting Jonathan Joseph and Colin Wight’s formulation, because the material “matter may be said to be more basic than life,” therefore, biology depends on chemistry and physics.<sup>5</sup> The implication is that although life has its own “emergent properties” that are not reducible to chemistry or physics, life itself is governed and constrained by underlying chemical and physical laws.<sup>6</sup>

In the social sciences, the “reality” of politics works the same way. As Kaufman elaborated further, on the one hand, “politics has unique emergent properties separate from psychology and sociology”; on the other, “politics emerges from and depends on society and individuals’ psyches.”<sup>7</sup> Hence, when hypothesizing about specific political processes, the unique emergent qualities of the layer being observed need to be accounted for while remaining mindful of the constraints imposed by other underlying layers. As other scholars have pointed out, just as chemists and physicists acknowledge the importance of accounting for the various chemical elements and physical forces when analyzing complex mechanisms and systems, IR scholarship must also recognize the simultaneous operation of these multiple causal logics.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See Beyer, “Globalizing Systems, Global Cultural Models and Religion(s)”; Haynes, *Religious Transnational Actors and Soft Power*; Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*; Jürgensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*; Spohn, “Multiple Modernity, Nationalism and Religion.”

<sup>4</sup> For deeper exposition of argument, see Fox, “Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations”; Marsden, *Religion and International Security*; Petito and Hatzopoulos, *Religion in International Relations*; Philpott, “Explaining the Political Ambivalence of Religion”; Seiple and Hoover, *Religion and Security*.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph and Wight, *Scientific Realism and International Relations*, 36.

<sup>6</sup> This analogy is developed further by Kaufman in “War as Symbolic Politics.”

<sup>7</sup> Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics,” 3.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph and Wight, *Scientific Realism and International Relations*; Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics.”

## Conceptualizing Religion, Nationalism, and Security

Before I flesh out the principal propositions on which the ethnoreligious othering framework rests, three key operational concepts need to be unpacked and established first: religion, nationalism, and security.

### Religion

Amid all the passionate philosophical and normative debates surrounding religion, the reality is that scholars and experts continue to debate about how to give the phenomenon a meaning that can capture its “exact” nature and essence. Some have even questioned the need to define religion at all, claiming that previous efforts invariably failed to effectively distinguish religion from other phenomena that also define and characterize collectivities across time, inspire fervent and fanatical loyalty, and bear a political agenda such as nationalism.<sup>9</sup> Given how inherently complex and essentially contested religion is as a concept, for this book, I adopt a broad definition of religion proposed by Chris Seiple, Dennis Hoover, and Pauletta Otis that is relatively free from philosophical individualism rooted in Western Enlightenment: “a belief in something greater than oneself—an apprehension and aspiration to the transcendent and to ethical clarity—which is often made manifest in rituals and institutions.”<sup>10</sup>

Such definition is comprehensive enough to accommodate most, if not all, of the vital elements of religion identified by philosopher William Alston, including: (1) a belief in a supernatural being(s); (2) prayers or communications with that or those beings; (3) transcendent realities, including “heaven,” “paradise,” or “enlightenment”; (4) a distinction between the sacred and the profane and between ritual acts and sacred objects; (5) a view that explains both the world as a whole and humanity’s proper relation to it; (6) a code of conduct in line with that worldview; and (7) a temporal community bound by its adherence to these elements.<sup>11</sup> Based on these formulations, as Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Shah noted, we can understand religion as encompassing a “combination of beliefs, behavior, and belonging in a community.”<sup>12</sup>

Far from being just derivative and epiphenomenal, religion is elemental and causal.<sup>13</sup> As a phenomenon, religion is deeply entrenched in much broader sociohistorical and politico-cultural contexts, providing an “integrated, systematized set of beliefs, behaviors, values, institutions, modes of communication, and

<sup>9</sup> Toft, Philpott, and Shah, *God’s Century*.

<sup>10</sup> Seiple, Hoover, and Otis, *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Alston, “Religion,” 140–45; see also Toft, “Getting Religion,” 99.

<sup>12</sup> Toft, Philpott, and Shah, *God’s Century*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> Seiple, Hoover, and Otis, *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security*.

leadership” that underpin conceptions of nationhood.<sup>14</sup> In the words of Joseph Liow, “it is also by this token that religion has currency in terms of the formation of the nation ... through how it is employed to inform narratives that, in turn, provide persuasive nationalist frames through which identity can be differentiated, and resistance articulated and mobilized.”<sup>15</sup>

To this extent, religion is instrumental for linking individuals to the greater whole and helping formal institutions define, organize, and legitimize that whole by offering “a meaningful worldview as well as the rules and standards of behavior that connect individual actions and goals to the worldview.”<sup>16</sup> As Amy Gutmann and Liow explained on separate occasions, “the enduring power of religion over people’s sense of identity can scarcely be doubted,”<sup>17</sup> especially if its role in the process of conceiving nationhood is “appreciated in the tradition of the nationalist enterprise of meaning production and the discursive formation of the nation.”<sup>18</sup>

### Nationalism

Like religion, the debates about the “true” character and purpose of nationalism have led to a wide variety of definitions and explanations. Yet, despite the sheer volume of literature on the subject, as Imanuel Geiss remarked, nationalism belongs to those “1001 themes on which not even two scholars are at one with each other.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith have ruminated on the complexity of nationalist discourse and noted that “there is little agreement about the role of ethnic, as opposed to political, components of the nation; or about the balance between ‘subjective’ elements like will and memory, and the more objective elements like territory and language, or about the nature of the role of ethnicity in national identity.”<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, scholars agree that such intricacies make nationalism highly resistant to one-dimensional conceptualizations and that it contains both opportunities and risks. On the one hand, nationalism can influence “personal and societal self-definition, a doctrine of freedom and sovereignty, or an agent in movements for freedom and emancipation,” but on the other, it can also contribute to “intolerance, arrogance, hostility, and oppression of other nations, and thus constructs new ‘us’–‘them’ boundaries.”<sup>21</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Otis, “Religion and War in the Twenty-First Century,” 17.

<sup>15</sup> Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Otis, “Religion and War in the Twenty-First Century,” 17.

<sup>17</sup> Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy*, 126–27.

<sup>18</sup> Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*, 11–12.

<sup>19</sup> Geiss as cited in Merdjanova, “In Search of Identity,” 234.

<sup>20</sup> Hutchinson and Smith, *Nationalism*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Merdjanova, “In Search of Identity,” 234–35; for more nuanced discussions on the nature and impact of nationalism, see also Bieber, “Is Nationalism on the Rise”; Gorski and Türkmen-Derivoğlu, “Religion, Nationalism, and Violence”; Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism.”



For this book, I espouse an understanding of nationalism proposed by Florian Bieber, that is, “a malleable and narrow ideology [based on principles of unity and identity] which values membership in a nation greater than other groups [e.g., political parties, gender divisions, or socio-economic classes], seeks distinction from other nations, and strives to preserve the nation and give preference to political representation by the nation for the nation.”<sup>22</sup> Although this nation may be perceived as a modern phenomenon, as Anthony Smith claimed, it is heavily dependent on the “the much longer time-spans of premodern ethnies [i.e., communities possessing shared traits that go on to form nations] and the survival of ethnic ties and ethnic mosaics from these periods into the modern world.”<sup>23</sup>

Given that they require premodern ethnic elements and are almost always founded on older, pre-existing ethnies, I adopt the view that nations are not entirely modern constructs. Thus, while nationalism may be conducive and tolerant to modernization and various forms of sociocultural development, it can also serve as a substitute for the artificial mythologization of the past and the instrumentalization of specific ethnic and religious cleavages.<sup>24</sup> The purpose of which is to address what Barbara-Ann Rieffer referred to as a “fundamental human need,” that is, having a secure and established identity with which individuals and groups can identify and connect with some part of the world.<sup>25</sup>

## Security

Similar to religion and nationalism, security remains a highly contested term in politics, as evidenced by the lack of consensus among experts and practitioners concerning its “precise” definition and understanding. Traditionally, the debate has been dominated by discussions about the scope of security, specifically between those who believe that its definition should be comprehensive (i.e., “expansionist”) and those who argue that it must be limited (i.e., “restrictionist”). Rethinking security in this manner, however, neglects the equally important issue of the primary referents. As far as the realist school is concerned, for as long as the state remains the supreme form of political organization and principal actor of domestic and international politics, the state will remain the chief provider and agent of security and, therefore, the rightful “referent object.”<sup>26</sup>

Such claims have been challenged from different directions. While some worry about the declining capacity of states to fulfill their primary functions, such as

<sup>22</sup> Bieber, “Is Nationalism on the Rise,” 2.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism”; Smith, “Culture, Community and Territory” and *Chosen Peoples*.

<sup>25</sup> Rieffer, “Religion and Nationalism,” 218.

<sup>26</sup> For in-depth discussion of realist accounts of security, see Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*; Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

providing national security, welfare, identity,<sup>27</sup> others question the legitimacy of those states that sow and propagate fear and violence against their own people and societies.<sup>28</sup> There is also the argument that the state must not be seen as an end goal in itself but an organizational mechanism intended to secure the life and freedom of the people and ensure their general well-being.<sup>29</sup> Viewed this way, security should primarily be about the protection not of the state per se but of the individuals, groups, and societies constituting it.

Hence, the book promotes an understanding of security that links together state-centric and human-centric dimensions to emphasize the mutually constitutive and reinforcing nature of state security and human security.<sup>30</sup> The idea is to recognize and include humans and societies in conceptualizing and analyzing security. Doing so requires the twin-process of widening (i.e., the inclusion of non-traditional, non-military security threats) and deepening (i.e., the opening of the field to accommodate other legitimate non-state referents, particularly the individuals, groups, and societies) of the security concept and realm.<sup>31</sup> This way, the misperception that state and human security are diametrically opposed or inherently incompatible is avoided, allowing experts and practitioners to view and appreciate security in multidimensional and multidirectional terms.

Such conception of security is underpinned by five critical assertions regarding its nature in the contemporary context. First, the distinctions between traditional, state-centric (i.e., military) and non-traditional, human-centric (i.e., non-military) security issues are not insurmountable.<sup>32</sup> Second, defining security strictly in terms of organized violence creates a false impression that those issues which do not necessarily entail force cannot be treated as security threats.<sup>33</sup> Third, limiting the discussion of security at the state level leads to a problematic view that security should not be analyzed at different non-state levels and with respect to different non-state referents.<sup>34</sup> Fourth, resisting the revision of the security concept amid changing domestic and international conditions undermines

<sup>27</sup> Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice*; Guéhenno, *The End of the Nation-State*; Rotberg, *When States Fail*.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report* which argued for the importance of recognizing and prioritizing human security.

<sup>29</sup> Christie, "Critical Voices and Human Security"; McFarlane and Khong, *Human Security and the UN*; and Newman, "Critical Human Security Studies" offer a broad range of reasons for the need to move beyond the narrow statist definition of security toward a more human-centric security concept.

<sup>30</sup> Magcamit, *Small Powers and Trading Security*.

<sup>31</sup> The debates on how to rethink and redefine the security concept and agenda are systematically explored in Krause and Williams, "Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies"; Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air"; Ullman, "Redefining Security."

<sup>32</sup> Acharya, "Human Security: East versus West"; Axworthy, "Human Security and Global Governance."

<sup>33</sup> Alagappa, *Asian Security Practice*; Krause and Williams, "Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies."

<sup>34</sup> Christie, "Critical Voices and Human Security."

its practical and analytical utility.<sup>35</sup> And fifth, the wide range of expertise required for addressing non-traditional threats underlines the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to security as opposed to delineating the boundaries of security based on specialization.<sup>36</sup>

### Constructing and Dissecting the Constitutive Structures of the *Ethnoreligious Othering* Causal Mechanism

Based on the preceding discussions, rather than assuming that all contemporary states and societies are unitary rational actors, my theorization of ethnoreligious othering begins with what psychology tells us about how people think and what sociology tells us about social life.<sup>37</sup> Hence, in constructing the framework and formulating its supporting propositions, I integrate the psychological dimensions of emotion, symbolic predisposition, and perception with the social dimensions of security, religion, and nationalism.

Figure 2.1 illustrates how a variety of material/rationalist, non-material/non-rationalist, and elite/instrumentalist factors (i.e., causes) lead to the activation of ethnoreligious othering and the eventual eruption of protracted internal and intrastate conflicts (i.e., outcome) by capturing and exposing the hidden three-part causal mechanism behind these events, namely: cultivation of hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism (Proposition 1-Stage 1), securitization of ethnoreligious others using hostile symbolic predispositions (Proposition 2-Stage 2), and sacralization of hostile perceptions of ethnoreligious identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states (Proposition 3-Stage 3).

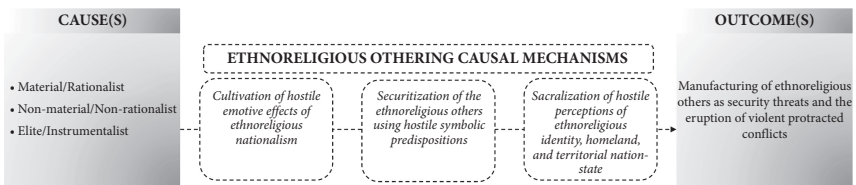


Fig. 2.1 A three-stage ethnoreligious othering causal mechanism framework

<sup>35</sup> King and Murray, "Rethinking Human Security"; Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air."

<sup>36</sup> Axworthy, "Human Security and Global Governance"; Christie, "Critical Voices and Human Security"; Krause and Williams, "Broadening the Agenda of Security Studies."

<sup>37</sup> This approach is based on the works of Kaufman including "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice" and "War as Symbolic Politics" and Petersen's *Understanding Ethnic Violence* and *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

## Stage 1: Cultivating the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism

**Proposition 1** *The two-way shared cultivation of chauvinistic ethnoreligious nationalism (emanating from the amalgamation of ethno-nationalist and religious factors and influences) between elite and non-elite actors (whether for tactical or substantive reasons) generates hostile emotive effects that induce rival groups within pluralistic polities to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic vis-à-vis identity and territory.*

Imagine how a person would feel if one day they wake up and realize that the place they consider their “birthright” homeland is on the verge of an irreversible demographic shift that will make a minority ethnoreligious group the new majority. If the image of that impending new order feels threatening, unsettling, and enraging to that person, then there is a good chance that they have been influenced by ethnoreligious nationalism, whether they realize it or not. Ethnoreligious nationalism results from the merging of ethnicized religious cultures and particularistic ethno-nationalist ideologies, which state and non-state agents cultivate and use not only for masking certain material interests but also for ascribing identity.<sup>38</sup>

While nationalism articulates the necessity of binding the state, territory, and culture together without defining the exact approach and substance of this amalgamation, ethnicity and religion offer distinct method and content by generating “models of authority” and “imaginings of an ordering power” affecting the various facets of life.<sup>39</sup> In short, whereas nationalism signifies a form with variable content, ethnicity and religion act as implements that specify the content of this form.<sup>40</sup> In this first stage of ethnoreligious othering, as **Proposition 1** states, the cultivation of competing forms of ethnoreligious nationalism generates hostile emotive effects that compel rival groups to acquire a zero-sum security logic as a means of survival.

This becomes particularly evident and salient amid structural changes precipitated by a myriad combination of material, non-material, and elite-driven causes similar to the hypothetical scenario described above. Such events create conditions that initiate the process of cognitive-emotive sequence, which underscores a “coherent flow among structure, cognition, the emotional mechanism, and the

<sup>38</sup> This view on the emergence and nature of ethnoreligious nationalism is drawn mainly from the works of Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism”; Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*; Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*; Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism”; Smith, *Chosen Peoples*.

<sup>39</sup> Friedland, “Religious Nationalism and the Problem of Collective Representation,” 39.

<sup>40</sup> See Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; Smith, “Nationalism and Classical Social Theory” and “Culture, Community and Territory.”

timing and target of action.”<sup>41</sup> When individuals develop beliefs that the new situation engenders discrepancies among groups and generates threats from another faction, certain types of emotions are triggered and precipitate changes in the saliency of specific desires. Here, *emotions* serve as “a mechanism that triggers action to satisfy a pressing concern” and operates to address situational challenges by (1) raising the saliency of one desire or concern over others, and (2) heightening the required cognitive and physical capabilities to respond to these challenges.<sup>42</sup>

Drawing on Nico Frijda’s view of emotions as “changes in action readiness to satisfy concerns,”<sup>43</sup> and David Franks and Victor Gecas’ interpretation of these elements as “a thought that becomes embodied because of the intensity with which it is laced with personal self-relevancy,”<sup>44</sup> Petersen defines emotion as a mechanism that explains shifts in motivation by mediating between cognition and desire which in turn, drives individuals to reach a recognizable goal.<sup>45</sup> Central to this conception is the understanding that individuals possess a repertoire of activation and deactivation mechanisms—emotions—that “change readiness physically and cognitively” by alerting them to modify their relationships in the environment.<sup>46</sup> For example, fear, hatred, and resentment can be examined in terms of action tendencies, that is, “as processes centered on an emotional mechanism facilitating individual action to satisfy an identified desire/concern.”<sup>47</sup> Cognition is viewed prior to the causal sequence for these three emotions where: “Beliefs about threat lead to fears; beliefs about status inconsistency lead to resentments; beliefs about history and vengeance lead to hatreds.”<sup>48</sup>

As Andrew Ortony, Gerald Clore, and Allan Collins have posited, “if an individual conceptualizes a situation in a certain kind of way, then the potential for a particular type of emotion exists.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, certain situations give rise to conceptualizations which, in turn, give rise to emotions. Such emotions are deemed to be “instrumental” precisely because they are capable of generating actions that directly meet urgent concerns in the form of threats: “fear prepares the individual to take action to reduce dangers in the environment; hatred prepares

<sup>41</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 30.

<sup>42</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 17–18.

<sup>43</sup> Frijda, *The Emotions*, 466.

<sup>44</sup> Frank and Geca, “Autonomy and Conformity in Cooley’s Self-Theory,” 8.

<sup>45</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 9–20.

<sup>46</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 18; see also Nussbaum, *The Intelligence of Emotions*; Hutto, “Truly Enactive Emotion”; Halperin, “Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution” and *Emotions in Conflict* for complementary explanations of how emotions serve as (de)activation mechanisms.

<sup>47</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 19.

<sup>48</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 21. Other scholars have also explored the linkages between emotions and social and cognitive factors and structures such as Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics* and “Conflicts and Social Psychology”; Halperin, Sharvit, and Gross, “Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Conflicts”; Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs” and “Social Emotion and Identity.”

<sup>49</sup> Ortony, Clore, and Collins, *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions*, 2.

the individual to attack previously identified enemies; resentment prepares the individual to rectify perceived imbalances in in-group status hierarchies.”<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, cognitive processes are perceived to be capable of directing actions toward specific targets that are sources of concern.

Once these instrumental emotions are produced, they create “feedback effects” that further reinforce those beliefs that have already been established. For example: “Once one is in the grip of fear, reports about danger and threat will crowd out other information. When one is in the clutch of resentment, indicators of group status constantly infiltrate one’s thoughts. Under hatred, long-dormant historical facts come to dominate thinking and discussion.”<sup>51</sup> It is worth emphasizing here that some types of emotion do not require a feedback loop (as in the instrumentalist path) to impact cognition.

Instead, these “non-instrumentalist” emotions can be differentiated from instrumentalist ones based on four main criteria: (1) cognitive distortions in the selection of targets, (2) the existence of clear substitute targets, (3) incoherent justifications for violence, and (4) difficulty in identifying a specific source beginning the process.<sup>52</sup> A primary example of this is rage which often results in misrepresentations in information collection and belief formation, thereby distorting cognition, particularly how targets are identified and labeled.<sup>53</sup> Whereas instrumentalist emotions are linked to specific sources and contexts of group relations, rage surfaces from general or multiple sources with no clear direction for action.<sup>54</sup>

Hence, while it also addresses pressing anxieties and concerns, rage produces “cognitive distortions” that result in irrelevant or counterproductive actions such as searching for scapegoats.<sup>55</sup> This intense urge to perpetrate violence generates a need to process available information intended to designate another individual or a group as the enemy and justify the violence against that target victim using diverse psychological mechanisms such as projection and attribution. Under this scenario, it is highly likely for some targets to be displaced or even permanently exiled, while others might be accidentally substituted as targets if the source of frustration or

<sup>50</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 29. For alternative instrumentalist analysis of such emotions, see Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Koschut, “The Structure of Feeling-Emotion Culture and National Self-Sacrifice in World Politics.”

<sup>51</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 22; see also Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, *Emotions and Beliefs*; Halperin, “Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution” and *Emotions in Conflict*; Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs.”

<sup>52</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 31; see also Berry, *Social Rage: Emotion and Cultural Conflict*. For in-depth examination of rage in conflict situations, see Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock, “Rage and Reason”; Pearce, “Religious Rage.”

<sup>53</sup> See Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock, “Rage and Reason”; Scheff and Retzinger, *Shame and Rage in Destructive Conflicts*.

<sup>54</sup> Scheff and Retzinger, *Shame and Rage in Destructive Conflicts*; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*.

<sup>55</sup> Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*.

vexation is unavailable for the attack.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, instead of alleviating the problem, such non-instrumental emotions could prevent individuals from directly and effectively tackling their most urgent concerns.

Note here that the elites do not have an absolute monopoly in deciding when and how to use the hostile emotive effects (e.g., fear, hatred, resentment, or rage) that emerge from the chauvinistic cultivation of ethnoreligious nationalism. The direction of influence goes both ways. While elite actors can undoubtedly develop and manipulate emotions to secure their ends, particularly in times of structural changes, it can also be the case that elite actions are responses to mass emotions amid structural shifts rather than shaping those emotions. Indeed, ordinary individuals also carry out multiple plausible motivations at different times based on these emotions, which work like a “switch” among a set of basic desires.<sup>57</sup>

In the words of Ivelin Sardomov, “Portraying millions of individuals in many societies as mindless robots who can easily be duped into assuming fictitious identities and sacrificing their own and others’ lives for the purposes of a small group of skillful self-serving manipulators represents an extremely simplistic and condescending view.”<sup>58</sup> On the contrary, the elites are not only “tactically” bound by ethnoreligious nationalism but can also be “substantively” influenced by its emotive effects. The day-to-day exchanges and interactions among regular people and the emotional content and weight of those lived experiences also shape elite behaviors and guide their conduct, thus making the chauvinistic cultivation of ethnoreligious nationalism and its resulting hostile emotive effects a two-way shared process.

Accordingly, such emotions are not just purely cognitive but are also inherently social and relational. They are generally expressed with respect to target groups and articulated in a language comprehensible to the referent groups, especially in contexts of shared experiences. Although they may be felt and experienced at the “inner state” level (i.e., individual), they are highly connected to further “entailments by which various subjects, objects, and acts have meaning.”<sup>59</sup> As Neta Crawford succinctly put it, emotions are “cognitively and culturally construed and constructed.”<sup>60</sup> They neither reside exclusively in the people’s minds nor do they come entirely from the social world.<sup>61</sup>

Such is the case with hostile emotions, which flow simultaneously from the internal “cognitive” realm toward external targets and from the external “social”

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, Anderson, “Religion and Violence: From Pawn to Scapegoat”; Glick, “Choice of Scapegoats”; Savun and Christian, “Threat Environment and Refugee Scapegoating.”

<sup>57</sup> This idea of emotions functioning as a switch is explained in detail by Petersen in *Understanding Ethnic Violence*.

<sup>58</sup> Sardomov cited in Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 36.

<sup>59</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, 92.

<sup>60</sup> Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics,” 125.

<sup>61</sup> See Ahmed, “Collective Feelings”; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Hutchison and Bleiker, “Theorizing Emotions in World Politics” for a comprehensive examination of the social aspects of emotions.

domain toward internal referents. On the one hand, the hostile emotions emanating from competing ethnoreligious nationalisms are constantly driving rival ethnoreligious group members to evaluate and appraise the significance of certain events, particularly the structural changes affecting their relative security, power, and status.<sup>62</sup> On the other, these hostile emotions and the chauvinistic behaviors attached to them are being learned and reinforced through social interactions of ethnoreligious group members both internally (among themselves) and externally (with the outsiders).<sup>63</sup> Therefore, emotions are not entirely natural. Instead, the natural is linked to the social via a continuum – ethnoreligious nationalism – that facilitates the growth, socialization, and institutionalization of context-specific hostile emotions.

For instance, in many pluralistic polities, ethnic, faith, and the land are typically depicted as fixed and indivisible components of individual being and collective survival. Consequently, the hostile emotions that are derived from and propagated through the chauvinistic doctrines, myths, dogmas, and norms (i.e., substructures) of ethnoreligious nationalism can engender a shared feeling among the elites and ordinary members of a particular group that they are all responsible for the survival and defense of their own imagined identity and homeland. That is: their shared fear prepares them to satisfy safety concerns, their shared hatred prepares them to act on historical grievance, their shared resentment prepares them to address status and self-esteem discrepancies, and their shared rage drives them to seek an outlet for their frustrations.<sup>64</sup>

Accordingly, crafting an emotive language that revitalizes and secures group identities and homelands has become fundamental to the salvation of rival factions. Ethnoreligious leitmotifs and symbols are constantly mined to build and entrench the foundations of the groups' imagined communities, enabling them to control their narratives and conceptions about themselves in relation to others and vice versa.<sup>65</sup> To this end, ethnoreligious nationalism provides the necessary affective lexicon which the elite and non-elite agents jointly construct and exploit to (1) initiate the othering of the target groups by serving as a fundamental reservoir of identity and morale, and (2) frame and legitimize calls for group action to revise or preserve the existing structural conditions affecting the rival groups' perceived well-being.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> See Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Halperin, Sharvit, and Gross, "Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Conflicts"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>63</sup> See Crawford, "Passion of World Politics"; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Holmes, "The Emotionalization of Reflexivity"; Hutchison and Bleiker, "Theorizing Emotions in World Politics."

<sup>64</sup> Based on Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*, 19.

<sup>65</sup> Drawn from Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Armstrong, "Religious Nationalism and Collective Violence"; Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism"; Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*.

<sup>66</sup> This argument is based on the synthesized works of Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism"; Friedland, "Religious Nationalism and the Problem of Collective Representation"; Fox, "The Rise of



The security value (toward insiders) and security curse (against outsiders) that it simultaneously generates ultimately work to protect and preserve a referent group's identity, homeland, and ideal conception of the nation-state at the expense of the othered groups. Ethnoreligious nationalism then becomes a matter of differentiating between legitimate and illegitimate identities and lawful and unlawful inhabitants. It provides a medium through which the collective emotions of an ethnoreligious group can be summoned to rally the ranks into actions against other forms of identity and versions of the homeland that threaten to undermine and delegitimize their existence. In doing so, it establishes the "chosen glories" and "chosen traumas" that must be glorified, the stories and symbols that must be venerated, and the relationships and loyalties that must be preserved, thereby suppressing all other sources and forms of histories, memories, and allegiances.<sup>67</sup>

## Stage 2 : Securitizing the ethnoreligious others using hostile symbolic predispositions

**Proposition 2** *This survivalist, zero-sum security logic, in turn, motivates the relevant state and non-state elites (e.g., political officials, ethno-nationalist leaders, religious chiefs) to securitize rival factions as threats to their security, power, and status (whether for tactical or substantive reasons) using their own hostile symbolic predispositions informed by the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism, and with the active participation and consent of their respective constituencies.*

Based on the classical formulation of Copenhagen School's securitization process, an issue is considered a security issue if framed as a threat to a specific political community: who we are is defined by the designation of "threatening" others. As Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde notably argued, security is self-referential in the sense that "an issue becomes a security issue, not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as a threat."<sup>68</sup> Hence, security is essentially a "speech act" because it is by articulating the security threats and identifying the legitimate referent objects of these threats that they are brought into being. Security, as Wæver put it, should not be understood as a sign that refers to something real and tangible, instead, "the utterance itself is the act ... by saying it, something is done."<sup>69</sup> By articulating certain issues as threats to survival, the securitizing agents—"placed in positions of power by

Religious Nationalism and Conflict"; Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?*; Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism."

<sup>67</sup> See Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging*; Smith, *Chosen Peoples*; Volkan, *Bloodlines*.

<sup>68</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 24.

<sup>69</sup> Wæver, "Securitization and Desecuritization," 55.

virtue of being generally accepted voices of security”—can employ “extraordinary measures” and suspend normal politics as means of dealing with those issues.<sup>70</sup>

However, as Matt McDonald pointed out, the *form* (with exclusive emphasis on the speech of dominant state actors), the *context* (with a sole focus on the moment of intervention), and *nature* (defined solely in terms of the designation of threats) of the *act* in the conventional securitization theory are all problematically narrow.<sup>71</sup> These analytical and normative constraints result in a partial account of the security construction or the process through which security and security threats are brought into existence in specific political contexts.

First, focusing only on speech acts ignores other crucial and valid forms of representation such as images, symbols, and material practices.<sup>72</sup> As Frank Möller noted, linguistic forms of “securitizing move,” while certainly the most essential, are only one channel through which meaning is communicated.<sup>73</sup> Exclusive reliance on language disregards bureaucratic practices or physical actions (both the mundane and extraordinary) not triggered by securitization speech acts but are nonetheless integral components of the mechanism through which meanings and interpretations of security are conveyed, and security itself is constructed.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, state elites cannot be the only legitimate securitizing actors as other influential non-state agents, including ethno-nationalist leaders, religious chiefs, and the media, also routinely take on this role.

Second, focusing only on the moment of intervention ignores the idea that security is constructed over time and via a series of incremental processes, which prevents us from clearly understanding why certain representations resonate with particular communities and how certain actors are either permitted or sidelined in “speaking security.”<sup>75</sup> Negotiations between the securitizing actor(s) and the constituency for whom the articulation is intended are necessary for securitization to be legitimate and effective, thereby making the act a two-way shared process.<sup>76</sup> Rather than being performed to, Ido Oren and Ty Solomon argued that “the audience participates in the performance in the manner in which a crowd at a rock concert sings along with the artists.”<sup>77</sup> This means that contextual factors such as the dominant narratives and symbols of ethnoreligious identity and homeland

<sup>70</sup> Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, 23; See also, Buzan and Wæver, *The Structure of International Security*.

<sup>71</sup> McDonald, “Securitization and the Construction of Security,” 13.

<sup>72</sup> McDonald, “Securitization and the Construction of Security”; see also Åhäll, “Images, Popular Culture, Aesthetics, Emotions”; Van Rythoven, “Learning to Feel, Learning to Fear?”; Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies.”

<sup>73</sup> Möller, “Photographic Interventions in Post-9/11 Security Policy.”

<sup>74</sup> See Hameiri and Jones, “The Politics and Governance of Non-Traditional Security”; Huysmans, “On Security Speech Acts and Little Security Nothings”; McDonald, “Securitization and the Construction of Security.”

<sup>75</sup> McDonald, “Securitization and the Construction of Security,” 570; see also Bigo, “Security and Immigration”; Stritzel, “Towards a Theory of Securitization.”

<sup>76</sup> See Balzacq, *Understanding Securitisation Theory*.

<sup>77</sup> Oren and Solomon, “Securitisation through Ritualised Incantation of Ambiguous Phrases,” 313.

cannot be dismissed given how they condition both the patterns of securitization and the broader construction of security.

And third, defining the nature of security construction exclusively in terms of threat designation undermines the centrality of how security (both as a normative agenda and an articulation of core values) is understood in specific contexts.<sup>78</sup> Understanding why some ethnoreligious groups are more likely to perceive certain actors and dynamics as threatening, or how historical narratives, cultural symbols, and identity images reinforce and legitimize particular forms of securitization requires proper attention to the underlying contexts in which specific security discourses become possible.<sup>79</sup>

Accordingly, adopting a looser understanding of traditional securitization (by relaxing its strict structure and requirements) as the discursive construction of security offers a more appropriate alternative. In this second phase of ethnoreligious othering, as **Proposition 2** states, when framing certain ethnoreligious factions as threats to a referent group's security, power, and status, the securitizing actors draw from the hostile symbolic predispositions informed by the hostile emotive effects of chauvinistic ethnoreligious nationalisms. These symbolic predispositions can be seen as "stable affective responses to particular symbols,"<sup>80</sup> which are "associated with different principled beliefs and different causal beliefs."<sup>81</sup>

Borrowing Jonathan Mercer's concept of "emotional belief," the hostile emotions of ethnoreligious nationalism, both instrumental and non-instrumental, "constitute and strengthen" these symbolic predispositions, thus making generalizations about particular ethnoreligious groups "with certainty beyond evidence" possible.<sup>82</sup> For instance, the hostile biases (in the form of prejudice, ideology, or value) being held by the in-group amplifies the *othering* of the out-group as sources of identity crisis, homeland instability, or existential anxiety. The zero-sum nature of these hostile predispositions generates a security dilemma on the part of the referent group, which necessitates the continued marginalization and weakness of the target group.

A fundamental assumption here is that most decision-making is done intuitively rather than rationally: it is emotion instead of purely "rational" calculation that is motivating people to act.<sup>83</sup> This is not to deny the vital role of rationality but, as Kaufman argues, "to explain why equally rational people given the same

<sup>78</sup> McDonald, "Securitization and the Construction of Security"; see also Balzacq, Léonard, and Ruzicka, "Securitization Revisited: Theory and Cases"; Huysmans, "Defining Social Constructivism in Security Studies."

<sup>79</sup> See Eroukhmanoff, "A Critical Contribution to the 'Security-Religion'"; Hansen, "Theorizing the Image for Security Studies"; Van Rythoven, "Learning to Feel, Learning to Fear?"

<sup>80</sup> Sears, "Symbolic Politics," 16.

<sup>81</sup> Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics," 4.

<sup>82</sup> Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs," 2.

<sup>83</sup> See Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice" and "War as Symbolic Politics"; Lodge and Taber, *The Rationalizing Voter*.

information frequently form opposing policy preferences for pursuing the interests of the same group or state.”<sup>84</sup> Indeed, symbols are powerful precisely because “they simultaneously refer to an interest and to an emotionally laden myth.”<sup>85</sup> Since attitudes that have been initially formed emotionally are more sensitive to emotional than to intellectual appeals,<sup>86</sup> ordinary people tend to choose emotionally among opposing values and leaders by reacting to the most evocative symbols depicted.<sup>87</sup>

To motivate people to take action, cunning politicians routinely evoke emotions (such as fear, resentment, hatred, and rage) by reinterpreting conflicts of interests as struggles for collective security, status, and future against the hostile, evil, or subhuman forces.<sup>88</sup> This helps explain why politicians’ rhetoric usually favors symbolic appeals to group identity, ideology, morals, or even prejudice over rational arguments.<sup>89</sup> As Drew Westen claimed, since political opinions are being shaped more by predispositions than facts, leaders are forced to make emotional appeals to those predispositions.<sup>90</sup>

Note, however, that predispositions have a two-way relationship with feelings of threat. Not only does an ambiguous behavior by an out-group likely to threaten the in-group who hold negative stereotypes about them, but even good and positive predispositions toward the out-group do not prevent the in-group facing an apparent threat from feeling threatened.<sup>91</sup> On the contrary, if members of the in-group feel under attack, that attack might just serve as a “psychological shock,” which can generate hostile predispositions.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, socio-psychological threats (e.g., to group resources, values, and status) also influence the insiders’ attitudes and perceptions toward the outsiders and, therefore, are just as crucial as physical threats.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, when a threat directly concerns and affects people’s safety, the adverse impact on political attitudes becomes particularly powerful—aggressiveness, intolerance, and ethnocentrism, among others.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics,” 4.

<sup>85</sup> Kaufman, “Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice,” 52.

<sup>86</sup> Edwards and von Hippel, “The Priority of Affective versus Cognitive Factors in Person Perception.”

<sup>87</sup> Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds* and “Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice”; Ross, “Identity Dynamics in Ethnic Conflict.”

<sup>88</sup> Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics”; Westen, *The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*.

<sup>89</sup> Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics.”

<sup>90</sup> Westen, *The Role of Emotion in Deciding the Fate of the Nation*.

<sup>91</sup> Alexander, Brewer, and Herrman, “A Functional Analysis of Out-Group Stereotypes”; Riek, Mania, and Gaertner, “Intergroup Threat and Outgroup Attitudes.”

<sup>92</sup> Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics,” 4; see also Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*, for a more detailed discussion.

<sup>93</sup> These social threats are their impact on day-to-day interactions between and among different groups examined in detail in Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*; Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Fierke, “Agents of Death” and *Political Self-Sacrifice*.

<sup>94</sup> Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics.”

And since the most crucial judgments vis-à-vis the different forms of threat happen and proceed collectively, group dynamics are incredibly vital.<sup>95</sup> Group perceptions of threat, according to David Snow and Robert Benford, proceed in three stages: (1) diagnostic, i.e., where the situation is identified, villains are labeled, and blame is projected; (2) prognostic, i.e., where solutions are proposed to address the problem at strategic, tactical, or individual levels; and (3) motivational, i.e., where collective action is mobilized by summoning the audience to participate in a movement.<sup>96</sup> On the one hand, without a credible leader to articulate it, a resonant frame will have no political impact, and on the other, shifting from opinion to political action requires organization, either formal institutions or informal social networks responsive to that leader.<sup>97</sup> Thus, factors such as the credibility of the frames and their sources, together with the predispositions of the target audience, determine whether the audience will believe and accept the frames and consequently feel threatened.<sup>98</sup> The more these frames resonate with the predispositions of the audience, the more support leaders are likely to receive.

Catarina Kinnvall's concept of the "abject-other,"<sup>99</sup> along with Sara Ahmed's notion of "strange encounters with the embodied others,"<sup>100</sup> and Judith Butler's frame on the "precariousness and grievability of life,"<sup>101</sup> help explain how the securitization of rival groups based on hostile symbolic predispositions shapes and reshapes collective understanding and interpretation of the *reality*. Manufacturing the others into enemies necessitates their systematic debasement and dehumanization, resulting in the perception of the others as being "dirty, despicable and worthless nonhuman."<sup>102</sup> This process allows the referent group to feel more secure and less anxious about its security and standing by assuring its members that they are inherently different and superior. Hostile conceptions and narratives of the *othered* become socially powerful and are accepted as the only correct and worthwhile perspectives.

With the reduction of the strangers into inhumanity, chauvinistic solutions believed to prevent the "dirty" and "evil" other from contaminating the "pure" and "holy" self are legitimized and defended. Over time, these perceived differences between ethnoreligious communities come to be seen as natural and intrinsic features that distinguish and separate the legitimate insiders from the illegitimate outsiders. To quote Robert Robins and Jerrold Post, "the movement must

<sup>95</sup> See Crawford, "Institutionalizing Passion in World Politics"; Hutchinson and Bleiker, "Emotions in the War on Terror"; Mercer, "Social Emotion and Identity."

<sup>96</sup> Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements."

<sup>97</sup> See Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*.

<sup>98</sup> Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics."

<sup>99</sup> Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism."

<sup>100</sup> Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*.

<sup>101</sup> Butler, *When Is Life Grievable*.

<sup>102</sup> Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism," 753.

strengthen its walls against the enemy from without and search for enemies within ... true belief does not permit question and doubt.”<sup>103</sup>

### Stage 3 : Sacralizing hostile perceptions of indivisible ethno-religious identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states

**Proposition 3** *With the successful cultivation of the hostile emotive effects of ethno-religious nationalism and effective securitization of the othered ethno-religious group using hostile symbolic predispositions, the state and non-state elites are now better positioned to solidify their groups’ legitimacy, authority, and primacy further (whether for tactical or substantive reasons) by sacralizing their hostile perceptions of indivisible ethno-religious identities, homelands, and nation-states.*

This third stage of ethno-religious othering underlines the focal referents of the hostile emotions and hostile symbolic predispositions cultivated and utilized in the first two stages: the sacred territorial homelands that anchor sacred identities. As **Proposition 3** states, with the successful cultivation of ethno-religious nationalism and effective securitization of target ethno-religious groups, state and non-state elites from rival camps maneuver to sacralize their ideal versions of ethno-religious identities, homelands, and nation-states to solidify further their groups’ legitimacy, authority, and primacy. They do this by attempting to embed their own ethno-religious *substructures* (i.e., doctrines, myths, dogmas, and norms) within the state’s underlying security *superstructures* (i.e., rhetoric, policies, strategies, and institutions).

In Toft’s theorization, a territory is both a material *object* that can be divided and exchanged and a non-material *subject* that cannot be split or traded.<sup>104</sup> Having effective control over a territory is crucial to states and ethno-religious groups precisely because both parties believe that their survival ultimately depends on it. While their ontological views about the relationship between territory and survival differ, as far as the latter is concerned, their territories are a defining feature of their identities—inseparable from their past and crucial to their continued existence as distinct tribes.<sup>105</sup> Here, territories are considered *homelands* that seem fixed in time and imagination, taking on meanings beyond their material and objective descriptions. Since these homelands contain the “fundamentals of culture and identity,” their cultural boundaries and boundedness must always be preserved.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Robins and Post, *Political Paranoia*, 94–95.

<sup>104</sup> See Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence* and “Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War.”

<sup>105</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*; see also Hassner’s “To Halve and to Hold” and *War on Sacred Grounds* for a parallel discussion on the indivisibility of sacred spaces.

<sup>106</sup> Morley and Robins, “No Place Like Heimat,” 8; see also “Smith States and Homelands” and “Culture, Community and Territory.”

Put differently, because homelands are indivisible attributes of collective identities and not mere objects to be exchanged, the othered groups' presence can be easily perceived as a threat. Thus, notwithstanding the territory's objective economic worth, rival ethnoreligious groups rationally view the right to control their respective homelands as a survival issue. This homeland principle—the idea that people who are historically rooted and attached to the land under question have the right to control it—encompasses notions of “investment” and “tenure” that are routinely employed to justify group mobilization in the face of threats and insecurities. Investment pertains to the contributions of a group to a specific territory in which “a group's development or sacrifice in defense of the land may be advanced in order to establish a legitimate claim to its control.”<sup>107</sup> Meanwhile, tenure is based on the “identity of the first people to inhabit a territory,” thereby affording the predecessor group of the first ethnic settlers significant claims over the right to control the territory.<sup>108</sup>

Crucial to the legitimacy of a group's claims over its investment and tenure vis-à-vis a territory is the principle of majority rule. Toft specifies three reasons why: (1) wherever democracy is considered legitimate, claims based on majority status are also regarded as legitimate; (2) a majority rule enables both participants and outside observers in a dispute to agree more quickly on whether a group constitutes a majority (i.e., 50 percent or more of the population in a given region) than on the validity of investment or tenure; and (3) a majority rule is often effective in facilitating group mobilization given the greater immunity that goes with action in large numbers.<sup>109</sup>

For ethnoreligious groups, having effective control over these homelands guarantees and protects not only their economic and political resources but also their rights to speak their languages, express their own cultures, and practice their faiths. Therefore, it is not surprising why individual members, particularly the most nationalist and religious among them, would be willing to sacrifice not only their lives but also the lives of their sons and daughters just to establish control and remain in their homeland.<sup>110</sup> To them, the occupation of and power over a territory is inseparable from their very existence and identity, making threats to homeland tantamount to threats to survival.

Consequently, many would rather risk death than live on without this concept and sense of identity, transforming the deaths and failures of those who

<sup>107</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, 23; see also Agnew, *Place and Politics*; Kaiser, “Homeland Making and the Territorialization of National Identity.”

<sup>108</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, 24. For a more anthropological conceptualization of territory, see Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*; Van den Berghe, “Territorial Behavior in a Natural Human Group.”

<sup>109</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, 24. Horowitz, “Ethnic Power Sharing” and Smith, “Ethnic Nationalism and the Plight of Minorities” also explore the issues concerning “democratic” power-sharing between the majority and minority groups within pluralistic polities.

<sup>110</sup> Johnson and Toft, “Grounds for War”; Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.”

have sacrificed themselves into martyrdom and victory.<sup>111</sup> As Mark Juergensmeyer put it, “Those who accept that their life struggles are part of a great struggle, a cosmic war, know that they are part of a grand tale that will ultimately end triumphantly, though not necessarily easily or quickly. . . . Happy ending may indeed be long delayed—perhaps until after one’s lifetime or after the lifetime of one’s descendants.”<sup>112</sup>

Interestingly, while few (if at all) question the rationality and heroism of state soldiers who offer themselves to save their countries, leaders, and comrades in arms, many consider the ordinary folks who sacrifice themselves in defense of their ethnoreligious identity and homeland as senseless and selfish.<sup>113</sup> Yet, given this intrinsic linkage between homeland territory and identity preservation, especially when the state is not an expression of the ethnoreligious group, such a strong attachment to the homeland cannot be simply dismissed as irrational.<sup>114</sup> On the contrary, self-sacrifice in expectation of proportionately larger and more transcendent benefits can be seen as a logical act.<sup>115</sup> The closer that one identifies with a person or an object, the more that self-sacrifice becomes logical.<sup>116</sup> What matters most is that the people who live there think of the land as a part of themselves or, as Toft would put it, “Divide it or share its control and you may as well hack off an arm or leg: what survives would be qualitatively different.”<sup>117</sup>

This situation is particularly relevant in countries with relatively more recent and fragile territorial boundaries due to their experience with colonialism. In many of these polities, ethnoreligious elites are often seen as the primary custodians of the “national” identity and homeland. Views about right and wrong or good and evil are guided by the different ethnoreligious substructures, which different groups continuously observe. Because belief systems are deeply ingrained into the individual thought process and societal consciousness, any threat to their infallibility is commonly suppressed or ignored.<sup>118</sup>

When confronted with issues that question a person or a group’s constitution of being, those at risk cannot afford to be too rational with their response. And this makes the ethnoreligious elites seem more credible and trustworthy than their

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Fattah and Fierke, “A Clash of Emotions”; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Hafez, “Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers”; Koschut, “The Structure of Feeling—Emotion Culture and National Self-Sacrifice in World Politics.”

<sup>112</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 205; see also Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*.

<sup>113</sup> Fattah and Fierke, “A Clash of Emotions”; Toft, “Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War.”

<sup>114</sup> This point is covered extensively by Hassner in “To Halve and to Hold” and *War on Sacred Grounds*; and by Toft in *Geography of Ethnic Violence* and “Issue Indivisibility and Time Horizons as Rationalist Explanations for War.”

<sup>115</sup> Fierke, “Agents of Death”; Hafez, “Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers”; Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.”

<sup>116</sup> Fattah and Fierke, “A Clash of Emotions”; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*.

<sup>117</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, 46.

<sup>118</sup> Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism*; Wentz, *Why Do People Do Bad Things in the Name of Religion*.



political counterparts and, in turn, gives their rhetoric more weight than secular political discourse.<sup>119</sup> By acting as powerful norm and discourse entrepreneurs, they are able to facilitate a considerable degree of attitudinal conformity among their followers and supporters.<sup>120</sup> Such social power transforms them into “divine authorities,” enabling them to influence even the political agents responsible for crafting the state’s security superstructures, especially those who are also members of the group.

This indicates that the political elites are not simply politicizing ethnoreligious substructures in pursuit of their interests. Their conduct of politics and the political channels through which they operate are also being infiltrated and constrained by these so-called “non-material” and “non-rational” elements. Hence, while they certainly have some strategic interests, it is also highly plausible that some genuine motivations are driving them. It cannot be simply assumed that the political elites do not believe in their group’s ethnoreligious cause or that the ordinary people are just passive victims of elite manipulation and predation. To do so is to misread and miscalculate both the nature and power of ethnoreligious nationalism. Even when they try to manipulate and exploit these ethnoreligious substructures, their constructions “become embedded in history, perception, and interpretation,” which means that they also become “beholden to this constructed reality if they want to stay in power.”<sup>121</sup>

To this extent, the sacralization of indivisible ethnoreligious identities and territories is also a two-way shared process. In pluralistic polities where “national identity” is conflated with the ethnicity and the religion of the majority, for example, the situation becomes more severe and pronounced. On the one hand, the majority’s ethnoreligious myths and doctrines heavily inform the security rhetoric and policies that are crafted by the state elites. On the other, the security strategies and institutions that these state officials end up implementing further legitimize and entrench the norms and dogmas associated with the majority ethnoreligious cluster. In short, state elites do not hold exclusive power over the construction of their ethnoreligious group’s interests, the latter’s interests also influence and dictate their decisions and actions. As such, their capacity to make or negotiate concessions is significantly reduced as they become “captive to the policies and discourses that helped them gain power.”<sup>122</sup>

This implanting of ethnoreligious nationalism when conceptualizing and crafting the state’s security superstructures sacralizes the dominant groups’ preferred versions of identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state while desacralizing those of the othered groups. Over time, the ethnoreligious substructures acquired

<sup>119</sup> Bosco, *Securing the Sacred*; Haynes, *Religious Transnational Actors and Soft Power*.

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, Karyotis and Patrikios, “Religion, Securitization and Anti-Immigration Attitudes.”

<sup>121</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, 9, 140.

<sup>122</sup> Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*, 140; see also Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*.

by the members of the majority group and the security superstructures developed out of these become axiomatic components of nation-state building. This makes the existing order seem right and natural, one that must be preserved despite the systematic marginalization of the “polluted” others. Oppositions against this majority-centric arrangement are often interpreted as a rebellion against the nation’s “god” and its most favored people and, therefore, are treated as national “security threats.”<sup>123</sup>

And since self-identity and territorial homeland are deemed indivisible components of survival, ethnoreligious groups believe in some form of a “just war.”<sup>124</sup> War and bloodshed are seen as regrettable, albeit necessary instruments for protecting the “purity” of the identity and the “sacredness” of the homeland. Determining the legitimate daughters and sons of the soil is a paramount and contentious issue that leads to the symbolic rejection and social expulsion of the others into the zone of killing. And the more that the other groups are vilified and excluded, the more they are forced to reexamine and revisit their respective ethnies and faiths on which they could build and anchor their own identities and homelands. Yet, these hostile perceptions of purity, chosenness, and sanctity rationalize both the ideology of the ensuing just war and the method for waging the war against the “alien” entities and their territories. The goal of which is to perfectly align a group’s ethnoreligious identity and homeland together to resemble a congregation where all members “sing the same hymns, listen to the same gospel, share the same emotions, linked not only to each other but to the dead beneath their feet.”<sup>125</sup>

## Conclusion

Synthesizing logically interdependent theories and assumptions on security, religion, and nationalism, on the one hand, and emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions, on the other, the ethnoreligious othering framework consists of and proceeds in three interconnected stages. In Stage 1, the two-way shared cultivation of chauvinistic ethnoreligious nationalisms by elite and non-elite actors generates hostile emotive effects which induce rival groups within pluralistic polities to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic vis-à-vis their identities and homelands. In Stage 2, this survivalist, zero-sum security logic, in turn, motivates the relevant state and non-state elites to securitize the rival factions as threats to group security, power, and status using hostile symbolic predispositions informed by the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalisms, and with

<sup>123</sup> Bilgin, “Sacralisation”; Karyotis and Patrikios, “Religion, Securitization and Anti-Immigration Attitudes.”

<sup>124</sup> See Elstains, *Just War Theory*; and Hassner, “Islamic Just War Theory and the Challenge of Sacred Space in Iraq” for theoretical and empirical discussions of just war in conflict contexts.

<sup>125</sup> Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging*, 95.

the active participation and consent of their respective constituencies. And in Stage 3, following the successful cultivation of ethnoreligious nationalisms and effective securitization of ethnoreligious others, state and non-state elites consolidate their groups' legitimacy, authority, and primacy by sacralizing their claimed ethnoreligious identities and homelands.

By merging these complementary propositions drawn from the political, sociological, and psychological strands of conflict theorizing within a single logic, the framework enables a more holistic yet still nuanced, accurate, and systematic method for explaining ethnoreligious otherings and violent protracted conflicts. As will be demonstrated in the succeeding case chapters, this ethnoreligious othering process is the engine that drives the reimagination and reconstruction of specific ethnoreligious communities into existential security threats. Its three constitutive structures—that are simultaneously emitting and powered by emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions—collectively function as channels through which the existing relations and prevailing arrangements between the insiders and the outsiders are either challenged or strengthened.

Accordingly, these hidden causal mechanisms are central to understanding how internal and intrastate conflicts eventually erupt and protract in pluralistic polities. Without a serious appreciation for these elements and mechanisms, violent clashes between rival ethnoreligious communities are bound to re-emerge and remain entrenched over long periods, trapping them into a vicious cycle of mass hostility, security dilemma, and chauvinist mobilization.

## Dinner with an Ex-terrorist Bomber in Jakarta: *Otherings and Conflicts* in Indonesia

“I regret doing it.” These were some of the first few words the came out of Sulaymān’s (not his real name) mouth once we started the interview in a secluded section of one of those nondescript Padang restaurants in downtown Jakarta. “I regret being a part of the Jemaah Islamiyah group that carried out the attack in Bali in 2002. We killed hundreds of innocent people—Australians, Indonesians, British—and there is nothing that I can do to bring back their lives,” he continued, his eyes trying to avoid mine. Nervous, I asked, “why did you do it in the first place,” which somehow registered in an accusatory tone. “Because at that time, I thought I was doing my obligation as a faithful mu-jahideen, and that is to fight for justice. Our leader told us that it was our duty to defend Islam against the United States for its war in Iraq and Australia for its role in East Timor. As you know, most people in those two countries are Christians and are also fierce protectors of the Jews. Growing up, I was taught by my parents and the Muslim elders around me never to trust and rely on these people because they were our greatest enemies. That is why I went to Afghanistan and trained how to become a faithful Muslim fighter. That was my dream. To fight for Allah and his people.”

“And did you think that by participating in the Bali bombing, you were fulfilling that dream of fighting for Islam and the Muslims?” I interjected. Pondering on the question, Sulaymān paused for a few minutes and concentrated his gaze on the glass of water in front of him. “You mentioned earlier that you regretted your participation in the Bali attack, but may I ask why? Wasn’t that a part of what you had trained for or perhaps had hoped to accomplish when you decided to train in Afghanistan?” Another minute passed by before he finally responded, this time sounding a bit embarrassed, albeit defiant,

“Well, in hindsight, I admit that what we did in Bali was terrorism. It was a mistake on our part. We miscalculated our intelligence and acted based on our wrong interpretations of the Qur’an. But when I was living in Afghanistan, I experienced the beauty of Muslim brotherhood, so I thought that what we were being asked to do was for my brothers in Islam.” Before I could ask my follow-up question, the person who introduced me to Sulaymān and gracefully volunteered to be my interpreter for the evening signaled for us to start eating. Perhaps reading what was running through my head as I pretended to look interested in the wide variety of Sumatran food laid on our table, Sulaymān proceeded, “I knew I got it wrong before, but the Bali experience taught me important lessons. I will continue preaching about the correct Islam and our Prophet until I die because it is the one true religion. The Bible keeps changing, but the Qur’an has remained the same. Indonesian Muslims need more Islam in our lives, not less, because Islam is what makes us who we are as Indonesians, not Christianity, not Judaism or any other religion, only Islam. This is what my fellow Indonesians need to understand, especially those who are not yet Muslims.”

Author’s field notes, August 18, 2017, Jakarta, Indonesia

### **Cultivating the Indonesian Islamic (vs. Othered Christian) Nationalism**

Despite the perceived strength of secularism in Indonesia, distinctive forms of ethnoreligious nationalism have always been integral to the conception and construction of the “Indonesian” identity, homeland, and nation-state. The absence of other unifying vehicles such as language, history, or a profound awareness of a common territory made ethnicity and religion the binding forces that gave form and substance to the people’s struggles toward imagining and creating Indonesia, particularly during its nesting years.<sup>1</sup> Against this backdrop, the following discussions demonstrate how the emotive causal mechanism of ethnoreligious othering (Stage 1) facilitated the hostile cultivation of competing Islamic and Christian nationalisms within Indonesia’s pluralistic polity. Amid the presence of competing ethnoreligious nationalisms, the structural changes that occurred throughout the country’s history—from the Dutch colonization to the emergence and collapse of Suharto’s New Order, all the way to the *reformasi* period and the present

<sup>1</sup> Aspinall and Berge, “The Break-Up of Indonesia?”; Hamayotsu, “Islam and Nation Building in Southeast Asia”; Hoey, “Nationalism in Indonesia”; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*.

era—compelled members of the rival factions to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic vis-à-vis their ideal identity and homeland.

Specifically, the mutual fear between the Muslim and Christian communities prepared them to satisfy safety concerns. Their mutual hatred prepared them to act on historical grievances. Their mutual resentment prepared them to address status and self-esteem discrepancies. And their mutual anger and rage drove them to seek outlets for their frustrations. Together, these hostile emotions heightened the gravity and urgency of the “security threat” personified by the ethnoreligious others. This discussion with a former member of the Jemaah Islamiyah group demonstrates how such episodes of structural shift (precipitated by combinations of material, non-material, and elite/instrumental factors) initiated a process of cognitive–emotive sequence that drove his group to tackle the source of their concern decisively:

In Indonesia, the Christians have become very powerful because of the many historical events that took place in our country... . Even though Indonesia is a majority Muslim country, many of us are poor, do not have jobs, are not educated, and do not have power... . Indonesia has always been an Islamic nation. But because of the Dutch colonizers, the natural balance changed, and now the Christians gained so much at the expense of the Muslims. I felt that we needed to correct the situation and restore the original balance of power between the Muslims and the Christians... . Many of us have resented the rights and privileges that the Christians have been enjoying at our expense ... we hated how the Muslims were being portrayed as the bad guys... . We feared that if we didn't act and do something to save Islam and protect our honor as Muslims ... we would eventually be defeated even in our own homeland. We had no choice but to fight back to save the Muslims in Indonesia from the threat of western Christianization.<sup>2</sup>

Here, we see how certain types of emotion can serve as mechanisms for shifting individual and group motivations by mediating between cognition and desire. More accurately, these hostile emotions derived and cultivated from either Islamic or Christian nationalism can mobilize group members into actions against other forms of identity and versions of the homeland deemed to undermine and delegitimize their existence. But while they are individually experienced, these emotions are highly connected to further “entailments” by which different subjects, objects, and acts are cognitively interpreted and culturally constructed.<sup>3</sup> In other words, emotions are not just exclusively in the minds of individuals nor originate entirely from the social realm.<sup>4</sup> Rather than just being purely cognitive, such hostile

<sup>2</sup> Author's interview, August 18, 2017, Indonesia.

<sup>3</sup> Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics”; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmed, “Collective Feelings”; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Hutchison and Bleiker, “Theorizing Emotions in World Politics.”

emotions are significantly interconnected and socialized since they are typically expressed with respect to a target group and articulated in a language that is comprehensible to the referent group, especially in contexts of shared experiences.

In the case of Indonesian Muslims, for example, prior to the establishment of various Islamic resistance groups, expressions of burgeoning anti-Dutch sentiments in the earlier periods of their colonial rule had already adopted certain ethnoreligious undertones. This was evident during the *Padri War* (1803 and 1837) in West Sumatra, between the reformist Muslim clerics who wanted to impose *Shari'a* in Minangkabau and abolish all “un-Islamic” customary laws found in the *adat*, and the traditional chiefs and nobility of the region who were supportive of these indigenous rights and pre-Islamic practices.<sup>5</sup> Through intensifying transnational interactions (particularly those linked to the *Hajj*), the emerging Islamic political thought and social activism from the Middle East and North Africa reached the Indonesian shores, stimulating the growth of patriotic feelings and collective aspirations articulated in deep ethnoreligious terms.<sup>6</sup> This marked the beginning of the instrumentalization of *ethnie* and faith as signifiers of a developing “national” identity, guiding the constructions of narratives and discourses of character affirmation and opposition toward Dutch colonialism.

Islam provided the emotional reservoir mined by local Muslim elites and ordinary people alike to cultivate their Islamic “Indonesian” nationalism and the linguistic device used to assert the formation of an independent Islamic nation-state. In the process, the Islamic faith became a sacred symbol of an imagined national community, and the Muslim identity became the icon of militant resistance against the colonial regime’s exploitations. The birth of Islamic organizations such as the *Sarekat Islam*, *Muhammadiyah*, and *Persi* in the twentieth century had further advanced this fermenting Islamic nationalism, as they undertook serious strides in molding the content and course of the ethno-nationalist revolution, as well as in training their members in becoming fervent Muslims and faithful citizens of the impending Indonesian nation-state.<sup>7</sup> The emotional impacts of this Islamic nationalism on many Indonesian Muslims are clearly exemplified in these interviews with some of the ordinary citizens:

My faith in Allah and Islam is encoded in my genes. It runs in my blood. It is hard to understand it if you refuse to be a part of this grand vision and mission, but to put it simply, it is my reason for living. I live and breathe because of Allah, and my hope is that Allah is living through me... I know deep down in my heart that I am destined to be a Muslim here in Indonesia and nowhere else.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Van Klinken, “The Maluku Wars” and *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia*.

<sup>6</sup> Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia*; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*.

<sup>7</sup> Federspiel, *Islamic Reform in Twentieth Century Indonesia*.

<sup>8</sup> Author’s interview, October 23, 2019, Indonesia.

Being an Indonesian Muslim is one of the greatest gifts that any human being can ever receive from Allah in this lifetime. To be born as a Muslim in Indonesia is a tremendous honor... . We believe that it is only through Islam that we can find genuine love, peace, and security. Islam is the core foundation of our being Indonesians. Without Islam to guide us, we cannot fulfill our duties and our responsibilities as Indonesians.<sup>9</sup>

I do not know what I will do with my life if I am not a Muslim. The thought of being a member of different religion like Christianity makes me uncomfortable and insecure. Islam gives me peace of mind and security. It is through Islam that I am able to live a happy and meaningful life. It is what defines me as a person and as an Indonesian. Through Islam, I am able to love Indonesia even more.<sup>10</sup>

Here, we see the enormous influence of ethnoreligious emotions on individuals and societies' attitudes, actions, and motivations, thus making them powerful engines of human behavior.<sup>11</sup> The more people identify themselves with a particular ethnoreligious community, the more they tend to feel and live these emotions on behalf of the group members.<sup>12</sup> Given this socio-cultural aspect of emotion, the personal victimization and maltreatment of a Muslim by a Christian, for example, is enough for the entire Muslim community to assimilate and experience collective hostile emotions against the Christians.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, the mutual fear, hatred, resentment, anger, or rage between the rival Muslim and Christian factions represent "context-sensitive shared expectations"<sup>14</sup> prescribed by ethnoreligious community members for particular social settings. They are crucial for regulating attitudes and behaviors that are deemed undesirable while promoting the group's ideal cultural features and values, thus reconstituting and reinforcing the very same sets of thought and belief from which they are formed.<sup>15</sup> To the extent that these hostile emotions guide the reimagination of being (i.e., meaning) and renegotiation of status (i.e., belonging) of a target group within a pluralistic polity, they can be viewed as a form of world-making.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Author's interview, October 23, 2019, Indonesia.

<sup>10</sup> Author's interview, October 22, 2019, Indonesia.

<sup>11</sup> Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Frijda, *The Emotions*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*.

<sup>12</sup> See Bar-Tal, *Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Smith, "Social Identity and Social Emotions" for an in-depth exploration of this point on shared social emotions.

<sup>13</sup> This inference is drawn from the findings of the studies conducted by Halperin, "Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution"; Mackie, Devos, and Smith, "Intergroup Emotions"; Smith, Serger, and Mackie, "Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level?"

<sup>14</sup> Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics," 129.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, *Emotions and Beliefs*; Harré, *The Social Construction of the Emotions*; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs."

<sup>16</sup> This idea of viewing emotions as a form of world-making is explored extensively in Fierke's *Political Self-Sacrifice*.



This has been particularly evident in Indonesia when the universal applicability and effectiveness of Islam's emotional vernacular was substantially undercut by Christianity's successful expansion in eastern parts of the archipelago. The transfer of the former Netherlands East Indies' administration from the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) to the Dutch government coincided with the reformation of orthodox Christianity and the rise to power of the Anti-Revolutionary Party headed by Abraham Kuyper, who served as a prime minister from 1901 to 1905. As a reformed theologian himself, Kuyper authorized the Dutch, German, and North American missionaries to bolster their evangelization efforts, believing that the indigenous Christian folks were easier and more loyal subjects than the Muslims.<sup>17</sup> Although the gradual progression of Christianity made the Muslims wary and suspicious of the Christians, at that time, they did not expect that the latter would pose severe risks to Islam's dominance and their position within the Indonesian society.<sup>18</sup>

But as the anti-colonial movement began to ignite and confront the rulers of the Dutch East Indies, the notion of an ever-expanding Christian influence and entitlement exposed the underlying distrust, resentment, and hostility that were increasingly felt by the majority of Muslims.<sup>19</sup> The persistent fear of *Kristenisasi* (Christianization) on the part of Muslim conservatives and the widespread view of Christians as Dutch collaborators had amplified and entrenched the underlying ethnoreligious divide between the two groups further and would eventually provoke fierce discussions about how to conceive and construct Indonesia's post-colonial nation-state.<sup>20</sup> Interview responses from some professional Muslims underscore these deeply entrenched sentiments, which have lasted for generations and persist today:

I also often ask that question to myself—how would I feel if I wake up tomorrow and realize that the Christians have outnumbered the Muslims in Indonesia. My honest answer is that I would definitely feel threatened, betrayed, and enraged. . . . Having been educated, I do not necessarily believe those stereotypes about Christians. I think a lot of them are decent and conscientious people. But I value my own faith and my community more than anything else, so the idea that the Christians might outnumber us if we do not keep them in check is unsettling and upsetting for me.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; Van Klinken, *Minorities, Modernity and the Emerging Nation*.

<sup>18</sup> Abuza, *Political Islam and Violence in Indonesia*; Van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia*.

<sup>19</sup> Feillard and Madinier, *Indonesian Islam and the Temptations of Radicalism*; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*.

<sup>20</sup> Arifianto, "Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia"; Laffan, *Islamic Nationhood and Colonial Indonesia*; Liddle, "The Islamic Turn in Indonesia."

<sup>21</sup> Author's interview, October 4, 2019, Indonesia.

... I come from a family of freedom fighters, and so I grew up listening to these stories about how my grandparents and great grandparents were betrayed by their Christian neighbors. This is why I still feel some kind of animosity and resentment toward them, even though it did not happen to me personally. I still remember the hurt in the eyes of my grandfather every time he would recount his experiences during that time... . Maybe they will not admit it, but if given a chance, I think many Christians would still want to Christianize the whole of Indonesia. That possibility always makes me suspicious of them despite wanting to see them differently.<sup>22</sup>

Here, we see how certain group-based emotions being experienced by members of competing ethnoreligious communities become expressions of their insecurities toward each other and manifestations of their vulnerabilities in relation to situations beyond their control. This implies that hostile emotions can also be seen as rational reactions to the crucial events in the lives of ethnoreligious group members, particularly in times of structural change that often result in the loss of balance and order.<sup>23</sup> Rather than dismissing these emotional experiences and their behavioral and political outcomes as irrational, they can be understood as the externalities of events that are routinely being “appraised and emotionally responded to” when all the community members’ prior cognitive and emotional dispositions are considered.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, even the vague actions or behaviors by an out-group can be interpreted as serious threats by the in-group when its previous collective victimization and shared hostility vis-à-vis the former are accounted for.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, as the chief architects of the newly independent, albeit fledgling Indonesian government soon found out, the fragmentation of domestic politics along sharp ethnoreligious cleavages was a massive thorn to Muslim and Christian relations. When Indonesia achieved its independence on August 17, 1945, the political successors and other elites were split between two polarized factions. One group wanted a nationalist, secular state, while the other fought for a traditional, conservative Islamic state. The brewing antipathy between the two sides finally exploded when the latter demanded that the preamble of the Indonesian Constitution (known as *Piagam Jakarta* or the Jakarta Charter) should read as: “a Republic

<sup>22</sup> Author’s interview, October 4, 2019, Indonesia.

<sup>23</sup> Fattah and Fierke, “A Clash of Emotions”; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs”; Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought*.

<sup>24</sup> See, Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed investigation of how the dynamics collective sense of victimization engender shared hostile emotions, see Bar-Tal et al., “A Sense of Self-Perceived Collective Victimhood in Intractable Conflicts”; Noor et al., “The Psychology of Competitive Victimhood between Adversarial Groups in Violent Conflicts”; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*.

founded on the principles of the Belief in One God, with the obligation for adherents of Islam to practice Islamic law.”<sup>26</sup> The conservatives also insisted on inserting additional clauses that would make Islam the only official religion and require the president of the republic to be “a native-born Indonesian who is a Muslim.”<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile, the opposition warned about the possible secession of regions in Eastern Indonesia with substantial Christian populations (such as North Sumatra, Kalimantan, North and West Sulawesi, and the Moluccas) if these sections were adopted in the new Constitution.<sup>28</sup> The Christian fight against the institutionalization of a highly sectarian order was backed by some secular Muslim leaders who were leaning toward a more flexible assertion of the republic’s religious persona and against the forceful espousal and implementation of *Shari’a* laws.<sup>29</sup> Fueled by their long-standing grievances toward disproportionate Javanese dominance and their anxieties over the looming *Islamisasi* (Islamization), the Christians had lobbied clandestinely albeit effectively against the advocates of the Jakarta Charter.<sup>30</sup> After intense deliberations, the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence decided to adopt the Jakarta Charter without the *Shari’a* clause to promote a more “holistic” form of theism.

This decision was consistent with the *Pancasila* principles articulated earlier by President Sukarno in his speech to the Committee for the Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence on June 1, 1945.<sup>31</sup> According to the former president, the constitution of post-independence Indonesia must be anchored on five universal principles and shared values, namely: a belief in the one and only God; a just and civilized humanity; the unity of Indonesia; consultative democracy; and social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the omission of the *Shari’a* article, pursued under the pretext of *Pancasila*, was deemed necessary for ensuring the growth and security of the infant nation-state’s conceptual cohesion and material integrity.

Notwithstanding these intentions, however, the ultimate rejection of the much-debated clause engendered a deep sense of betrayal on the part of Islamist nationalist groups who believed that given Indonesia’s status as the world’s largest country with the biggest Muslim population, the nation-state must be essentially Islamic both in form and in character. In addition, considering the significant role

<sup>26</sup> Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia*, 26; see also Bishku, “Sukarno, Charismatic Leadership and Islam in Indonesia” and Kahin, “Natsir and Sukarno: Their Clash over Nationalism, Religion and Democracy” for supplemental readings.

<sup>27</sup> Arifianto, “Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia,” 79.

<sup>28</sup> Elson, “Another Look at the Jakarta Charter Controversy of 1945”; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*.

<sup>29</sup> Arifianto, “Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia”; Elson, “Another Look at the Jakarta Charter Controversy of 1945.”

<sup>30</sup> Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*.

<sup>31</sup> Palmier, “Sukarno, the Nationalist”; Van der Kroef, “Sukarno, the Ideologue.”

<sup>32</sup> See, Elson, “Another Look at the Jakarta Charter Controversy of 1945”; Schwarz, *A Nation in Waiting*; Sofjan, “Pancasila and the Dignity of Humankind.”

that Islam played in those decisive nationalist movements that gave Indonesia its freedom, as one Muslim government official asserted, Islam deserved to have a unique and privileged position in the constitution.<sup>33</sup> The fact that that their mission was thwarted by a coalition between a small but disproportionately influential cluster of Christian leaders and secular nationalist elites further agitated those traditionalist Muslims who had always been critical of Christianity's perceived role as a medium for Dutch colonization.<sup>34</sup> The more radical and extreme camps scattered in the provinces of West and Central Java, South Sulawesi, South Kalimantan, and Aceh, decried the direction and legitimacy of the new government and embarked on an armed rebellion to pursue their aspiration to establish an Islamic Republic.<sup>35</sup>

Here, we see that emotions have histories and, therefore, are inherently tied to memories. These memories, both real and artificial, constitute traces of other background emotions that give them "specific content and cognitive specificity."<sup>36</sup> The "stickiness" of these hostile emotions in particular and their attached meanings are consistently strengthened and replicated by socio-cultural memories anchored on chauvinistic narratives, symbols, and images of competing ethno-religious nationalisms which the members narrate about themselves and the others.<sup>37</sup> The following interview excerpts neatly summarize the lingering hostile emotions of ethno-religious nationalism still being harbored by some of the ethno-religious members who have been directly affected by the ensuing conflicts:

I will never forgive the barbaric Muslims who mutilated the bodies of my parents. My hatred for Muslims transcends this world, and I will carry it with me in the afterlife. Only my own death can take away the pain that I have to go through each day of my remaining years. I pray and pray, but the anger and pain still remain in my heart... . But what hurts even more, is that I have to pretend that I am happy living with them and forget about seeking justice for my parents to protect my own family. I am afraid that by bringing up that past, the same tragedy will happen to my children and grandchildren.<sup>38</sup>

... After the Christian rebels violated and tortured my Muslim brothers and sisters during the conflicts in Ambon, which they started, I became convinced that they are nothing but pests... . They destroy everything that they touch, and they are

<sup>33</sup> Author's interview, August 15, 2017, Indonesia; see, Arifianto, "Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia"; Elson, "Another Look at the Jakarta Charter Controversy of 1945"; Sofjan, "Pancasila and the Dignity of Humankind."

<sup>34</sup> Van Bruinessen, "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia"; Elson, "Another Look at the Jakarta Charter Controversy of 1945."

<sup>35</sup> Abuza, *Political Islam and Violence in Indonesia*; Elson, "Another Look at the Jakarta Charter Controversy of 1945"; Feillard and Madinier, *Indonesian Islam and the Temptations of Radicalism*; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*.

<sup>36</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, 91; see also, Collins 2004; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.

<sup>37</sup> See, Collins, *Occupied by Memory*; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*.

<sup>38</sup> Author's interview, August 12, 2017, Indonesia.

very greedy. This is the truth. But today, you cannot tell the truth about them in public. . . . I do not fear them. I hate and resent them. When I see their church, I still feel the rage that I felt in my body twenty years ago when I saw the bodies of my family members.<sup>39</sup>

This examination of the emotive mechanistic evidence (Stage 1) of ethnoreligious othering in Indonesia showed how the hostile emotions cultivated from ethnoreligious nationalism rallied the members of the rival groups into actions against other forms of identity and versions of the homeland that were deemed to undermine and delegitimize their existence. By simultaneously constructing and propagating the emotional ideations and discourses about the self with respect to the other (and vice versa), ethnoreligious nationalism facilitated the differentiation and delineation between legitimate and illegitimate personas and between lawful and unlawful inhabitants. This process established the chosen glories and chosen traumas that were eulogized, stories and symbols that were venerated, and relationships and loyalties that were preserved. Such attempts at manufacturing a homogenous ethnoreligious identity and composing a grand narrative of the homeland based on some ideal and legitimate type of ethnoreligious nationalism necessitated the suppression of all other sources of histories, memories, and allegiances.

### **Securitizing the Othered Christian (vs. Indonesian Muslim) Threat**

During the course of Dutch colonialism, the eastern province of Maluku (comprised of the central and the southern Maluku islands) developed along a strikingly different path from the main Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra. Christianity—particularly Calvinism—was resolutely promoted by the colonial rulers and proliferated at a much faster pace than in other East Indies provinces.<sup>40</sup> Rather than resisting, the native Maluku people provided the Dutch colonial army with a large number of well-trained soldiers and fought alongside their European colonizers against the Japanese military forces during the Second World War.<sup>41</sup> Within this context, the following discussions demonstrate how the symbolic causal mechanism of ethnoreligious othering (Stage 2) facilitated the hostile securitization of the target group as a threat to the referent group's security, power, and status within Indonesia's pluralistic polity.

<sup>39</sup> Author's interview, August 16, 2017, Indonesia.

<sup>40</sup> Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*.

<sup>41</sup> See Schulze, "Laskar Jihad and the Conflict in Ambon"; Van Klinken, *Minorities, Modernity and the Emerging Nation and Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia*; Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*.

State and non-state elite efforts to frame the perceived Christianization or “Indonesianization” (i.e., Islamization) of the entire country as an existential threat against the Muslim and Christian populations, respectively, were intended to resonate strongly with the hostile symbolic predispositions of their target audiences to trigger actions. This involved the simultaneous imagination of the self and reimagination of the others as strangers and enemies based on the prevailing prejudices and ideologies informed by the hostile emotive effects of Islamic and Christian nationalisms. The mass hostility, ethnocentric mobilization, and security dilemma engendered by the securitization of ethnoreligious others justified the chauvinistic solutions deemed necessary for the protection of identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states at stake: the resort to violent Muslim-Christian “just wars” that claimed thousands of lives. Separate group discussions with some Javanese Muslims and Papuan Christians reveal how these predispositions fuel the securitization of ethnoreligious others and provide essential clues about how the ordinary people (i.e., the constituencies) participate and consent to this process whether intentionally or not:

You have to understand that here in Indonesia, Islam and politics cannot be separated. We believe that just policies need to be based on Islam ... we believe that Muslims need to be prioritized more because we face more problems and challenges even though we are the majority. Developing policies that help the Muslims is necessary for preserving our Muslim identity and the Islamic values of this nation. And you cannot help in securing Islam and the Muslim identity if you are a Christian... . Although we understand the importance of *Pancasila*, however, it should not be used to undermine the primacy and centrality of Islam in Indonesian society and politics.<sup>42</sup>

Being born and raised as Christians in Papua, we have experienced so much discrimination from our fellow Indonesians who are Muslims. Two of us here witnessed how the Indonesian army killed our parents and siblings... . We are unfairly treated, and many try to make us feel that we are inferior Indonesians. Like what our parents and grandparents told us, the worst threats to our security and freedom as Papuans are not the foreigners but those Indonesian Muslims who only think of Papua as a piece of land that they can exploit... . This is why the Christian rebels in Papua believe that we should have our own sovereignty and our own independent country... . Although most Papuans do not agree with their methods or their ultimate goal, we know that they are fighting for us and the future generations. Many from our tribe give at least their moral support to the group.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Author’s group discussion, October 8, 2019, Indonesia.

<sup>43</sup> Author’s group discussion, October 18, 2019, Indonesia.

Similar to how emotions emerge and proliferate, here we see how these hostile symbolic predispositions and their consequent behaviors are also conditioned by individual and societal experiences.<sup>44</sup> While some are directly rooted in personal memories and recollections, others are indirectly formed and instituted through the narratives propagated via different channels, including the government, media, schools, and even family units.<sup>45</sup> These chauvinistic beliefs, prejudices, and ideologies demand group members to go beyond the evidence and rely on some “internally generated inference” instead.<sup>46</sup> The hostile emotions linked to ethnoreligious nationalism play an important role here by influencing the predispositions of rival ethnoreligious communities toward each other and the degree to which their members will accept these predispositions. In effect, the hostile predispositions being accessed and used by securitizing agents when framing the othered groups as security threats are simultaneously constituted by and are strengthening hostile emotions, enabling rival groups to generalize with certainty and conviction beyond evidence.<sup>47</sup> Put differently, the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism are co-producing hostile predispositions.<sup>48</sup>

This condition has become highly prevalent in Indonesia, where hostile ethnoreligious emotions between its Muslim and Christian communities have aggravated these chauvinistic predispositions and their attached destructive behaviors. After Japan’s surrender and defeat in 1945, the nationalist leaders from Java unilaterally declared Indonesian independence without the consent and approval of all regions and populations across the archipelago. The indigenous people of South Maluku, supported and aided by the Dutch government and military, were among the earliest organized groups that opposed this move. The rebels demanded the recognition of an early post-colonial treaty between the Netherlands and the Republic of Indonesia, which prescribed a federal state.<sup>49</sup> When the agreement failed, the demobilized soldiers of the former Royal Dutch East Indies Army and other separatist groups that remained loyal to the Dutch crown revolted and proclaimed the formation of the Republic of South Maluku (*Republik Maluku Selatan* or RMS) on April 25, 1950.<sup>50</sup> The Indonesian army swiftly extinguished the rebellion and

<sup>44</sup> Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics”; Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs” and “Social Emotion and Identity.”

<sup>45</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics”; Sears, “Symbolic Politics”; Smith and Collins, “Dual-Process Models: A Social Psychological Perspective.”

<sup>46</sup> Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs,” 2.

<sup>47</sup> Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs”; see also Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, *Emotions and Beliefs*.

<sup>48</sup> This insight is anchored on the evidences and arguments presented by Frijda and Mesquita, “Beliefs through Emotions”; Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics”; Mercer, “Social Emotion and Identity”; Sears, “Symbolic Politics” and “The Role of Affect in Symbolic Politics.”

<sup>49</sup> Goss, “Understanding the Maluku Wars”; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; Wilson, “The Ethnic Origins of Religious Conflict in North Maluku Province” and *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*.

<sup>50</sup> In Indonesian, *Republik Maluku Selatan* or RMS. See Badrus Sholeh, “Conflict, Jihad, and Religious Identity in Maluku, Eastern Indonesia”; Van Klinken, “Patronage Democracy in Provincial Indonesia”; Wilson, “The Maluku Wars.”

absorbed their territory into the Republic of Indonesia, thereby allowing Sukarno to pursue his vision of a unitary state. Since then, the RMS has become a pejorative term used by Muslim nationalists to refer to Christian separatism, colonialism, and betrayal.

Nevertheless, as one former Muslim politician argued, the establishment and facilitation of the New Order under the Suharto regime from 1966 to 1998 gave the Christian and moderate Muslim elites (the *abangan*) preferential entry pass to government and bureaucratic positions while limiting the access of conservative Islamic groups and their members (the *santri*) to the arcades of power.<sup>51</sup> As a preventive measure against the growing hostility and opposition from the *santri*, Suharto cultivated good relations with the Christian groups, believing that they could serve as buffers should a full-scale political resistance against the New Order arise. This resulted in accusations by the conservative Muslims that the Christian leaders were exploiting the ongoing turmoil between Islam and the regime to promote *Kristenisasi* and entrench their influence further at the expense of conservative Muslims and Islam.<sup>52</sup> According to one of the journalists who followed these developments, the irony of having less political power and economic resources despite being the majority ethnoreligious group amplified the enmity and resentment being harbored by the *santri* against the Christian populations.<sup>53</sup>

The heightened sense of discrimination felt among the fundamentalist Islamic communities fueled the emergence of “Christian threat” narratives about how the state’s alleged promotion of Christianity and connivance with its leaders were detrimental to Islamic values and interests. The personalities behind the spread of anti-Christian discourses criticized the use of material inducements for convincing Muslims to convert into Christianity, while the others compared those foreign-funded Christian missionary efforts across the Indonesian archipelago as yet another form of neocolonialism.<sup>54</sup> Such rhetoric and the images they conjured propagated the idea that Suharto’s New Order was a deliberate plan to purge the Muslim political and religious elites and their Islamic parties and organizations.<sup>55</sup> The clashing atmosphere of Muslim insecurity and Christian hostility that emanated from these conditions set the stage for the eruption of violent conflicts between the two factions. Some of these anti-Christian biases are exemplified well

<sup>51</sup> Author’s interview, August 13, 2017, Indonesia; see also Arifianto, “Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia”; and Schulze, “*Laskar Jihad* and the Conflict in Ambon.”

<sup>52</sup> Arifianto, “Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia”; Liddle, “The Islamic Turn in Indonesia”; Van Bruinessen, “Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia.”

<sup>53</sup> Author’s interview, August 13, 2017, Indonesia; see also Hefner, *Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia*.

<sup>54</sup> Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*.

<sup>55</sup> Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; Van Bruinessen, “Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia.”



in the following excerpts from the interview with a Muslim member of a local conservative party:

For decades since our independence, the Christians have not really exerted much effort in contributing to nation-building in Indonesia. . . . And . . . because they are not Muslims, they do not have a genuine interest in integrating into the Indonesian society. So, we think that one of the most effective ways to integrate them is by convincing them to convert to Islam. In fact, I think that Indonesia will be a lot more united and peaceful if there is only one religion, and that is Islam. . . . The spread of Christianity in Indonesia broke our country apart. It was a foreign religion that was used by our enemies to divide and colonize us. . . . How can they believe and accept a religion that was used by the foreigners like the Dutch to colonize and treat their Muslim brothers and sisters like slaves? We all know that the main reason why they converted to Christianity was to get more power and wealth.<sup>56</sup>

With the unforeseen resurgence of Islam and the revival of the faith of Indonesian Muslims, however, Suharto dramatically reoriented his New Order approach. From suppressing and strictly regulating the political activities of Islamist and conservative Muslims, the former dictator, as noted by a religious scholar, began embracing and actively co-opting them into his sphere of influence from the late-1980s until his regime's demise in 1998.<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, the government gradually rolled out a series of policies accommodating the Muslims' demands to appease their feelings, particularly their deep-seated concerns about the threat of *Kristenisasi*. Among these was a joint decree between the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) requiring religious organizations that wanted to build new places of worship written permissions from the heads of the local government (the *bupati*) and the MRA. Permits would be administered only after successful consultation with the *bupati* and local religious leaders concerning the proposals' predicted impacts on the relations between the two ethnoreligious communities.<sup>58</sup> Given its dominance in most parts of Indonesia, such stipulations disproportionately benefited Islam by enabling Muslim leaders to reject the proposals presented by non-Muslim minorities arbitrarily.

Since its implementation, Christian organizations not only started to face enormous challenges in securing state permits to build new churches, but incidents of

<sup>56</sup> Author's interview, August 11, 2017, Indonesia.

<sup>57</sup> Author's interview, August 17, 2017, Indonesia; see also Liddle, "The Islamic Turn in Indonesia"; Nenchik, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia*.

<sup>58</sup> For a descriptive analysis of how these laws and their impact on Muslim-Christian relations, see Crouch, "Implementing the Regulation on Places of Worship in Indonesia" and *Law and Religion in Indonesia*; and Fealy and White's edited collection on Indonesia's intertwining religious life and politics, *Expressing Islam*.

vandalism and burning of their existing ones significantly increased.<sup>59</sup> The MRA also issued complementary decrees that limited the activities of foreign missionaries, including the evangelization of individuals and groups who were members of officially recognized religions. Although, in theory, these policies covered all official religions in Indonesia, including Islam, the Christians felt that they were being targeted and argued that their enactment violated religious freedom.<sup>60</sup> More importantly, Suharto also began replacing Christian government ministers, military officers, and other chief bureaucrats with well-known devout Muslims. The ejection of Christian elites from the corridors of power drastically undermined the religious rights and privileges that had been previously afforded to them and their capacity to provide patronage for powerful government officials.<sup>61</sup>

These episodes in Indonesia's nation-state building history reveals how intensifying feelings of threat induced by emotionally charged hostile symbolic predispositions enhance group support for chauvinistic and aggressive actions against the target group.<sup>62</sup> Sensing a danger perpetuates suspicion and distrust between rival ethnoreligious groups, forcing them to ignore each other's benign intentions and focusing instead on behaviors indicating hostility.<sup>63</sup> The prevalence of physical and social threats in pluralistic polities like Indonesia makes it easier for the securitization agents to condition their audiences (and vice versa) to respond aggressively to these threats, both real and imagined. In such contexts, aggression is commonly viewed as the ultimate strategy for countering these types of threat, making the aggressive leaders promoting aggressive policies more popular than their pacifist counterparts.<sup>64</sup> Note here that the members' support for aggressive methods is not only determined by collective feelings of threat but is also influenced by the amount of credibility that the securitizing actors and their frames possess.<sup>65</sup> This means that the securitization frames vis-à-vis the othered groups must connect clearly with the symbolic and emotional faculties of the in-group to ensure that the audience will accept these frames and consequently feel threatened, thus raising public support for aggressive measures against the sources of those threats.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Crouch, "Implementing the Regulation on Places of Worship in Indonesia."

<sup>60</sup> Bowen, *Islam, Law, and Equality in Indonesia*; Crouch, *Law and Religion in Indonesia*.

<sup>61</sup> Van Klinken, "Patronage Democracy in Provincial Indonesia"; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*.

<sup>62</sup> Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Sears, "Symbolic Politics"

<sup>63</sup> See, Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics."

<sup>64</sup> Hirschberger and Pyszczynski, "An Existential Perspective on Ethno-Political Violence"; Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice"; Spanovic et al., "Fear and Anger as Predictors of Motivation for Intergroup Aggression."

<sup>65</sup> Johnston and Noakes, *Social Movements and the Framing Perspective*; and Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements" offer a thorough discussion of the importance of credible framing in social mobilizations.

<sup>66</sup> Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics."

This whole dynamic was manifested clearly during the aftermath of the New Order's collapse as the country suffered some of the most brutal and violent conflicts in its history. The fall of Suharto finally ignited the ethnic and religious tensions that had been fermenting for decades, erupting into vicious battles between dueling tribes that were trying to destroy and slaughter each other's communities and villages. For example, in the province of Maluku, the horrific scale of violence ripped its Muslim and Christian communities apart and transformed it into a notorious site of extreme discord. The surrounding climate turned for the worse when external entities intervened in the ongoing clashes to help the Muslims in their fight against the Christians, thus adding more complications to the already tense situation.<sup>67</sup> Their arrival further amplified the opposing enclaves' ethnoreligious dispositions, resulting in more radicalized Islamic narratives of *jihad* (espoused by groups such as *Laskar Jihad* and *Laskar Mujahidin*) and Christian discourses of crusades (promoted by the Maluku Sovereignty Front).<sup>68</sup>

The rampant use of sacred imageries and symbols by combatants from both quarters (e.g., the alleged sightings of angels on battle horses on the part of Muslim militants and the reported apparitions of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary on the Christians' side) also created a sense of an impending apocalypse that provoked even greater religious fanaticism among Maluku's divided population.<sup>69</sup> The accounts given by a Muslim *ulama* and a former Christian missionary who followed these violent clashes underscore the impact of hostile symbolic predispositions on the framing of ethnoreligious others as strangers and enemies and how this, in turn, destroyed the socio-institutional fabrics that had been woven through and underpinned *pela-gandong* for decades:

For me, the killings and murders of many innocent people in Maluku showed how much pain and suffering we cause to other people because of our hatred, jealousy, and negative biases toward them. We let our human nature overpower our human conscience. Instead of finding common ground through our common humanity, the Muslims and the Christians decided to murder and kill each other like animals. Both sides used their ethnicity and religion to justify their brutal actions. Both claimed that Allah or God was on their side, fighting with them against their enemies. Both used their being Javanese or Malukan to carry out and excuse their cruel actions against each other... . Our stereotypes toward the

<sup>67</sup> See, Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; Schulze, "Laskar Jihad and the Conflict in Ambon"; Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad*; Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*.

<sup>68</sup> See Badrus Sholeh, "Jihad in Maluku"; Duncan, "The Other Maluku"; Schulze, "Laskar Jihad and the Conflict in Ambon"; Van Klinken, "The Maluku Wars"; and Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia* for detailed accounts of these events.

<sup>69</sup> The proliferation and use of religious imageries and symbols during the conflict in Maluku are also tackled in Bubandt, "Malukan Apocalypse" and "Rumors, Pamphlets, and the Politics of Paranoia in Indonesia"; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; Spyer, "Fire without Smoke and Other Phantoms of Ambon's Violence"; Van Liere, "Fighting for Jesus on Ambon."

members of other religions transformed us into heartless monsters... . We only have our insecurities and our unwillingness to let go of our prejudices against the Christians and Muslims to blame.<sup>70</sup>

Witnessing the violent conflicts in Ambon and seeing how both the Muslims and Christians violated the sacredness of human life made me question myself and my work as a Christian missionary. My mind was telling me to hate the Muslims because of their crimes against innocent Christians... . I thought that I had to work much harder and faster in evangelizing the people, thinking that Christianity would be the cure to the madness being perpetrated by the extremist Muslims. But my heart was telling me not to take sides ... and think of what Jesus would have done instead... . If we do not learn how to tame our human nature, then we will just kill each other whenever we are confronted by people whom we see as threats to our own survival... . That is exactly what happened in Maluku. People started to view and treat each other as enemies, just like in the jungle.<sup>71</sup>

That these events were taking place at the same time as the vicious fights between the Indonesian military and the majority Catholic Timorese demanding independence were unfolding aggravated the situation in Maluku further by raising the stakes of their battles while amplifying the hostile emotions and symbolic predispositions consuming both camps. The Christian nationalists in Maluku used the state's extreme methods after its invasion of East Timor in 1975 and during the height of the separatist crisis in 1999 as justifications for their just wars against the Muslim enemies. Narratives about the government's lack of genuine interest in imagining the non-Muslims in Maluku and East Timor as "Indonesians" were widespread among those who mobilized and joined the struggle.<sup>72</sup> As Benedict Anderson explained it, the inability of the Indonesian government to thoroughly scrape away the otherness and strangeness attributable to the Dutch and Portuguese colonization thwarted whatever "natural Indonesianness" was expected from the Timorese Catholics [and by extension, the Maluku Christians], thereby failing to incorporate them imaginatively.<sup>73</sup>

Conversely, the Muslim forces in Maluku used the perceived ingratitude and betrayal of the Christians toward Indonesia and the Indonesian Muslims as rationalizations for attacking them. Rhetoric about the stubborn resistance among the Maluku Christians and Timorese Catholics was prevalent among the leaders

<sup>70</sup> Author's interview, August 14, 2017, Indonesia.

<sup>71</sup> Author's interview, August 16, 2017, Indonesia.

<sup>72</sup> This sentiment among the non-Muslims in Indonesia is well reflected in the works of Anderson, "Imagining East Timor"; Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*; Spyer, *Fire without Smoke and Other Phantoms of Ambon's Violence*; Turner, *Myths and Moral Authority in Maluku*; Wilson, "The Ethnic Origins of Religious Conflict in North Maluku Province," among others.

<sup>73</sup> Anderson, "Imagining East Timor," 36.

and members of the Muslim side.<sup>74</sup> These all contributed to the legitimation of the “pure” insiders’ victim status and justification of the violent attacks against the “impure” outsiders, transforming the once peacefully co-existing villages into exclusive Muslim and Christian territories that sharply fractured the region.

Here, we see how the interactions between these hostile predispositions and hostile emotions, alongside the chauvinistic motivations and actions they induce, are at the center of security dilemma spirals. Under such conditions, a referent group’s quest for uncontested dominance and predatory goals is viewed by the target group as damaging to its survival and interest and, therefore, counter-mobilizes by escalating their aggressive behaviors rather than responding tit for tat.<sup>75</sup> The more hostile the in-group’s predispositions and emotions toward the out-group are, the more threatening the latter’s actions (to satisfy their security requirements) will be on the former’s part. To this extent, human experiences are crucial to explaining these cycles of security dilemma given that the predispositions, emotions, and actions constituting such conditions are intrinsically connected to the actors’ political and social encounters. Separate interviews with Christian and Muslim participants from the eastern provinces of Indonesia (including Maluku, East Nusa Tenggara, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi) expose the enduring symbolic and emotional side-effects of these brutal fights and their impact on inter-group predispositions:

Since we became conscious that we are Christians and not Muslims, we became a lot more sensitive to the negative traits and images that the Muslims associate with us. We are traitors; we are bastards; we are parasites. When these words are repeated to you over and over again, you start to think that they are true. But the only truth that matters most to us is that those fanatic Muslims attacked our villages, burned them to the grounds, and killed as many Christians as they wanted while the Indonesian government just stood there watching... . Because of that, we find it extremely difficult to build strong and genuine relations with the Muslims... . We do not even talk about these things ... , but by not talking about it, our negative images and perceptions about each other will remain in our hearts and minds for a long time, maybe forever.<sup>76</sup>

The Christians are not the only victims in those violent battles... . The way that some Christians tell the story of what happened in Ambon or Halmahera is very offensive because the Muslims are not murderers. We do not kill people. Our religion teaches us to always be at peace with each other and respect all people,

<sup>74</sup> See Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*; Carey, “The Catholic Church, Religious Revival, and the Nationalist Movement in East Timor”; Goss, “Understanding the Maluku Wars”; Schulze, “*Laskar Jihad* and the Conflict in Ambon”; Van Klinken, “The Maluku Wars.”

<sup>75</sup> Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics”; see also Melander, “The Geography of Fear”; Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict”; Roe, “The Intrastate Security Dilemma.”

<sup>76</sup> Author’s interview, October 23, 2019, Indonesia.

even if they are not Muslims. No Muslim wants to kill or be killed. It takes an extraordinary event to convince a Muslim to kill a person and what they did in Ambon and Halmahera was self-defense. We were defending our rights as Muslims and natives of Maluku... . After what happened between the Muslims and Christians, it is difficult to restore the same trust and friendship that we used to share with them... . Although we do not talk about these feelings out in the open, the conflicts proved many of the negative views and perceptions that we have toward the Christians.<sup>77</sup>

This examination of the symbolic mechanistic evidence (Stage 2) of ethnoreligious othering in Indonesia showed how the securitization of ethnoreligious others as existential threats had reconstructed the prevailing realities of the security context underpinning a pluralistic polity. In the process, collective self-understandings were altered and, in turn, modified group assessments about the “actual” threats and the “real” victims. The hostile symbolic predispositions used in framing certain target groups as strangers and enemies justified their systematic debasement and dehumanization. Their resulting image as dirty, menacing, and insignificant nonhumans gave the members of the referent group the assurance that they were inherently different and superior to the others, thus allowing them to feel more secure and less anxious about the state and nature of their being. In strengthening their walls against the outside enemies while weeding out the impostors from within, chauvinistic solutions were implemented and defended until they became “natural” and “permanent” features of the existing order. The effectiveness and legitimacy of these aggressive and hostile actions required absolute belief and left no room for question and doubt.

### **Sacralizing the Indonesian Muslim (vs. Othered Christian) Identity, Homeland, and Territorial Nation-State**

Former president B. J. Habibie’s efforts to transform Indonesia’s government system into a democracy via the implementation of Decentralization Laws in 1999 had fundamentally altered the power dynamics and relations between national and local government units. Described by some as one of the most substantial and extensive power reallocations by a sovereign state in contemporary times, this process gave provincial and regency/city administrations the authority to pass and implement *perda* or regional regulations, except in those areas that remain exclusively under the ambit of the central government.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Author’s interview, October 9, 2019, Indonesia.

<sup>78</sup> Crouch, *Law and Religion in Indonesia*; Tyson, *Decentralization and Adat Revivalism in Indonesia*.

Under these circumstances, the following discussions demonstrate how the perceptual causal mechanism of ethnoreligious othering (Stage 3) facilitated the chauvinistic sacralization of competing versions of the ideal ethnoreligious identity, homeland and territorial nation-state within Indonesia's pluralistic polity. The hostile perceptions that these primary security referents are meant to be pure and indivisible compelled state and nonstate actors from the rival factions to influence the nature and content of the state's security superstructures (rhetoric, policies, strategies, and institutions) by implanting their ethnoreligious substructures (myths, doctrines, norms, and dogmas) into these instruments. Failure to do so significantly endangers the rights and space of an ethnoreligious group within the existing order.

In this case, the Indonesian Muslims have effectively ensconced their ethnoreligious substructures in the state's security superstructures, thereby retaining their predominant power and position relative to the othered Christians. On the other hand, the relegation of Christian elites to the sidelines significantly curtailed their personal capacity and the capacity of their group's ethnoreligious substructures to induce the security superstructures necessary for the protection of their own ideal version of identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state. These separate dialogues with a community leader and a religious adviser provide a glimpse of the precarity of losing access and control over these security superstructures by justifying the existing arrangement between the Indonesian Muslims and othered Christians as being right and natural:

To be a true Indonesian is to be a true Muslim. Period. Members of other religions can claim to be Indonesians, but when one chooses another religion like Christianity, that person diminishes his value and right as an Indonesian... . There is no way that a Christian can become a president of this Muslim nation... . That is the natural order of things, and it is a sacred order that cannot be broken... . I was born a Muslim and will die a Muslim. And if I were to be born again, I would still choose to be a Muslim here in Indonesia and nowhere else because this place is Allah's place for us... . The Christians were never on the Muslims' side. They always fought on the side of our foreign enemies... . They should accept that Indonesia is for Allah... . It is not Indonesia anymore if there are more Christians than Muslims.<sup>79</sup>

Even Christians have a place in this country. We are just as Indonesians as the Muslims. We should have the same rights and privileges as them, but I do not think that we actually do just because we believe in the Bible instead of the Quran. We may not pray to the same God or worship in the same temples, but we are just as humans as they are... . It is hurtful to be considered second-class citizens or

<sup>79</sup> Author's interview, October 7, 2019, Indonesia.

be treated as traitors because of our religion and the way that Indonesian history was written by the Muslims... . But because I was born a Christian, I will die a Christian... . If you ask me what I want to be if I were born again, I still want to be a Christian here in Indonesia because this is our home too, our own promised land... . We become good Indonesians by being good Christians.<sup>80</sup>

These existing emotional and symbolic relationships between ethnoreligious communities significantly influence their members' attribution of motives to the behaviors and actions of the non-members. Put differently, the perceptions that these groups have toward each other are essentially connected to the prevailing emotions and predispositions being harbored by their respective members. As such, individuals and groups regularly categorize their relationships with others, both emotionally and symbolically.<sup>81</sup> This, in turn, affects the insiders' perceptions of the out-group, including their interpretations of certain ambiguous situations involving the outsiders and their corresponding actions in those contexts.<sup>82</sup> Such ambiguities force rival ethnoreligious communities to speculate the causes and motives behind the outsiders' behaviors and appraise the legitimacy of the reasons given by the outsiders for those actions. Throughout this process, those prior emotional and symbolic relationships between them guide their attribution of motives and intents to each other's attitude and conduct.<sup>83</sup> Amid the presence of strong hostile emotions and predispositions, chauvinistic perceptions of indivisible and sacred identity, homeland, and nation-state intensify, leading to the negative and often erroneous appraisals about the others and the ambiguous behaviors ascribed to them.

This condition helps explain the successful development and implementation of specific religious regulations by local officials in Indonesia that were neither stipulated under the Decentralized Laws nor officially recognized in the country's legal system, without being questioned or opposed by the central authorities.<sup>84</sup> These instruments were introduced in various forms, such as letters written by the governor, instructions coming from the mayor, and circulars and appeals released by the regent.<sup>85</sup> Some of these regulations facilitated the full implementation of *Shari'a*. The most notable example of this is the *Qanun* adopted in Aceh that allowed the

<sup>80</sup> Author's interview, October 18, 2019, Indonesia.

<sup>81</sup> Drawn from Crawford's concept of emotional relationship as explained in "The Passion of World Politics."

<sup>82</sup> Based on the arguments by Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; and Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs."

<sup>83</sup> Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; see also Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*; Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds* for discussions on how pre-existing emotional and symbolic relationships—at state, group, or individual level—affect an agent's ascription of motives vis-à-vis an outsider party's action.

<sup>84</sup> Arifiant, "Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia"; Fealy and White, *Expressing Islam*; Tyson, *Decentralization and Adat Revivalism in Indonesia*.

<sup>85</sup> Crouch, "Implementing the Regulation on Places of Worship in Indonesia" and *Religion in Indonesia*.



locals to establish *Shari'a* administrative institutions and enforce vital aspects of the *Shari'a* law governing Islamic creed, worship, finance, and morality.<sup>86</sup> Meanwhile, other regulations focused on embedding Islamic values when designing regional local governance systems, such as The Strategic Plan for West Java (2001–2005) which linked Islam to the concepts of equality and progress.<sup>87</sup> There were also those regulations that strengthened orthodox systems of local governance by denoting *Shari'a* as a part of, or in addition to Muslim customary practices and traditions or the *adat*.<sup>88</sup> Examples of these are West Sumatra's numerous village regulations anchored on the customary philosophy that recognizes the Quran as the ultimate basis of Islamic laws and the root of their Minangkabau mores and customs.<sup>89</sup>

Indeed, the overhauling of the Indonesian government system through the decentralization process generated vital instruments for expressing and delineating competing ethnoreligious identities, specifically between the Muslims and Christians. The construction of these wide-ranging religious regulations underscores the dominant group's attempts at reconfiguring and renegotiating the weaker group's representation, power, and status, based on hostile perceptions concerning the basic premises of Indonesian identity, homeland, and nation-state. Discussions with members of Catholic-Christian civil society organization from Batak, Java, Manggarai, and Maumere highlight how such Muslim-centric security superstructures have curtailed their right and freedom to practice their faith and culture, thus undermining their sense of and control over their own identity and homeland:

Many foreigners think that everyone is free to follow and practice their own religion in Indonesia because of the *Pancasila*. But if you ask me, *Pancasila* is not that effective... . In many parts of Indonesia, we cannot build many churches because the local government will not give us permits ... they would say it might create conflicts. But for them, they can always build a mosque in a Catholic or a Christian village. That means that many Muslims do not want us to have equal religious rights... . They can protect their territory from Christianity, but we cannot protect our territory from Islam. Even today, there are many conservative Muslims who hate seeing a Catholic church. That is why sometimes they burn them. I have

<sup>86</sup> For a thorough investigation of the impetus behind the implementation of *Shari'a* Law and its impact on intercommunal relations in Aceh, see Feener, *Shari'a and Social Engineering*; Hasnil Basri Siregar, "Lessons Learned from the Implementation of Islamic Shari'ah Criminal Law in Aceh, Indonesia"; Kloos, "In the Name of Syariah?"

<sup>87</sup> Crouch, "Religious Regulations in Indonesia."

<sup>88</sup> See Davidson and David, *The Deployment of Adat from Colonialism to Indigenism*, for an exhaustive discussion of the revival and continued implementation of *adat* in villages across the Indonesia.

<sup>89</sup> Bieveveld, "The Many Roles of *Adat* in West Sumatra"; Crouch, "Religious Regulations in Indonesia."

encountered a lot of Muslims who like to mock Jesus and call the Bible stupid, but we can never mock Prophet Mohammed or call the Quran stupid.<sup>90</sup>

The government in our province makes it hard for us to show our devotion and faith to the Catholic Church. Sometimes we feel like we are committing crimes by attending mass on Sundays or whenever we are celebrating our feasts and other important events in our religion like Christmas and Lenten Season... In the eyes of the Muslims, especially the more conservative ones, we are offending Islam and are not respecting their feelings. Even simple things like cooking and eating pork sometimes become a source of dispute with our neighbors. They feel that they are being attacked when they smell pork being cooked. They think that because we eat pigs, we have the attitude of a pig. So, to them, we are dirty and sinners... Even though I am proud of being a Catholic, sometimes I try to hide it because of the discrimination that many of us still experience today.<sup>91</sup>

When I was younger, I used to wonder if our lives would have been a lot better and more peaceful if we were not Catholics. Would I have been happier as a child if I was born in a Muslim family? ... I experienced so much bullying and verbal abuse not only from my classmates but also from some of my teachers. For example, when I decided to run for class president, my teacher told my classmates that a Catholic could not be a leader for Muslims because I have different values and beliefs. Even though I was qualified, and I was one of the top students, I did not get the chance to serve in the student council because I am Catholic. That particular incident scarred me and made me question my worth ... Now that I am older, I still carry some of that shame.<sup>92</sup>

Here, we see how the persistence of hostile emotional and symbolic relationships between rival ethnoreligious communities inevitably widens the psychological disconnect and cultural distance between them. This, in turn, prevents an in-group from perceiving the out-group, particularly its emotions and predispositions, as non-threatening and akin to their own. The more the members identify and associate with their own communities, the more that they are likely to discriminate against the non-members as misperceptions between them amplify.<sup>93</sup> This was highly evident in how the powerful Muslim politicians and elites behaved throughout the conflict in Maluku. For the Islamists and conservative Muslims, the Christians' petition for United Nations (UN) intervention and the formation of the Maluku Sovereignty Front meant to revive the RMS movement were solid

<sup>90</sup> Author's interview, October 10, 2019, Indonesia.

<sup>91</sup> Author's interview, October 10, 2019, Indonesia.

<sup>92</sup> Author's interview, October 10, 2019, Indonesia.

<sup>93</sup> See Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Mercer, "Anarchy and Identity."

proofs of the conspiracy to dismember and destroy the largest Muslim country in the world.<sup>94</sup>

In response to these allegations, the state had virtually passed on the tremendous responsibility of settling the conflicts in the hands of the warring enclaves, letting itself be usurped and used by militant Islamist groups like the *Laskar Jihad*. According to a civil society leader and a sociologist familiar with the events, the group justified its waging of *jihad* in Ambon as a “humanitarian mission” to save Maluku and its people from Christianity’s deceptions and distorted doctrines by converting them back to Islam.<sup>95</sup> The goal was to reform the entire country into a *Sharia*-ruled Islamic state using Ambon as a litmus test for assessing the strength of non-Muslim resistance and the response of the government and the Muslim population.<sup>96</sup>

The widespread perception that ethnic and religious concerns and interests drove Islamist militants to intervene in Maluku and carry out violent attacks against the Indonesian Christians prevented both local and national government units from adopting decisive measures to resolve the conflict. Suharto’s decision to repress and ignore these tensions for more than three decades had grave consequences on the capacity of political officers and security forces to end the bloodbath. The confusion and chaos brought about by the start of the *reformasi* transition at that time, forced state actors to prioritize the security and stability of post-Suharto Indonesia at the national level instead of focusing on the local clashes taking place in various parts of Maluku.

Underestimating the magnitude and extent of the conflict, the politicians in Jakarta depended on military personnel to control the situation who, in turn, relied on local civilians for guidance.<sup>97</sup> But as the violence continued to intensify and spread across the province, the Christian commander of the Maluku military district and the Muslim governor of Ambon were both reluctant to intervene, fearing that their actions would be interpreted as partiality toward their respective communities.<sup>98</sup> Even Indonesia’s then-president, Abdurrahman Wahid, distanced himself from the situation and refused to act, claiming that the people of Maluku must be allowed to resolve their problems on their own.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Badrus Sholeh, “*Jihad* in Maluku”; Bubandt, “Rumors, Pamphlets, and the Politics of Paranoia in Indonesia”; Van Klinken, “The Maluku Wars”; Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*.

<sup>95</sup> Author’s interview, August 19, 2017, Indonesia; see also Schulze, “*Laskar Jihad* and the Conflict in Ambon”; Van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia*.

<sup>96</sup> Davis, “*Laskar Jihad* and the Political Position of Conservative Islam in Indonesia”; Van Klinken, “The Maluku Wars”; Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*.

<sup>97</sup> Noorhaidi Hasan, “Rise of the *Laskar Jihad* in the Era of Transition in Indonesia”; Schulze, “*Laskar Jihad* and the Conflict in Ambon.”

<sup>98</sup> Schulze, “*Laskar Jihad* and the Conflict in Ambon.”

<sup>99</sup> Badrus Sholeh “Conflict, Jihad, and Religious Identity in Maluku, Eastern Indonesia”; Goss, “Understanding the Maluku Wars”; Noorhaidi Hasan, “The Rise of the *Laskar Jihad* in the Era of Transition in Indonesia.”

This general paralysis, if not apathy, among government officials contributed to the contamination of members of the local army and the police who had been successfully recruited by Muslim and Christian fighters attempting to reinforce their ranks and cement their positions.<sup>100</sup> Such an attitude was largely driven by the underlying fear and opportunism of key state agents. Several high-ranking politicians in Jakarta saw the situation as an opportunity to enhance their popular appeal and secure their position further by exploiting Islam's political currency. A think tank consulted in the study pointed that the rekindling of Islamic national identity among the Indonesian Muslims made it extremely difficult for officials to condemn publicly and stop the *mujahideen's* activities in Maluku.<sup>101</sup> Those who tried to facilitate peace talks on the grounds of equality and mutual tolerance were accused of being infidels and Christian sympathizers. The political costs of being labeled an anti-Muslim, on the one hand, and the political rewards for condoning and backing up the Islamists, on the other, forestalled any meaningful conflict resolution plans.

Meanwhile, mainstream Muslim organizations also helped legitimize the presence of these Islamic militants in Maluku by not challenging their extremist ideologies, which reinforced the sense that Indonesian Islamic faith and laws were less genuine than the Salafi movement and rationalized the *Shari'a* system being imposed by these actors.<sup>102</sup> All this silence and inaction led to perception among the ordinary Indonesian Muslims that without the Islamist groups in Ambon, particularly the *Laskar Jihad*, the entire Maluku would have been vulnerable to Christian counterattacks. Thus, rather than providing equal rights and protection for the Christians in Maluku, democratization, along with the institutions created in its name, provided channels for the (re)Islamization of Indonesia at the expense of all other non-Muslims. The electoral value and cost of Islam-centric religious regulations made it highly problematic for national and local politicians and other elites to review, let alone revoke them. A correspondence with the officials from an Islamist political organization help explain the gravity of the threat of losing one's claimed identity and homeland and the sacrifices that one is willing to make to protect these:

When we found out that the *Jemaah Islamiyah* and *Laskar Jihad* had finally arrived in Ambon, I felt a sense of relief and pride because we knew that our fellow Muslims would never let them down. Without them, maybe all the Muslims in Maluku and North Maluku would have all been killed or forced to accept

<sup>100</sup> Van Klinken, *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia*; Wilson, *Ethno-Religious Violence in Indonesia*.

<sup>101</sup> Author's interview, August 20, 2017, Indonesia; see also Davis, "Laskar Jihad and the Political Position of Conservative Islam in Indonesia"; Noorhaidi Hasan, "The Rise of the *Laskar Jihad* in the Era of Transition in Indonesia"; Turner, "Myths and Moral Authority in Maluku."

<sup>102</sup> Badrus Sholeh, "Jihad in Maluku"; Schulze, "Laskar Jihad and the Conflict in Ambon."

Christianity... . We cannot just surrender our homes and our territories to the enemies... . In fact, the Christians at that time asked for help from other Christian nations. They wanted other Christians and Catholics to fight for them like the crusaders back in the day... . Their hostile actions against us called for *jihad*, and we were prepared to fight for our Muslim brothers and sisters.<sup>103</sup>

I remember watching the news about the Christian attacks in Maluku and feeling really angry not only with the Christians for killing hundreds and hundreds of Muslims but also with the government because they were not doing enough to protect the Muslims. I was a university student then, and the members of my student organization became very absorbed. We thought of traveling to Ambon to help our Muslim brothers in their fight... . Looking back, I realized that even though we did not fully appreciate the extent of the situation then, we were ready to sacrifice our lives if we were only given a chance... . The annoying thing is how the Muslims are being called terrorists, but if you study the history of the Maluku conflict without any bias, you will discover that the Christians were the real terrorists.<sup>104</sup>

Here, we see how the hostile emotions between ethnoreligious communities, like anger and fear, are also influenced by their hostile perceptions of each other,<sup>105</sup> illuminating why people with a genuine sense of group solidarity are more likely to experience such feelings toward the outsiders.<sup>106</sup> Hence, when a referent group perceives itself as not having enough power or capacity to protect its members against the target group, the ensuing fear (and its associated biases) separate the population between victims and aggressors.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, when an in-group perceives the out-group as the culprit behind the ongoing violence and discord, the subsequent anger (and its attached beliefs) heighten the desire of the former to blame and punish the latter.<sup>108</sup> And when a domineering group perceives itself as being undermined and controlled by an underserving group, the stemming resentment (and its accompanying prejudices) urge members to revise the status quo.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Author's correspondence, September 1, 2017.

<sup>104</sup> Author's correspondence, August 29, 2017.

<sup>105</sup> See Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>106</sup> See Mackie, Devos, and Smith, "Intergroup Emotions: Explaining Offensive Action Tendencies in an Intergroup Context."

<sup>107</sup> For a more systematic investigation of fear in conflict situations, see Halperin et al., "Fear and Hope in Conflict"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*; Spanovic et al., "Fear and Anger as Predictors of Motivation for Intergroup Aggression."

<sup>108</sup> For an extensive analysis of how anger influences the relations and conflicts between different ethnic/religious groups, see Halperin et al., "Anger, Hatred, and the Quest for Peace"; Noor et al., "The Psychology of Competitive Victimhood between Adversarial Groups in Violent Conflicts"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>109</sup> For further exploration of the emotion of resentment in conflict contexts, see Bonikowski, "Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment"; Hirsch, "The Agonistics

Accordingly, the emotional and symbolic relationships between rival ethno-religious groups also follow from these perceptions, which means that perceptions also constitute and reinforce prevailing emotions and predispositions. In Indonesia, the interlinkages between these hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions ultimately led to the expulsion of ethno-religious others into the zone of killing as a way of “teaching them a lesson” and putting them back in their “proper places.”<sup>110</sup> The continuation of the interview with a former *Jemaah Islamiyah* member captures the very essence of sacralizing this perceived ideal ethno-religious identity, homeland, and the territorial nation-state:

There is this saying that I learned during my training years in Afghanistan: One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter. I do not mean to justify extremist violence and the killings of innocent people, but it is very important for Muslims to learn the value of protecting our Islamic identity, our own *ummah*, and our own faith from those who want to destroy and conquer us... . In protecting our Muslim people and our lands, that requires sacrifices on our part. We need to forget about our own selves and sometimes even our own families to achieve victory for the followers and believers of Islam. I believe that we have a higher purpose in this life, and that is to bring peace to as many people as we can through Islam. In my case, I do this by learning and helping spread the true and correct words of Prophet Mohammed. Unfortunately, peace is not always easy. Sometimes we commit mistakes as I did, but if we sincerely ask for forgiveness from Allah, He will forgive us and give us another chance to remain and serve in His paradise.<sup>111</sup>

This examination of the perceptual mechanistic evidence (Stage 3) of ethno-religious othering in Indonesia showed how the implantation of the more dominant group’s ethno-religious substructures into the state’s security superstructures sacralized its claimed identity and homeland, along with its preferred version of the territorial nation-state. The intrinsic connection of these referents with security and survival made just wars viable options for rival ethno-religious groups. In the process, hostile perceptions about the purity, sanctity, and inviolability of these security referents rationalized both the ideology of these “necessary” just wars and the method for waging them. Attempts at perfectly aligning and synchronizing these indivisible identities, homelands, and nation-states together required the desacralization and reduction of the othered groups to inhumanity, which, in turn, resulted in their rejection and banishment. Although regrettable, war and bloodshed were deemed parts of a grand tale—a divine struggle that would ultimately

of Respect, Resentment and Responsibility in Post-Conflict Society”; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence and The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>110</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* and “Ethnic Power Sharing: Three Big Problems”; Petersen *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>111</sup> Author’s interview, August 18, 2017, Indonesia.

lead to a glorious ending where all accepted and proven members could chant the same slogans, experience the same sentiments, and live by the same doctrines.

## Conclusion

Overall, this chapter reveals how the emotive, symbolic, and perceptual casual mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering facilitate the reconstruction of ethnoreligious others into existential security threats within Indonesia's pluralistic polity. They collectively function as a conduit through which the status quo relations and arrangements between its Muslim and Christian communities are either re-strengthened or remodified. Throughout this three-stage process, these constitutive structures of ethnoreligious othering are simultaneously producing and driven by emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions.

In Stage 1, we see how the two-way shared cultivation of chauvinistic Islamic and Christian nationalisms engendered hostile emotive effects which compelled the members of these rival groups to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic vis-à-vis their respective identities and territories. Although they may be felt and experienced at the individual level, these emotions do not operate in a vacuum but are deeply attached to further entailments by which different subjects, objects, and acts have meanings. As the Indonesian case shows, rather than just being purely cognitive, these emotions are highly interconnected and socialized as they are commonly expressed in relation to the target group (e.g., othered Christians) and expressed a vernacular comprehensible to the members of the referent group (e.g., Indonesian Muslims), especially in contexts of shared experiences. As socio-cultural phenomena, the expressions and meanings of hostile emotions confronting Indonesia's Islamic and Christian communities are anchored on contrasting ethnoreligious substructures underpinning the competing forms of ethnoreligious nationalism (i.e., Islamic and Christian) that have shaped the past and continue to guide the present and future interactions between them.

In Stage 2, we see how this survivalist, zero-sum security logic, in turn, stimulated state and nonstate elites (e.g., Indonesian Muslims) to securitize a target faction (e.g., othered Christians) as a threat to their security, power, and status using the hostile symbolic predispositions informed by the hostile emotions of (e.g., Indonesian Islamic) ethnoreligious nationalism and with active consent and participation of their (e.g., Muslim) constituency. These symbols had been particularly instrumental and powerful in framing and selling the conflicts of interests—materialist, nonmaterialist, or elite/instrumentalist—between the Muslim and Christian communities in Indonesia as battles against the “threatening” and “evil” outsiders. The chauvinistic mythologies, narratives, and images produced by and propagated through either Islamic or Christian nationalism engendered a shared sense and feeling among leaders and members that they were

ultimately responsible for the survival and defense of their respective groups. As the Indonesian case demonstrates, the resulting securitization of ethno-religious others often induces and entails an understanding of security that requires dominance over these targets and, as such, leads to predatory policies, jingoistic mobilizations, and security dilemma spirals.

And, in Stage 3, we see how the dominant state and nonstate elites from the politically influential ethno-religious camp (e.g., Indonesian Muslims) solidified their legitimacy, authority, and primacy further by ensconcing their (e.g., Islamic) ethno-religious substructures into the overarching state's security superstructures, thereby sacralizing their model version of (e.g., Indonesian Muslim) identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state. Perceptions of chosenness, sacredness, and pureness, especially on the part of the preponderant ethno-religious group, rationalized both the ideology and method for waging just wars in defense of these security referents. The symbolic and emotional weight of these chauvinistic perceptions considerably influenced the interactions between rival ethno-religious groups and the outcomes of those interactions. As the Indonesian case reveals, the perceived indivisibility of these objects or subjects gives them the quality of being ideal, divine, and transcendent markers of Islamic and Christian communities and, therefore, are regarded as absolute, irreplaceable, and infallible by significant sections of these populations.



## The Proud Hotel Termite Inspector of Yangon: *Otherings and Conflicts* in Myanmar

“Good morning. Can I share a table with you?” I asked the man in a white shirt and green checkered *longyi* seated beside the coffee machine. He nodded his head and motioned for me to take the vacant chair right across him. “I am sorry, but my English is not very good. I know some, but only some,” he said smiling. “That’s absolutely fine ...” I answered while placing my cup of coffee on the table. “Where are you from? I thought you were Burman.” “Yes, a lot of people here tell me that, but I am from the Philippines,” I replied. “Oh, Philippines. You are a tourist here?” he queried. “I am doing a research, and yes, some touring too.” “You drink only coffee? No rice, no *mohinga*? Try *mohinga*. It is very good,” said the man as he gestured to offer the noodles from his bowl. “Thank you. I would definitely try that tomorrow. I just usually have coffee for breakfast.” As I took my first sip, I noticed a yellow device resting on the right-hand side of the table that resembled a TV remote control. Curious, I asked him what it was. “Oh, this is for insects, like ants, but not real ants, but insects that eat wood. I use this to find bad insects. I don’t know the English word but wait.” The man drew his phone tucked between his shirt and *longyi* and showed a photo of what looked like termite colonies. I studied the photo for a few seconds and realized that those were indeed termites.

“Ah, termites! Those are termites.” “How to say again in English, termites?” “Yes, termites. I think they’re termites. You study termites?” “No, no, I don’t study, I kill them... . Hotels call us, and then we go to hotels, find termites and kill them. That is our job.” “Oh wow, that’s pretty cool! Is it difficult?” I asked out of genuine interest. “No, not difficult. I like killing them because they destroy houses and hotels. They

are not good insects. They are like Rohingya.” Jolted by what I heard, I repeated his last words, “Like Rohingya? What do you mean?” “Yes, do you know them? They are the Bengali Muslims in Rakhine. They rape Burman women, kill Buddhist people, and attack the Myanmar military. They are like termites, eating and destroying the house of Burma. There are many videos on Facebook. But the Americans, the British, and many foreign people think we Buddhists are the bad people. They are the bad people! They are like termites... ” Trying to conceal my initial shock, I retorted, “But don’t you feel sad for the innocent Rohingya? Not all of them are bad, right? But their houses are also being burned, and their women are being raped and tortured, while their men, sometimes children, and even babies are being killed.” “Hmm,” he murmured, sounding disappointed at my question. “But that’s how we kill insects, those termites. I am proud of my job because I protect houses and hotels... ”

Author’s field notes, September 9, 2017, Yangon, Myanmar

### **Cultivating the Burman Buddhist (vs. Othered Islamic) Nationalism**

Throughout Myanmar’s history (formerly known as Burma until 1989), Buddhism has played a central role in the construction of “Burmeseness” and the legitimation of the “rightful” Burman Buddhist rulers of their imagined territorial homeland. This resulted in a highly interdependent relationship between the monks and government leaders: anticipating the former to interfere in secular political matters when the state turns weak and abusive and, in turn, expecting the latter to eliminate and cleanse the *Sangha* (the monastic order) when tainted with corruption.<sup>1</sup> While this set-up may seem moral and altruistic at first glance, it has also encouraged the rise of extremist groups that only want to promote and protect the idealized Burman Buddhist at the expense of the ethnoreligious minorities.

Against this background, the following discussions demonstrate how the emotive causal mechanism of ethnoreligious othering (Stage 1) facilitated the hostile cultivation of competing Buddhist and Muslim nationalisms within Myanmar’s pluralistic polity. Parallel to the Indonesian experience, the structural shifts that took place throughout the country’s history amid the presence of conflicting ethnoreligious nationalisms—from the British colonization and Japanese invasion to the establishment of an independent Burma and consequent uprisings; to Aung

<sup>1</sup> Frydenlund, “The Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom during Myanmar’s Transition to Democracy”; Mendelson, *Sangha and the State in Burma*.

San Suu Kyi's rise to and fall from power and the *Tatmadaw's* reimposition of direct authoritarian rule—pushed the members of rival communities to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic vis-à-vis the concepts of identity, homeland, and nation-state.

Specifically, the collective fear between the Buddhist and Muslim communities primed them to assuage safety concerns. Their collective hatred primed them to settle historical injustices. Their collective resentment primed them to resolve status and self-esteem inconsistencies. And their collective anger and rage primed them to perpetrate violence against their designated scapegoats. Together, these hostile emotions underscored the exigency and severity of the “security threat” embodied by the ethnoreligious others. This interview with a Buddhist government official showed how such incidents of structural change (driven by a mix of rational, non-rational, and elite/instrumental factors) ignited a process of cognitive–emotive sequence that ultimately propelled them to confront the source of their concern:

For years since the Rakhine crisis erupted, the Buddhist people of Burma have been vilified by the international community. We've been accused of genocide by certain countries and human rights organizations in the West based on stories they've heard from the Rohingya Muslims while refusing to acknowledge the Burman narratives... I don't think they understand the magnitude of the fear and the anger that our citizens grapple with on a day-to-day basis because of the terrorist acts being committed by the Rohingya Army... For those who have not personally experienced the horrific violence of terrorism, it's very easy to criticize our government's response as being inhumane and genocidal. But we are talking about the lives of many innocent people here... You cannot blame my countrymen for feeling resentful [...] toward those who still chose to betray us by joining the Rohingya Army despite giving them refuge in our lands. Our citizens needed to see their government take action ..., and that's what our leaders and our military tried to do. But sadly, the world has put all the blame on Aung San Suu Kyi and accused her of being complicit in the killings that happened in Rakhine. It's always easy for the West and human rights groups to intervene in the domestic affairs of small and poor countries like Myanmar, but they can never do that in their own backyards.<sup>2</sup>

Again, we see here how specific types of emotion, by interceding between cognition and desire, can alter individual and group motivations. More precisely, these hostile emotions cultivated from either Buddhist or Islamic nationalism can rally the community members into actions against other variations of identity and visions of the homeland that are feared to weaken and delegitimize their existence.

<sup>2</sup> Author's interview, November 12, 2019, Myanmar.

Similar to the nature of the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism in Indonesia, these emotions flow simultaneously from the inside (i.e., cognitive) toward the outside targets and the outside (i.e., social) toward the inside referents. Hence, while they may be experienced at the individual level, they are commonly expressed with respect to an out-group and articulated in a manner that is comprehensible to the in-group.<sup>3</sup> Another way of putting it is that the natural is inter-linked with the social through a continuum (e.g., ethnoreligious nationalism) that allows the generation and institutionalization of particular emotions by and within ethnoreligious communities and, therefore, are best examined in their specific contexts.

In the case of Myanmar, for example, the cultivation of Buddhist nationalism has been largely precipitated by the brutalities of the British colonial rule that lasted from 1824 to 1948. Through their shared Buddhist faith, the Burmese subjects were able to consolidate their anti-colonial stance against a repressive foreign power that divided and ruled their communities using policies of racial hierarchization.<sup>4</sup> This process naturally amplified the core-periphery exploitation and, in turn, aggravated further the already volatile inter-ethnic relations in the country. For the local ruling elites, particularly the Burmese king and his monks, Christianization was not simply meant to convert their subjects to a different faith and a set of belief systems, but a tool designed to subvert the people's loyalty and allegiance to the monarchy and the *Sangha* by transforming them into *kala* or foreigners.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, the refusal of the British administrators to appoint a head of the *Sangha* and their rejection of the royal mandate to protect Buddhism significantly curtailed the monks' influence and forced them to survive on their own. The colonial administrative strategy of establishing a plural society while employing a strict rule of racialized division of labor prevented the British rulers from fully appreciating the extent to which religion shapes and defines the ethnic Burmese identity and its capacity for triggering future clashes.<sup>6</sup> The idea that people of different ethnoreligious groups could meet and interact in market places while observing their own beliefs and customs did not do much in placating the Buddhist majority who felt grave injustice over the monarchy's abolishment and Buddhism's relegation to the sidelines. The intergenerational hostile emotive effects of Buddhist nationalism continue to persist today, albeit in relation to a different

<sup>3</sup> See Ahmed, "Collective Feelings"; Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Hutchison and Bleiker, "Theorizing Emotions in World Politics."

<sup>4</sup> For more in-depth examination of Buddhism's political throughout Myanmar's colonial history, see Kipgen, *Myanmar: A Political History*; Taylor, "British Policy towards Myanmar and the Creation of the Burma Problem"; Turner, *The Impermanence of Religion in Colonial Burma*.

<sup>5</sup> Gravers, "The Ethno-Nationalist Struggle of the Karen in Burma/Myanmar"; see also Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*; Kyaw, "Legal Personhood and Cultural Personhood of Muslims in Myanmar"; South, *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict* for further reading.

<sup>6</sup> This point has been well accounted in Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*; Gravers, "The Ethno-Nationalist Struggle of the Karen in Burma/Myanmar"; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*.

target— the othered Muslims— as exemplified by these interview responses from some Burman Buddhist professionals:

Buddhism is what makes the Burman people Burmans. It is the core of our being and the center of our lives. Contrary to what you may have seen in the media ever since the Rohingya crisis came to light, Buddhism is the most peaceful religion you can ever experience. It's about peace, equality, and love. We have to accept the fact that in Myanmar, the majority of the people are Buddhists. Therefore, the minority needs to respect our beliefs and traditions. Unfortunately, some Muslims have been undermining the peace and unity in Myanmar because of their illegal activities. . . . Even if the educated people in Myanmar want to believe that Islam is also a good religion, however, when you hear about the bad things that some Muslims are doing to the non-Muslims in this country, it gets very difficult to trust them. Some of their actions create so much fear and hatred among the Buddhist people. . . . I am glad that the majority of the people here are Buddhists because we are not fanatics. . . . Buddhism is what unites most of the Burmans together.<sup>7</sup>

If you study our history properly, you would learn how Buddhism has helped the Burmese people defeat colonialism and achieve independence. The Buddhist people and our monks have worked hard to build our own nation. The Muslims did not help us in our fight. Many of them, especially the Bengalis, were brought here by our enemies and used to achieve their colonial interests at the expense of the Buddhist people. . . . Despite that, the Burmese people have been very reasonable with regard to the citizenship issue in order for the illegal Muslim settlers to acquire citizenship even though they don't have a single drop of Burmese blood. But as their population continues to increase, the land that they claim also expands. This is a threat to the native Arakanese people, who are the legitimate citizens and owners of those lands. . . . We are a sovereign country, and we deserve to create our own citizenship laws based on what we think will be good for our people and our nation.<sup>8</sup>

Here, we see the rationale behind hostile group-based emotions. Rather than dismissing them as irrational, they can be viewed as “rational” responses to threats and insecurities confronting rival ethnoreligious groups.<sup>9</sup> Put differently, these are externalities emanating from situations and events that are constantly being appraised and emotionally responded to, based on society's collective cognitive

<sup>7</sup> Author's interview, November 5, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>8</sup> Author's interview, November 8, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>9</sup> Fattah and Fierke, “A Clash of Emotions”; Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs”; Nussbaum, *The Intelligence of Emotions*.

and emotional dispositions.<sup>10</sup> As such, when an out-group displays a rather ambiguous behavior or attitude, the in-group can easily interpret and frame this as a significant existential threat amid a shared sense of victimization and chauvinistic feelings.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, this socio-cultural feature of emotions makes it possible for the other in-group members to assume and internalize the hostile emotions directly experienced by some of their members who were mistreated and abused by the outsiders.<sup>12</sup> Identifying oneself with an ethnoreligious group allows one to access and feel these shared hostile emotions on behalf of the community members.<sup>13</sup> In the process, the rival ethnoreligious factions are “constituted differently within two worlds” as the members come to embody opposing meanings and belongings.<sup>14</sup> Within a pluralistic polity, such powerful emotions do not just influence people’s attitudes, actions, and motivations<sup>15</sup> but are also pivotal in reconstructing and renegotiating a target group’s state of being and position. This world-making function of ethnoreligious nationalism and its emotive effects have been highly evident throughout Myanmar’s political history, especially during the colonial period.

To the Buddhist majority, the monastic community has an obligation to defend Buddhism since the general health of religion and the overall stability of Burmese polity are deemed to be hugely intertwined.<sup>16</sup> This arrangement resulted in the establishment of early religious-nationalist movements such as the Young Men’s Buddhist Association (YMBA) which the monks used to mount their protest against the British colonizers by touring around the country to give *dhamma* lectures on Buddhism and politics.<sup>17</sup> When a 1931 book allegedly published by a Muslim in 1931 got reprinted in 1938, a resolution demanding that the author be punished for purportedly mocking and threatening to exterminate Buddhism and its language was passed.<sup>18</sup> Even though the exact content of the book had never been verified, the Buddhist monks and their followers warned that if nothing was done, “steps will be taken to treat the Muslims as enemy number 1 ... and to bring

<sup>10</sup> Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*.

<sup>11</sup> Drawn from some of the experimental and empirical studies conducted by Bar-Tal et al., “A Sense of Self-Perceived Collective Victimhood in Intractable Conflicts”; Noor et al., “The Psychology of Competitive Victimhood between Adversarial Groups in Violent Conflicts”; and Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*.

<sup>12</sup> Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Mackie, Devos, and Smith, “Explaining Offensive Action Tendencies in an Intergroup Context”; Smith, Serger, and Mackie, “Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level? Evidence Regarding Four Conceptual Criteria?”

<sup>13</sup> This assertion is drawn from the research findings of Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; of Smith, “Social Identity and Social Emotions.”

<sup>14</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, 65, 93.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics”; Frijda, *The Emotions*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*.

<sup>16</sup> Schissler, Walton, and Thi, “Buddhist-Muslim Violence, Narrative Making and Memory in Myanmar”; Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar*.

<sup>17</sup> Matthews, “Buddhism under a Military Regime”; Taylor, *The State in Myanmar*.

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*.

about the extermination of Muslims and the extinction of their religion and language.”<sup>19</sup> A few days later, a newspaper company owned by a right-wing politician named U Saw published a monk’s incendiary letter which described the supposed miseries and pains suffered by many Burmese wives in the hands of their Muslim husbands.<sup>20</sup>

The upshots were predictable. Violent riots erupted once the stories about how Buddhist women were forced to give up their ethnic and religious identity to follow their spouses’ Islamic faith spread across the communities.<sup>21</sup> In 1938, members of the All Burma Council of Young Monks (numbering to about 1,500) attacked, pillaged, and razed Muslim-owned stores in response to the rumors about the Muslims’ plans to destroy the Sule and Shwe Dagon pagodas.<sup>22</sup> Guided by the slogans “Burma for Burmans” and “Master Race We Are, We Burmans,” the *Dobama* (We Burmans) movement resulted in the killings of 192 people of Indian descent and the arrests of more than 4,000 individuals.<sup>23</sup> The monks who staged demonstrations felt that it was their divine duty to intervene and correct the immoral and corrupt arrangements engendered by the British colonial system. As noted by a local Muslim leader, the strong and widespread perception that Burmese religious and cultural heritage is in constant danger of being replaced by foreign ones or that Theravada Buddhism would inevitably deteriorate and vanish has never completely escaped the minds of the Buddhist people despite gaining independence from Britain more than seventy years ago.<sup>24</sup> Interview responses from some ordinary Burman Buddhist citizens underscore these deep-seated sentiments and shared feelings of “Muslim threat” that continue to linger today:

To be a citizen of Myanmar, first of all, you need to exist. Those people you call Rohingya, in my view, do not exist, so how can they be citizens? I do not recognize their existence. What I mean is, there is no such thing as Rohingya. Those you call Rohingya are illegal Muslim settlers. They are not from Myanmar and, therefore, are not citizens. It is as simple as that. Myanmar citizenship is not for free ..., so

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, 10; see also Gravers, “The Ethno-Nationalist Struggle of the Karen in Burma/Myanmar”; McCarthy and Menager, “Gendered Rumours and the Muslim Scapegoat in Myanmar’s Transition.”

<sup>20</sup> Gravers, “The Ethno-Nationalist Struggle of the Karen in Burma/Myanmar”; McCarthy and Menager, “Gendered Rumours and the Muslim Scapegoat in Myanmar’s Transition”; Mendelson, *Sangha and the State in Burma*.

<sup>21</sup> Van Klinken and Aung, “The Contentious Politics of Anti-Muslim Scapegoating in Myanmar.”

<sup>22</sup> Cady, *A History of Modern Burma*; Gravers, “The Ethno-Nationalist Struggle of the Karen in Burma/Myanmar.”

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed discussion of the emergence, ethos, and impact of the *Dobama* movement, see Yi, *The Dobama Movement in Burma 1930–1938*; Nemoto, “The Concepts of *Dobama* and *Thudo-Bama* in Burmese Nationalism, 1930–1948.”

<sup>24</sup> Author’s interview, September 2, 2017, Myanmar; see also Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar*; Schissler, Walton, and Thi, “Buddhist-Muslim Violence, Narrative Making and Memory in Myanmar”; Walton and Hayward, *Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar*.

why are the foreigners forcing Aung San Suu Kyi and our government to accept these people as true Burmese people? They are not even Buddhists.<sup>25</sup>

There are many videos on Facebook showing the Rohingya soldiers raping Burman women, killing Buddhist people, and attacking the Myanmar military. They want to eliminate Buddhism in Myanmar and replace it with Islam. They always act like the victims, but in reality, they are the ones who want to hurt and kill us. Our Buddhist women who married Muslim men are being forced to convert to Islam. If they don't agree, their husbands severely beat them. They don't respect our religion even though we are the majority. But when the Buddhists question their religion, they don't hesitate to kill us and our families.<sup>26</sup>

Here, we see how hostile emotions are closely connected to multidirectional and multidimensional historical memories (both actual and constructed) underpinning the dynamics and relations between competing ethnoreligious populations. These emotions and their attached meanings are continually being duplicated and bolstered by the socio-cultural memories ingrained in and conveyed through the historical narratives, cultural symbolisms, and identity imageries of chauvinistic ethnoreligious nationalisms which the insiders recount about themselves and the outsiders.<sup>27</sup> This condition has been particularly salient in Myanmar, where Buddhism came to be seen as the panacea for the perceived moral disorder in the country, guiding the cultivation of Burmese nationalism and the framing of identity politics amid colonialism. The state's promotion of Buddhist nationalism inevitably drove the proliferation of anti-Muslim narratives that regularly emphasized the perils of the creeping Islamization of Myanmar.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, despite fierce oppositions from Muslim and Christian groups, the country's first prime minister, U Nu, declared Buddhism as the official state religion as a means of undoing some of the colonial legacies of their former British rulers.<sup>29</sup> The move emboldened some of the younger and more conservative monks who protested against the building of mosques and inter-ethnic unions, particularly between Muslim men and Buddhist women.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, when the Communist Party of Burma started its revolutionary campaign in 1948, the military saw yet

<sup>25</sup> Author's interview, November 9, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>26</sup> Author's interview, September 5, 2017, Myanmar.

<sup>27</sup> The works of Collins, *Occupied by Memory*; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*; and Young, "Bodily Memory and Traumatic Memory" offer nuanced explanations of how these memories are simultaneously producing and being sustained by individual and collective emotions.

<sup>28</sup> Frydenlund, "The Birth of Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom in Myanmar"; Schissler, Walton, and Thi, "Buddhist-Muslim Violence, Narrative Making and Memory in Myanmar"; Van Klinken and Aung, "The Contentious Politics of Anti-Muslim Scapegoating in Myanmar."

<sup>29</sup> Crouch, *Islam and the State in Myanmar*; Matthews, "Buddhism under a Military Regime"; Mang, "Buddhist Nationalism and Burmese Christianity."

<sup>30</sup> Gravers, "The Ethno-Nationalist Struggle of the Karen in Burma/Myanmar"; McCarthy, "Legitimacy under Military Rule: Burma."



another opportunity to promote Buddhism by distributing pamphlets such as the *Dhammantaraya* (“Dhamma/Buddhism in Danger”), which denounced the anti-religious philosophy of Marxism, along with its other “corrupt” beliefs and foreign influences.<sup>31</sup>

Even as General Ne Win took over the helm of power after a successful coup in 1962, the cultivation of Buddhist nationalism continued. Due to the authoritarian nature of his government, cultural pluralism was fiercely suppressed, fearing that it would only exacerbate power competitions among the country’s diverse ethnic communities.<sup>32</sup> While the *Tatmadaw’s* efforts to control the faith and the monks seemed to have undermined the central place of Buddhism in Myanmar society, Ne Win’s persistent propagation of Buddhist nationalism while curbing Islamic and Christian influences secured its dominance over the conception and construction of the “Burman” territorial nation-state. These interviews with Muslim and Buddhist participants originally from Rakhine encapsulate the profound emotional impact of competing ethnoreligious nationalisms and the contrasting lived experiences between their respective groups with nation-state building in Myanmar:

Sometimes I can’t help but ask myself if I am really from Myanmar even though I am one of those few Muslims who have been given citizenship. Maybe because when we were young, we were taught that the Buddhists are the enemies... I still feel very different from the Buddhist people... Many still treat me differently once they find out that I am Rohingya. They suddenly change their attitude and how they communicate with me... When I saw Aung San Suu Kyi’s speech about the Rakhine affairs, I lost my trust in her because of the things that she has said about us. My father even used to defend her from her critics, but he was also one of the victims of the conflicts. He died of cancer while he was in Bangladesh and never received treatment.<sup>33</sup>

The international media is only interested in hearing the stories of the Bengali Muslims who have been accusing the military of torturing them. They don’t even want to hear how much the Buddhist people in Rakhine have suffered because of these illegal migrants. Since their arrival, the Buddhist people have faced so many problems... Their plan is to steal our lands and then claim independence for themselves. They do this by rapidly increasing their population. They want to invade the whole Rakhine region and convert everyone living here to Islam... Those Bengalis are definitely not the victims here... Their army also killed many

<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch, “The Resistance of the Monks: Buddhism and Activism in Myanmar”; Von der Mehden, “Burma’s Religious Campaign against Communism.”

<sup>32</sup> Nakanishi, *The State and Military in Burma*; Kipgen, *Myanmar: A Political History*; and Steinberg, *Burma/Myanmar: What Everyone Needs to Know* provide an extensive analysis of the authoritarian rule in the country and its impact on inter-ethnic/religious relations.

<sup>33</sup> Author’s interview, November 6, 2019, Myanmar.

Buddhist families... . After allowing them to settle in our lands, this is how they repaid us by planning to exterminate the Buddhist people.<sup>34</sup>

This investigation of the emotive mechanistic evidence (Stage 1) of ethnoreligious othering in Myanmar demonstrated how ethnoreligious nationalism provided the affective lexicon that the elite and non-elite agents jointly cultivated and exploited. This language enabled them to initiate the othering of the target group by serving as a primary reservoir of identity and morale, and legitimize the appeals for group mobilization amid the shifting structural conditions underpinning their relative security, power, and status. The hostile emotions that crystallized through this process engendered a collective view among the members of rival ethnoreligious groups that they were all responsible for the security and survival of their own ethnic and faith.

Accordingly, devising an emotive discourse designed to revitalize and reinforce the foundations of their respective identities and homelands became a crucial part of their defense strategy against the existential threats posed by the ethnoreligious others. But while the cultivation and propagation of particular forms of ethnoreligious nationalism provided the referent group with a greater sense of security and control, however, it also created corresponding levels of insecurity on the part of the target group.

### **Securitizing the Othered Muslim (vs. Burman Buddhist) Threat**

As the myth of Burmese deracination began to proliferate, Buddhist nationalist militants demanded the adoption of constitutional instruments that could safeguard Buddhism from the Muslims' alleged attempts at "Islamizing" Myanmar. The resulting Burmanization of the "national" identity and homeland has led to the creation of highly discriminatory legislations intended to subjugate, if not ultimately, expel those ethnoreligious groups deemed as threats to the cohesion and integrity of the idealized Burman Buddhist nation-state, particularly the othered Muslims. Amid this context, the following discussions demonstrate how the symbolic causal mechanism of ethnoreligious othering (Stage 2) facilitated the hostile securitization of the outsiders as threats to the insiders' security, power, and status within Myanmar's pluralistic polity. State and non-state elite efforts in framing the perceived Islamization or "Burmanization" (i.e., Buddhization) of the whole Myanmar as a security threat against the Buddhist and Muslim communities, respectively, were meant to connect strongly with the hostile symbolic predispositions of their constituencies to precipitate actions.

<sup>34</sup> Author's interview, September 2, 2017, Myanmar.

This entailed the simultaneous conceptualization of the self and reconceptualization of the others as strangers and enemies based on the underlying prejudices and ideologies informed by the hostile emotive effects of Buddhist and Islamic nationalisms. Similar to how this process unfolded in Indonesia, the securitization of ethnoreligious others stimulated a violent cycle of mass hostility, ethnocentric mobilization, and security dilemma between the rival groups. This string of reactions rationalized the implementation of chauvinistic measures judged necessary for the defense of identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states at risk: the recourse to brutal Buddhist-Muslim “just wars” that killed thousands. These discussions with some independent journalists and media personnel illuminate how these predispositions drive the securitization of ethnoreligious others and offer vital information about how the target audiences intentionally (or unintentionally) partake and consent to this process:

... The state does not allow the media to carry out its own investigation, which means that we have to rely on the information coming from the government.... Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the people get very affected by the news contents that come out of the media, and that prevents many journalists from observing proper media ethics. For example, if we write news articles that do not criticize the Rohingya Muslims or paint them as the victims, people will think that we are siding with the Rohingya... . Because of this, negative stories about the Rohingya people ... spread very quickly... . If they don't see immediate actions from government officials, they will be branded as Muslim sympathizers or coddlers of terrorists. Some conservative Buddhists even criticize Aung San Suu Kyi ... they think that's she's being very soft on this issue, which negatively affects her popularity.<sup>35</sup>

... Our government denies that our security forces have committed genocide against the Rohingya people but wouldn't let the media to interview those local actors who have been involved in the conflicts and the victims of these violent clashes... . The information that comes from the *Tatmadaw* officials exacerbates the hatred and animosity that many Buddhist people in Rakhine and the rest of Myanmar already feel toward the Rohingya Muslims... . When they heard that the Rohingya militants attacked and killed some policemen, they got even more aggressive and more hostile toward the Muslim people in their communities... . They supported the *Tatmadaw's* violent operations against the Rohingya, either directly or indirectly, because they were convinced that the Rohingya were really planning to attack their villages and kill them... . It's difficult for journalists and other media practitioners to counter these narratives against the Rohingya because we have no access to Rakhine... .<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Author's interview, November 8, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>36</sup> Author's interview, November 6 and 11, 2019, Myanmar.

Here, we see the tendency of certain ethnoreligious group members to depend on internally deduced generalizations regardless of the evidence and, by doing so, assume the risks that they might be wrong.<sup>37</sup> This underscores the considerable influence of the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism on the symbolic predispositions of rival groups, particularly their chauvinistic beliefs and biases. The referent group's ethnocentric and prejudiced views of the others, for example, are the "ports" through which fear, hatred, resentment, anger, and rage wield their influence over human affairs.<sup>38</sup> Experiencing and undergoing these emotions affects a person's or a group's predispositions and the level on which these predispositions are received and tolerated.<sup>39</sup> Such predispositions and the behaviors and attitudes that they inspire are both individually and socially conditioned, just like emotions.<sup>40</sup> Similar to those symbolic predispositions examined in Indonesia, some are tied directly to individual members' personal experiences and memories, and the others are indirect results of the narratives and programs promoted through various institutional channels.<sup>41</sup> Regardless of how they are formed, however, these hostile predispositions and the hostile emotions embedded in them ultimately distort individual and group judgments.<sup>42</sup>

This condition has also become pervasive in Myanmar, specifically between its Buddhist and Muslim communities, where the hostile emotive effects of clashing ethnoreligious nationalisms have worsened these chauvinistic predispositions and their consequent damaging behaviors. The Citizenship Law passed in 1982, for instance, was a crucial component of a series of actions implemented by the nationalist Myanmar government intended to shore up Burmese ethnic power by securing the dominant Buddhist faith.<sup>43</sup> Under this law, a person is given a color-coded Citizenship Scrutiny Card that corresponds with the status of their citizenship and the rights that come with it: pink for full citizenship, blue for associate citizenship, and green for naturalized citizenship. Citizens must carry these cards at all times, which include information about their religious affiliations (only one) and ethnic identities (can be multiple). Full citizenship is granted only to members of the eight indigenous races (*taing-yin-tha*), which the state identified and

<sup>37</sup> Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs."

<sup>38</sup> Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, *Emotions and Beliefs*.

<sup>39</sup> Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs"; Öhman and Wiens, "The Concept of an Evolved Fear Module and Cognitive Theories of Anxiety"

<sup>40</sup> Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Mercer, "Social Emotion and Identity."

<sup>41</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Sears, "Symbolic Politics"; Smith and Collins, "Dual-Process Models: A Social Psychological Perspective."

<sup>42</sup> Elster, *Rationality and the Emotion*; Kaufman, "Symbols, Frames, and Violence"; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs."

<sup>43</sup> For a detailed assessment of Myanmar's citizenship law and its impact on some ethnoreligious minorities, see Archana and Alam, "The National Laws of Myanmar"; Cheesman, "How in Myanmar 'National Races' Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya"; Haque, "Rohingya Ethnic Muslim Minority and the 1982 Citizenship Law in Burma"; South and Lall, *Citizenship in Myanmar*.

believed to have already settled in Myanmar before the start of British occupation in 1824.

These “first-class” citizens are the Bamar, composed of nine different ethnic groups; Chin with 53; Kachin with 12; Kayin with 11; Kayah with 9; Mon as 1; Rakhine with 7; and Shan with 33. Meanwhile, associate citizenship is given to those who applied for citizenship under the 1948 Union Citizenship Law but were no longer qualified under the new law. These “second-class” citizens are composed mainly of individuals who failed to provide strong evidence proving that their ancestors lived in Myanmar before 1823, and the children of mixed marriages where one of the parents is a member of a recognized indigenous race. Lastly, naturalized citizenship is assigned to those who can provide conclusive evidence showing that they or their parents entered and settled in Burma before its independence in 1948 and applied for citizenship after 1982. Most of these “third-class” citizens are descendants of immigrants who arrived in the country during the British colonial period and those with at least one parent holding one of the three types of Burmese citizenship. Other ethnic groups not mentioned on the list are denied citizenship and are barred from possessing identity cards.<sup>44</sup> The impact of these institutionalized negative biases against the Muslims, particularly the Rohingya, are evident in the group discussion with some members of a Buddhist women’s group:

Since we were little kids, our views toward the Muslims, especially those with dark skin, have been quite negative. Our parents and the other elders in our villages would often call them *kalar*. When we don’t listen to our parents and are being difficult, they would threaten us by saying, “We will give you to the *kalar*.” So, growing up, our image of a *kalar* Muslim is that of a scary monster. We grew up thinking that they’re different from us, not only in terms of how they look, but also in terms of their attitude and their behavior. . . . When I became a mother, I’ve also been telling my children the same things about the *kalar* so that they would behave. Now I see them in the news attacking the Buddhist people in Rakhine. They’ve been killing our soldiers and our policemen, and we can’t help but get scared and think that it’s maybe because they want to convert everyone to Islam.<sup>45</sup>

These people are not Burmese, they are Bengalis, and that’s why they don’t have citizenship. . . . I don’t accept them as Burmese because, first of all, it’s obvious that they don’t look like us. They look like those people from India because that’s where they came from. But even though the Buddhists in Rakhine allowed them to live there permanently, they still committed many crimes and brought a lot of problems. How can we accept and welcome these people back in our lands after

<sup>44</sup> Cheesman, *How Myanmar’s Courts Make Law and Order*; Crouch, *The Constitution of Myanmar*; Human Rights Watch, “Discrimination in Arakan”; Kyaw, “Legal Personhood and Cultural Personhood of Muslims in Myanmar.”

<sup>45</sup> Author’s interview, November 22, 2019, Myanmar.

what they have done? The rules need to be properly implemented and followed. Based on our laws, they are not legal citizens of this country, so they can't return.<sup>46</sup>

Even if we allow the Bengalis to return to our country, they should be treated as foreigners and not as citizens. Burmese citizenship is not for free. If they want to return here, they need to apply for a foreign residence card. Government authorities need to conduct thorough investigations on them to make sure that no Muslim terrorist can enter our country. They also need to follow all the laws of Myanmar and not just their own Islamic culture. For example, they need to stop marrying Buddhist women and forcing them to become Muslims. That's why we will never allow our children, especially our daughters, to marry Muslims. If they do that, they will no longer be welcomed into our families... . Our government must make sure that Buddhism is always protected; that's why I can never accept a Muslim to become the president of Myanmar and let Myanmar become an Islamic country.<sup>47</sup>

Here, we see how the presence and proliferation of negative predispositions help define the primary interests of an ethnoreligious group and the corresponding aggressive strategies deemed necessary to secure these goals. The more these hostile predispositions become widespread within an ethnoreligious community, the more the members become symbolically and emotionally estranged from the non-members, thus amplifying the latter's otherness and strangeness.<sup>48</sup> The predisposition of an in-group to think of the out-group as inherently evil or naturally corrupt is simultaneously informed by and reinforcing the fear, hatred, resentment, anger, or rage confronting the insiders. The heightened sense of threat stimulated by these emotionally laden hostile predispositions, in turn, increases group support for chauvinistic and aggressive measures against the target.<sup>49</sup>

In Myanmar's case, for example, although the exact origin of the government's list of indigenous races is not exactly known and its formal status remains unclear, the country's Ministry of Immigration and Population continues to use and refer to it.<sup>50</sup> By significantly curtailing, if not completely rejecting the rights of those who do not meet the citizenship criteria, the law has effectively stripped the normative basis of a person's constitutional rights under the guise of defending the rights of the legitimate Burmese.<sup>51</sup> The state's absolute authority for determining

<sup>46</sup> Author's interview, November 22, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>47</sup> Author's interview, November 22, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>48</sup> This claim is also informed by the works of Ahmed, *Strange Encounters* and *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Butler, *Frames of War*; and Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism," which all explore (to varying degrees) how emotions and predispositions contribute to the social construction of the "othered strangers."

<sup>49</sup> Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Sears, "Symbolic Politics."

<sup>50</sup> Frydenlund, "The Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom during Myanmar's Transition to Democracy?"

<sup>51</sup> Cheesman, *How Myanmar's Courts Make Law and Order*; Crouch, *The Constitution of Myanmar*.

which group qualifies as a “national” race and, therefore, deserving of citizenship gives it a powerful tool for the systematic othering of all ethnoreligious minorities considered threats to the conceptual cohesion and material integrity of Myanmar’s nation-statehood.

This is precisely what happened to the Rohingya Muslims who have been deprived of citizenship, making them the world’s largest stateless population within a country today. Despite being able to trace the group’s history to the eighth century, in the eyes of the ruling government and most Burman Buddhists, the Rohingya are “resident foreigners” because the Rohingyan ethnic race is not indigenous to Myanmar. Such framing implies that the Rohingya entity is a modern construct—they are “Chittagonian Bengalis” brought illegally to Myanmar by the British colonizers—as many local Burman Buddhists believe.<sup>52</sup> Since many Rohingya families migrated to Arakan (Rakhine’s old name) during this period, they were immediately excluded from being considered Burmese citizens. Yet, even for those whose ancestors resided in the region before 1823, the exceedingly burdensome process of producing irrefutable proof of their historical lineage and residence has made it virtually impossible for the majority of them to secure citizenship.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, as one civil society organization pointed out, the Rohingya Muslims have become easy targets of extremely aggressive, intolerant, and ethnocentric attitudes and actions that further rationalize their methodical debasement and dehumanization.<sup>54</sup>

Here, we can see why threat frames are designed to resonate strongly and clearly with the ethnoreligious group members’ hostile symbolic predispositions and emotions. And that is to ensure that the intended audience will indeed feel threatened and, in turn, convince them that aggressive measures are necessary to tackle the threat effectively.<sup>55</sup> This dynamic has been widely observed in pluralistic polities like Myanmar, where threats to physical safety and social security are rampant. Such conditions give the securitizing agents greater capacity to persuade the public about the importance of taking more aggressive actions in response to the identified threats, especially when the members perceive them and their threat frames to be credible.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, feelings of threat significantly increase distrust, forcing

<sup>52</sup> Author’s interview, September 8, 2017; see also Ahmed, *Plight of the Stateless Rohingyas*; Ullah, “Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar”; Ibrahim, *Inside Myanmar’s Genocide*.

<sup>53</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Discrimination in Arakan”; Haque, “Rohingya Ethnic Muslim Minority and the 1982 Citizenship Law in Burma”; Kipgen, “The Rohingya Crisis.”

<sup>54</sup> Author’s interview, September 3, 2017; see also Berlie, *The Burmanization of Myanmar’s Muslims*; Macmanus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Genocide in Myanmar*; Zarni and Cowley, “The Slow-Burning Genocide of Myanmar’s Rohingya”; and Ibrahim, *Inside Myanmar’s Genocide* for a comprehensive report on the still ongoing persecution of the Rohingya Muslims in the country.

<sup>55</sup> Kaufman, “War as Symbolic Politics.”

<sup>56</sup> Butler, *Frames of War*; Hirschberger and Pyszczynski, “An Existential Perspective on Ethno-Political Violence”; Kaufman, “Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice” and “Symbols, Frames, and Violence.”

rival ethnoreligious group members to be suspicious of the others including their benign and non-threatening behaviors and attitudes.<sup>57</sup>

In Myanmar, the arbitrary rewriting and recasting of the Rohingya narrative and image amid an intensifying feeling of threat have prevented them from fitting within and fulfilling the standard requirements for Burman identity and citizenship. The following insights from these separate discussions with Buddhist monks and a Muslim *ulama* underline the influence of hostile symbolic predispositions on the reconceptualization and renegotiation of the ethnoreligious others' identity and status as enemies and outcasts:

The most fundamental and important teaching in Buddhism is to not do any evil, to cultivate goodness, and to purify the heart. We teach our followers to develop humanity and patience, be kind and giving, and have wisdom and compassion. These are the core virtues that all Buddhist people must have in them. Unfortunately, the crisis in Rakhine has brought out our worst human qualities... . Some took advantage of the situation and twisted the words of Buddha to pursue their immoral agenda. They exploited the innocent and vulnerable Buddhist people who felt insecure and used them to propagate a message of hate and bigotry against others... . Instead of guiding our people to the righteous path, some extremist groups reinforced the people's negative attitudes and feelings toward certain groups like the Muslims. That's why their members and supporters started to target Muslims in general... . This is certainly not what true Buddhism is about but its exact opposite... .<sup>58</sup>

... A true Muslim proves his faithfulness and loyalty to Allah by showing love and compassion to other people, whether Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, or Hindus. This is why we always say that our religion is a religion of peace. Unfortunately, because of the wrong opinions and very negative impressions that many Burmese people have toward us, we've been the targets of extreme abuses and discriminations... . They think that we are less Burmese because we are Muslims. For hundreds of years, we have been treated as outsiders and as illegal settlers. And because of that, we've endured so many tragedies in our lives. Many Muslims are tired of the constant persecution that we've been dealing with since birth, as the Rohingya in Rakhine... . We understand their pain and their suffering, but

<sup>57</sup> The works of Bar-Tal, "Conflicts and Social Psychology"; Halperin, "Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution"; and Spanovic et al., "Fear and Anger as Predictors of Motivation for Intergroup Aggression" offer crucial insights regarding the underlying "socio-psychological repertoire" that help explain this dynamic.

<sup>58</sup> Author's interview, November 12 and 18, 2019, Myanmar.



unfortunately, there's very little that we can do to help them. In fact, many Muslims are also afraid to talk about what's happening to the Rohingya people because they're scared that they too might become targets.<sup>59</sup>

Together with the chauvinistic motives and actions that they engender, these interplaying hostile predispositions and hostile emotions are at the center of escalating security dilemma characterized by predatory goals and the need for uncontested dominance.<sup>60</sup> Under this scenario, the more antagonistic and hostile the in-group's predispositions and emotions in relation to the out-group are, the more insiders will feel threatened by the outsiders' actions to fulfill their own security requirements, trapping them into a spiraling security dilemma. This scenario has also become particularly pronounced in Myanmar, where the subsequent clearance operations conducted by its armed forces in the name of Burmanization have inexorably implicated the government in the ongoing charges of ethnic cleansing and state-sponsored genocide of the Rohingya Muslims.

The Buddhist nationalist accord that emerged and progressed during sixty years of the British colonial period and fifty years of military rule has underwritten the development and spread of discriminatory laws and exclusionary norms. Compulsory birth control, restrictions on marriage, prohibition from positions of power, and denial of employment in government institutions (e.g., police, army, and judiciary) are just some of the instruments that are used to reinforce the distinctions between the "legitimate" Burman Buddhists and "illegitimate" Rohingya Muslims.<sup>61</sup> By rendering them stateless, they have been effectively dispossessed of their right to have rights. A correspondence with a Muslim (originally from Myanmar) and Burman Buddhist residing abroad illuminate the symbolic and emotional residues of these violent conflicts and their effects on inter-group predispositions even among those who have not been directly involved:

When my family learned about what's happening to the Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine, we felt a kind of fear we never felt before... . If they could do such horrific crimes to the Rohingya, they might do the same thing to our families and relatives in Myanmar. We can't make any mistake because that might be used further against us, so we feel a lot more pressure to act in a way that's acceptable to the Buddhist people. But after a while, you'd get tired of being afraid and scared, and you start to question why you are being mistreated just

<sup>59</sup> Author's interview, November 8, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>60</sup> Kaufman's "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice" and "Symbols, Frames, and Violence" systematically probe the importance of these non-materialist/rationalist factors in explaining the security dilemma spiral in specific conflict contexts.

<sup>61</sup> See the reports published by Fortify Rights, "Preparations for Genocide and Crimes against Humanity against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, Myanmar"; and UN Commission on Human Rights, "Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar."

because you're a Muslim... . Even though we haven't been directly targeted, we can't help but feel very suspicious of the government after seeing the videos and photos of what the military did to our Muslim brothers and sisters. We were distraught to realize how easy it was for other people to kill and murder Muslims in Myanmar.<sup>62</sup>

I don't think it's fair for the world to accuse Myanmar of genocide because what our military did was self-defense. The Rohingya terrorists were prepared to kill all the Buddhist people and the non-Muslims in Rakhine. So, they had to be protected... . We are very angry because they destroyed the reputation and honor of the Buddhist people... . The terrorist attacks launched by the Rohingya people proved that they could not be trusted and have no desire to be part of Myanmar. What they really wanted was to invade our lands and make Myanmar a Muslim country. I feel very betrayed, and it will be difficult for me to accept them back. Their actions have made it more difficult for our country to develop and move forward because now we have to use our limited resources in rebuilding Rakhine instead of spending the money on other projects like education and health services... .<sup>63</sup>

This investigation of the symbolic mechanistic evidence (Stage 2) of ethnoreligious othering in Myanmar demonstrated how the securitization of target ethnoreligious groups as existential threats redefined the given realities of the security context underpinning a pluralistic polity. By marking specific targets as enemies, the securitizing agents from rival factions were able to project the blame onto each other. This, in turn, allowed them to concoct and employ the “necessary” chauvinistic solutions for defeating their designated enemies with the approval and consent of their respective constituencies. By tapping into their groups' hostile predispositions, these securitizing agents constructed and employed threat frames that resonated credibly and strongly with their audiences, thereby convincing them about the reality of the threats (physical or social) posed by the ethnoreligious others. The in-group's negative biases toward the out-group amplified their feelings of threat when confronted with the latter's suspicious behaviors. And when faced with what seemed like an obvious threat, the in-group's more positive biases vis-à-vis the out-group did not deter it from feeling threatened but only reinforced its hostile predispositions against the latter. In navigating these new realities that emerged through this process, aggression, intolerance, and ethnocentrism became regular features of ethnoreligious relations.

<sup>62</sup> Author's online discussion, November 12, 2018.

<sup>63</sup> Author's online discussion, December 2, 2017.

## **Sacralizing the Burman Buddhist (vs. Othered Islamic) Identity, Homeland, and Territorial Nation-State**

Notwithstanding the 2008 “secularist” Constitution being flaunted by the Myanmar government, its promotion of Burman Buddhist nationalism and support for the Citizenship Law created an atmosphere of tyranny and hostility toward its ethnoreligious minorities. On paper, the laws clearly state that (1) religion cannot be used to secure electoral ends and applied in official state politics; that (2) religious elites cannot establish their political parties and have no right to suffrage; and that (3) political parties are strictly forbidden from “writing, delivering speech or organizing and instigating that can cause conflict, or that can affect dignity and morals relating to nationality, religion, individual or public.”<sup>64</sup> However, such constitutional provisions do not necessarily reflect the regime’s fundamental approach with respect to the various ethnoreligious issues confronting it, particularly in regards to the minorities.

From this angle, the following discussions demonstrate how the perceptual causal mechanism of ethnoreligious othering (Stage 3) facilitated the hostile sacralization of conflicting conceptions of the ideal ethnoreligious identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state within Myanmar’s pluralistic polity. The perception that these primary security referents needed to be pure and indivisible obliged state and non-state actors from the rival groups to dictate the nature and content of the state’s security superstructures (rhetoric, policies, strategies, and institutions) by embedding their own ethnoreligious substructures (myths, doctrines, norms, and dogmas) into these instruments. A group’s inability to do so severely jeopardizes its members’ rights and space within the prevailing arrangement.

In this case, the Burman Buddhists, like their Indonesian Muslim counterparts, have successfully implanted these substructures into the state’s security superstructures, thus maintaining their preponderant power and position relative to the othered Muslims. Meanwhile, the marginalization of the Muslim elites to the periphery largely diminished both their clout and the ability of their group’s ethnoreligious substructures to stimulate the security superstructures needed for the propagation of their ideal “Myanmar” identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state. Discussions with members of a local peace organization highlight the dangers of losing influence and power over these security superstructures by naturalizing and normalizing the pre-existing order between the Burman Buddhists and the othered Muslims:

This is a very sensitive issue for us, and you should understand that not everyone supports the Rohingya, even among the Muslim communities. There are also Muslims who believe that they are Bengalis who have been causing a lot of trouble

<sup>64</sup> As stated in the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2008, <http://www.myanmar-law-library.org/law-library/laws-and-regulations/constitutions/2008-constitution.html>.

for the other Muslims in Myanmar. Because they are not considered a legitimate ethnic group, many of our fellow Muslims don't support their cause... . As Muslims, there are some hurdles and challenges that we have to face each day, but because of what the Bengalis did, things have gotten worse for many of us... . As peace advisers, we've been working so hard to mitigate the conflicts and misunderstandings between the Muslim and Buddhist communities, but because of the terrorist activities of the Bengali people in Rakhine, our efforts and initiatives have been seriously compromised. So, we don't want to take sides as much as possible because it might be interpreted as a form of opposition to the government. If that happens, then it will be disastrous for the innocent Muslims who have nothing to do with the Bengali people... . We understand ... that because we are the minority, our chances of being elected for higher government positions are very slim. However, that is always the case in many countries. The majority is always the most politically influential and powerful group. So, that's something that we can accept. The most important thing is to do our best to improve the day-to-day life of the Muslims in this country.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to the cognitive processing and social construction of existential threats and their meanings, here we see how ethnoreligious group members are also often predisposed toward threat perception. This increases the tendency of rival groups to adopt and display defensive attitudes and behaviors vis-à-vis the others. From an evolutionary standpoint, this intrinsic bias in the direction of a low threat threshold can be particularly useful, especially when a group believes that falsely launching defense mechanisms or responses is less risky than failing to implement one when the threat is real.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, this dynamic aggravates the already hostile emotional and symbolic relationships between ethnoreligious factions and, in turn, widens their psychological and cultural differences further. The more that the insiders fail to perceive the outsiders' emotions and predispositions as similarly benign as their own, the more they will discriminate against them.<sup>67</sup>

Looking at the Myanmar case, for example, although Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Animism are recognized as "religions existing in the Union," the Constitution gives Buddhism a unique position and privilege as the majority religion, setting it apart from and above the other denominations. Accordingly, the state is expected to institutionalize and legitimize the protection of the "sacred" Buddhist polity even at the expense of the othered ethnoreligious groups, particularly the Rohingya Muslims.<sup>68</sup> As one NGO executive commented, the

<sup>65</sup> Author's group discussion, November 20, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>66</sup> See Johnson and Toft, "Grounds for War"; Öhman, "Fear and Anxiety as Emotional Phenomena"; Öhman and Wiens, "The Concept of an Evolved Fear Module and Cognitive Theories of Anxiety."

<sup>67</sup> Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics" and "Institutionalizing Passion in World Politics."

<sup>68</sup> Crouch, *The Constitution of Myanmar*; Nilsen and Tønnesson, "Can Myanmar's 2008 Constitution Be Made to Satisfy Ethnic Aspirations?"; South and Lall, *Citizenship in Myanmar*; Ghai, "The 2008 Myanmar Constitution."

reluctance to decisively defeat the “Rohingya threat” is often interpreted as softness on the part of the state, if not a conspiracy amid the looming “Islamization” of Myanmar.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, efforts to promote human rights norms and investigate the abuses being committed against the Rohingya are often viewed by many Burman Buddhists as a means of encouraging the growth and spread of Islam and its “bastards.”<sup>70</sup> Even government declarations endorsing democratic pluralism for fostering peaceful ethnoreligious relations are construed as an excuse for reducing and regulating the Burman Buddhists’ political power and cultural status in the country.

The emergence and reproduction of such narratives and perceptions about the Rohingya Muslims have been enabled significantly by certain extremist groups that continue to aspire for a “pure” Buddhist Myanmar that the “rightful” Burmese people deserved. As part of their strategy, they proselytize about the sacred duty of the laypeople in defending the Burman Buddhist identity and homeland against the perceived dangers being posed by the ethnoreligious others, specifically the Muslims. Instead of guiding the conduct of their followers in accordance with the *dhamma*, the monks behind these organizations are helping the Buddhist nationalists to compartmentalize and exonerate their actions against the othered Muslims.<sup>71</sup> These comments from a supporter of one of these extremist groups capture the logic underpinning their attempts at sacralizing the Burman Buddhist identity and homeland, along with their ideal version of the Myanmar nation-state:

I think they are just defending our loved ones from the Muslims who want to swallow the Buddhist people and our entire country. They are giving us warnings about what can happen to us if we are not careful. Look at all the bad things that are happening in many Western countries today because of the influx of Muslims. I heard from many people, including some of the foreigners here in Myanmar, that the spread of Islam has already killed many people in other countries. We do not want terrorism to happen here in Myanmar, but unfortunately, it’s now happening in the Rakhine because of the illegal Muslims. . . . I don’t think it will end in Rakhine. If we don’t stop them, they will also bring Islam and terrorism in other regions like Ayeyarwady and Chin until the whole of Burma becomes a Muslim country. I don’t understand why the government always tries to arrest those Buddhist monks who express their honest political opinions. It’s very unfair for the Buddhist people who just want to defend our rights and our country.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Author’s interview, September 6, 2017.

<sup>70</sup> Ullah, “Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar”; Kipgen, “Conflict in Rakhine State in Myanmar”; Kyaw, “Legal Personhood and Cultural Personhood of Muslims in Myanmar.”

<sup>71</sup> Frydenlund, “The Birth of Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom in Myanmar”; International Crisis Group, “Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar.”

<sup>72</sup> Author’s interview, September 6, 2017.

Similar to the Indonesian case, the prevailing emotional and symbolic relations between ethnoreligious communities in Myanmar have considerable impacts on how their members attribute motives to the attitudes and actions of the othered. In other words, the hostile perceptions that a group has toward the target group are fundamentally tied to the hostile emotions and predispositions being held by its members. This is because individuals and groups emotionally and symbolically label their relationships with the outsiders, and these labels affect how they perceive the others and interpret their actions.<sup>73</sup> As such, ethnoreligious groups are routinely assigning causes and motives to each other's behaviors and are constantly appraising the reliability of the reasons provided by the out-group for their conduct.

This entire process is guided by the pre-existing emotional and symbolic relationships between ethnoreligious communities, which determine the "forms" of intent (e.g., threatening or non-threatening) attributed to each action.<sup>74</sup> Amid the proliferation of hostile emotions and hostile predispositions, hostile perceptions of chosen identity, holy land, and homogenous nation-state are also amplified, resulting in undesirable and often specious assessments of the ethnoreligious others and their ambiguous behaviors. The ripeness of this condition in Myanmar helps explain the government's passage of the Control of Population and Health Care Law designed to prevent the population of "illegal Bengalis" from increasing and the Monogamy Law that is intended to reduce the size of Muslim families particularly in the Rakhine region as parts of the umbrella Race and Religion Protection Laws in 2015.<sup>75</sup>

Behind these legislations are some ultranationalist religious groups such as the Ma Ba Tha, which claims to secure the primacy of Theravada Buddhism and the Burman Buddhists in Myanmar. The group is made up of monks, nuns, and lay people who believe that they have a divine duty to protect their faith and their people from Muslim invasion. Those who tried to question the validity and soundness of their ideology and legislative proposals were accused of colluding with the Muslim enemies.<sup>76</sup> Its leader, Ashin Wirathu (dubbed as the Face of Buddhist Terror), has admitted that these laws are meant to eradicate Muslim practices to

<sup>73</sup> Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs"; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*.

<sup>74</sup> Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>75</sup> The two other components of the legislative package include the the Religious Conversion Law to prohibit the "forced" conversion of Buddhist women to Islam and the the Interfaith Marriage Law that is supposed to ensure the rights of Buddhist women married to Muslim men to religious freedom and their protection against sexual violence. See Crouch, "Constructing Religion by Law in Myanmar"; Frydenlund, "Constructing Religion by Law in Myanmar"; Walton, McKay, and Mar Mar Kyi, "Women and Myanmar's Religious Protection Laws."

<sup>76</sup> See Kyaw, "Islamophobia in Buddhist Myanmar"; Than, "Old and New Wunthanu Movements in Myanmar"; Lee, "How Myanmar's Political and Media Freedoms are Being Used to Limit Muslim Rights."

prevent a future of Islamic tyranny that would “surely” lead to the persecution and annihilation of the Burman Buddhists.<sup>77</sup> The following excerpts from separate interviews with a Muslim activist, a Muslim party representative, and a group of Muslim youths, reveal how these Buddhist-configured security superstructures are challenging their consciousness and control vis-à-vis their own ethnoreligious identity and homeland:

In the eyes of the Burmese government, the Muslims in this country cannot claim to be a hundred percent people of Myanmar. When applying for citizenship, we are forced to choose either Myanmar-India, Myanmar-Bangladesh, or Myanmar-Pakistan. We can never choose Myanmar, even though my ancestors served as generals during the time of Burmese monarchs. This shows that we are not accepted as legitimate people of this country, that we don't have the same rights as the majority Buddhists. Many are denied full citizenship and are only given partial citizenship, while the others are completely stripped of their legal status. This is the reason why many are forced to convert to Buddhism.<sup>78</sup>

There's no incentive for the government to change the system because that's actually how they control the Muslim population. Even if there are some good Bamar politicians who want to help us by amending the constitution, however, sooner or later, they will be labeled as pro-Muslims or anti-Buddhists and, therefore, will lose their popularity... . That's wrong because we all deserve our human rights, and it is the responsibility of the government to find humane solutions to these problems.<sup>79</sup>

As much as possible, I try not to tell other people, especially the Bamar, that I am a Muslim. The reason is that I might be discriminated by them. If I tell them I'm a Muslim, I fear that they'd start questioning not only my credibility but also my entire being. For many Buddhist people, we are strangers and intruders. They don't really see us as being one of them. We are seen as the inferior race that does not contribute much to Myanmar society... . Even if we have a national registration card, we still don't have the same equal rights and privileges as the Buddhist citizens. For example, the education system in Myanmar still prioritizes the Buddhist people and emphasizes the importance of their faith and culture in building Burma. But they don't teach about the significance of the Islamic culture or how the Muslim people help create better societies. We also have very little to no representation in the government, media, military, and other key sectors. That makes us feel invisible and unimportant. That's why even if we've been suffering

<sup>77</sup> Beech, “The Face of Buddhist Terror,” <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,2146000,00.html>.

<sup>78</sup> Author's interview, November 17, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>79</sup> Author's interview, November 21, 2019, Myanmar.

a lot of injustices, many Muslims still choose to be quiet and accept all the abuses because they're afraid of losing their homes and be permanently exiled.<sup>80</sup>

Even the government's subsequent ban on the Ma Ba Tha in 2017 proved ineffective in diminishing the appeal of the xenophobic narratives trumpeted by the group.<sup>81</sup> For one, the ruling had little to do with the members' anti-Muslim message. The misplaced attention on the group's illegal use of Buddhist images and symbols suggested that the State *Sangha Maha Nayaka* Committee was more concerned about its reputation than the group's chauvinistic character and intentions. Moreover, such lukewarm attempts at demobilizing and disbanding the Ma Ba Tha only gave the members the impression that the governing National League for Democracy (NLD) Party was reluctant and unwilling to seriously address the "threat" of Islam. Some also questioned Aung San Suu Kyi's perceived Western liberal influences and criticized her for being more sympathetic to the cause of protecting the rights of the Muslim minorities rather than ensuring the security and primacy of Buddhism and the Burmese people.<sup>82</sup> These continuing efforts to force-feed a Burman Buddhist construction of the "national" identity, homeland, and nation-state have severely thwarted the birth of a polity that is compelling enough to absorb and overcome the conflicting cleavages even among Myanmar's ethnically diverse Buddhist communities, except for their widely shared perception of the Muslims, particularly the Rohingya, as existential threats.

By co-constituting (as opposed to merely strengthening) the prevailing hostile emotions and predispositions between the rival ethnoreligious groups, such hostile perceptions are also defining the nature and direction of inter-group emotional and symbolic relationships. Indeed, the the fear (and its attached prejudices) confronting certain Burman Buddhists are partially determined by their perception of the othered Muslims like the Rohingya and their perception of themselves as having the inadequate capacity to defend their group against the perpetrators.<sup>83</sup> Likewise, the perception of certain Burman Buddhists that the Rohingya and other Muslims, in general, are the main sources of violent conflicts results in anger (and its accompanying biases) that increases their desire to rebuke and punish the targets while portraying themselves as the victims.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the perception of

<sup>80</sup> Author's interview, November 8, 2019, Myanmar.

<sup>81</sup> *Asia Times*, "Misunderstanding Myanmar's Ma Ba Tha," <https://asiatimes.com/2017/06/misunderstanding-myanmars-ma-ba-tha/>; *The Irrawaddy*, "Nationalists Rally in Yangon to Denounce New Ban on Ma Ba Tha," <https://asiatimes.com/2017/06/misunderstanding-myanmars-ma-ba-tha/>.

<sup>82</sup> Davies, "ASEAN, Myanmar and the Avoidable Failures of Human Rights Socialization"; Kinley and Wilson, "Human Rights Training in Burma/Myanmar"; Lee, "Aung San Suu Kyi's Silence on Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya."

<sup>83</sup> Mackie, Devos, and Smith, "Explaining Offensive Action Tendencies in an Intergroup Context"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>84</sup> Halperin et al., "Anger, Hatred, and the Quest for Peace"; Noor et al., "The Psychology of Competitive Victimhood between Adversarial Groups in Violent Conflicts"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.



certain Burman Buddhists that they are being challenged by some contemptible group fuels resentment (and its associated beliefs) that forces them to demand the restoration of the old arrangement where they had uncontested dominance.<sup>85</sup> As in the case of Indonesia, this perceived status reversal drove the offended group to decisively put the offending party back in its place and teach them a lesson.<sup>86</sup> These overlapping hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions ultimately led to the scapegoating of the othered Muslims in Myanmar, particularly the Rohingya, and their eventual expulsion from their own imagined community.<sup>87</sup> These separate dialogues with Buddhist party leaders and some members tackle the magnitude of the threat of losing one's perceived identity, homeland, and nation-state, and the damages that one is willing to cause and justify to keep them intact:

You have to view the situation not only from the perspective of the Bengali Muslims who were displaced during the conflicts but also from the perspective of the majority Buddhists and the minority Hindus and Christians who were victimized by the Bengali army. Their soldiers indiscriminately massacred non-Muslim targets. They weren't thinking about the human rights of those innocent victims, and no foreign assistance ever came... Human rights should be for everyone, not just for the Bengali Muslims. What would've happened to the other Arakanese people like the Buddhists, Christians, and Hindus if nobody intervened and fought against the Bengali army? They've been planning this attack the whole time. Now, many of us think that the only way to survive is by arming ourselves because it's difficult to trust others, even the Burmese military...<sup>88</sup>

What happened in Rakhine is not genocide. That's a very strong word and accusation. It's not acceptable to accuse the Myanmar government and military of genocide because those Bengali terrorists were the ones who attacked first. To be clear, we're not saying that the military is always right or that we support all their actions because we know that they also create a lot of problems for other ethnic minorities in Rakhine. However, it is also important to emphasize that the Bengali army exploits their own people by using them as covers to pursue their agenda. The *Tatmadaw* may have killed some people during the fights, and we admit that,

<sup>85</sup> Bonikowski, "Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment"; Hirsch, "The Agonistics of Respect, Resentment and Responsibility in Post-Conflict Society"; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*.

<sup>86</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* and "Ethnic Power Sharing"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>87</sup> See Glick, "Choice of Scapegoats"; McCarthy and Menager, "Gendered Rumours and the Muslim Scapegoat in Myanmar's Transition"; Savun and Gineste, "Threat Environment and Refugee Scapegoating"; and Van Klinken and Aung, "The Contentious Politics of Anti-Muslim Scapegoating in Myanmar" for a parallel analysis of how these often-neglected elements facilitate the scapegoating of the ethnoreligious others.

<sup>88</sup> Author's interview, November 12, 2019, Myanmar.

but the situation called for decisive use of force to immediately stop the terrorists from slaughtering the police, the soldiers, and the innocent people.<sup>89</sup>

This investigation of the perceptual mechanistic evidence (Stage 3) of ethnoreligious othering demonstrated how state and non-state agents' attempts from the more dominant faction to sacralize their ideal ethnoreligious identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state within Myanmar's pluralistic polity, facilitated the eviction and extermination of a target group. They did this by embedding their own group's ethnoreligious myths, doctrines, norms, and dogmas (substructures) into the state's security rhetoric, policies, strategies, and institutions (superstructures). Whereas the predominant group's ethnoreligious substructures dictated the nature and content of the security superstructures developed by state agents, the superstructures adopted by the latter further legitimized and ensconced the former's substructures. Hence, not only did they preserve the perceived purity of their indivisible identity and homeland, but they also maintained their preferred ideational and material constitution of the overarching nation-state. The dangers posed by the ethnoreligious others to the infallibility of the majority's perceptions of chosenness and sacredness were routinely suppressed through this process that reduced the former to abject strangers whose lives were not worthy of grieve. And this easily justified the war and bloodshed that were pursued to banish these "polluted" and "poisoned" others out of their homeland.

## Conclusion

In sum, this chapter reveals how the emotive, symbolic, and perceptual causal mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering facilitate the reinvention of ethnoreligious others into existential security threats within Myanmar's pluralistic polity. Together, they serve as a channel through which the prevailing relations and arrangements between its Buddhist and Muslim communities are either refortified or reconfigured. As in Indonesia, the constitutive structures of ethnoreligious othering are simultaneously creating and propelled by emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions.

In Stage 1, we see how the two-way shared cultivation of chauvinistic Buddhist and Islamic nationalisms generated hostile emotive effects, forcing the members of these rival clusters to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic in relation to their respective identities and territories. While these emotions did not just reside entirely in the people's minds, they also did not come purely from the social world. As the Myanmar case shows, the hostile emotions of fear, hatred, resentment, anger, and rage flow simultaneously from the inside realm (i.e., cognitive) toward

<sup>89</sup> Author's interview, November 6, 2019, Myanmar.

external targets (e.g., othered Muslims), and from the outer realm (i.e., social) toward internal referents (e.g., Burman Buddhists). Indeed, these emotive effects of (e.g., Burman Buddhist) ethnoreligious nationalism are a way of world-making to the extent that they aid in the reconstitution and renegotiation of a target (e.g., Rohingya Muslim) group's state of being and position within a pluralistic polity.

In Stage 2, we see how this survivalist, zero-sum security logic, in turn, drove state and non-state elites (e.g., Burman Buddhists) to securitize a target group (e.g., othered Muslims) as a threat to their own security, power, and status using the hostile symbolic predispositions linked to the hostile emotive effects of (e.g., Burman Buddhist) ethnoreligious nationalism, and with active consent and participation of their (e.g., Buddhist) audience. Specifically, the production and proliferation of chauvinistic ideologies, ethnocentric values, and prejudiced biases—via the socialization and cascade of (e.g., Buddhist or Islamic) ethnoreligious nationalism—were intended to connect clearly with the symbolic and emotional faculties of the members of rival communities. As the Myanmar case illustrates, securitizing the othered Muslims, particularly the Rohingya, as existential threats increase the Burman Buddhists' support for highly aggressive and discriminatory measures against the former. Such acts are naturally threatening to the Rohingya Muslims and drive them to view the Burman Buddhists, especially their political leaders and armed forces, as threats to their own security and survival. The result is a security dilemma in which neither ethnoreligious group feels secure unless its relative security, power, and status requirements are fulfilled, but both sets of needs cannot be satisfied simultaneously.

And in Stage 3, we see how the powerful state and non-state elites from the politically dominant ethnoreligious faction (e.g., Burman Buddhists) bolstered their legitimacy, authority, and primacy further by implanting their (Buddhist) ethnoreligious substructures into the overarching state's security superstructures, thereby sacralizing their preferred version of (Burman Buddhist) identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state. Consequently, the right and capacity of the target (e.g., Rohingya Muslim) group to express its own ethnoreligious substructures and influence the prevailing security superstructures as a means of asserting its legitimacy were severely undermined. As the Myanmar case shows, such attempts at sacralizing an ideal construct of Burman Buddhist identity, homeland, and nation-state inexorably desacralizes, delegitimizes, dispossesses the othered Muslims, especially the Rohingya. The perceived indivisibility and inviolability of these security referents provided valuable instruments of power for the dominant and chauvinistic (Burman Buddhist) political and ethnoreligious actors who demanded uncontested control and jurisdiction over their ideational and material constitutions.

## Riding in Taxi with a Mosque-phobic Driver from Manila: *Otherings and Conflicts in the Philippines*

“Sir, do you mind if I drop you off in front of Mercury? I don’t want to enter that Muslim area,” the taxi driver asked as he lowered the volume of the car’s stereo. “Why? Is there something wrong?” I asked, worried. “I’ve heard a lot of bad things happening there from the other taxi drivers. The other day, one of my friends got robbed and was stabbed three times and died on the scene. I’m sorry, sir, but I have four young children to feed. I can’t risk it,” explained the driver. “Those Muslims are monsters,” he added while cursing under his breath. “But how did you know that they were Muslims?” Without thinking for a second, the driver replied, “Of course they are Muslims. That’s what they do. Most of the crimes happening here in Metro Manila are being committed by Muslims. They don’t fear God, so it is easy for them to kill innocent people who are just trying to make a living. I am sure many of them are members of that syndicate that kidnaps and sells children.” “People will really surprise you,” I thought quietly to myself.

“Don’t you have any Muslim friends?” I asked, hoping that something would remind him of anything good about the Muslims. “No.” He replied flatly. “They will just sell me to the *Abu Sayyaf* for a fortune. If I resist, they will chop my head off. There’s a Muslim family in our *barangay*. One of my neighbors saw the father stealing his and his wife’s underwear hanging on their clothesline. The other neighbor saw the eldest son raping a dog in an abandoned warehouse near our place. They are disgusting, and we hate them! We all wish they just leave and vanish.” As if being slapped by a sudden realization, he faced me and asked in a concerned tone, “You’re not a Muslim, are you?” For a split second, I thought of saying yes to see how he would react,

but I thought better of it and decided I did not want a prolonged awkward situation since we still had a long way to go. “No, I’m not. I’m just meeting someone.” Relieved, he said, “You’re so brave. I don’t even like seeing mosques. I don’t like the sight of it. It gives me the creeps. They remind me of Bin Laden and those terrorist animals. That mosque, in particular, is cursed. One time my compadre had a Muslim passenger whom he dropped off in front of that mosque. On his way home, he was hit by a truck and almost died. My brother-in-law, who’s also a taxi driver, went in front of that mosque one time to pick up a Muslim woman covered in black garments. An hour later, my sister called him from the hospital and told him that she had a miscarriage. I’m telling you, that mosque curses the Catholics.”

Authors field notes, August 4, 2017, Manila, Philippines

### **Cultivating the Filipino Catholic (vs. Othered Islamic) Nationalism**

As one of the only two predominantly Catholic countries in Asia, the state-led cultivation of “Filipino” Catholic nationalism has been a powerful unifying force that bound most of the Philippines’ ethnically and linguistically diverse populations. But for the others who do not share this ethnoreligious identity, particularly the Moro Muslims, the Filipinization of the entire archipelago has become a potent tool for their alienation and oppression. Against this setting, the following discussions demonstrate how the emotive causal mechanism of ethnoreligious othering (Stage 1) facilitated the hostile cultivation of competing Catholic and Islamic nationalisms within the Philippines’ pluralistic polity. Similar to Indonesia’s and Myanmar’s experiences, the structural changes that took place throughout the country’s history amid competing ethnoreligious nationalisms—from centuries of Spanish subjugation to the eruption of nationalist revolution; the installment of the first republic and the advent of American imperialism; the brief but brutal Japanese occupation and all the way to the postcolonial era—forced the members of rival groups to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic vis-à-vis their ideal identity and homeland.

Specifically, the communal fear between Catholic and Muslim communities directed them to satisfy safety concerns. Their communal hatred directed them to confront historical injustices. Their communal resentment directed them to resolve status and self-esteem inconsistencies. And their communal anger and rage directed them to commit violence against the target enemies. Together, these hostile emotions amplified the pressure and intensity of the “security threat” epitomized by the ethnoreligious others. This correspondence with an ex-Moro Muslim

rebel illustrates how such structural shifts (propelled by multiple material, non-material, and elite/instrumental factors) stimulated a process of cognitive–emotive sequence that drove them to mobilize against the source of their crisis aggressively:

As Muslims, we feel that we are nobody in the Philippines. For decades, the Muslims in this country have suffered the wrath and hatred of the government that is being controlled by the Catholics. Since the Americans annexed our *Bangsamoro* ancestral homeland, the government has implemented genocidal policies to eradicate Islam and our Moro Muslim identity. They stole our lands to establish Christian settlements... . They exploited our natural resources without giving anything back to us... . They also killed and massacred innocent Muslims... . How can we possibly accept being called Filipinos when we resent much of the things that they represent? Most ... feel deep pain and anger for being treated like animals, so we decided to fight back to reclaim our faith and our homeland... . The others wanted to promote secularism and set aside our Islamic roots and traditions. But ... at times, we need to engage in *jihad*. That was our mission and our way of achieving our goals for the *Bangsamoro* Muslims. The only way that we can help our people regain their rights and freedoms is by establishing an autonomous state and government that adopts *Shari'ah*.<sup>1</sup>

Once again, we see how particular types of emotion arbitrate between cognition and desire, providing the mechanisms for influencing individual and group motivations. More specifically, these hostile emotions, cultivated from either Catholic or Islamic nationalism, can summon faction members into actions against other forms of identity and interpretations of the homeland that could destabilize and delegitimize their existence. As with the hostile emotive effects of ethno-religious nationalism in Indonesia and Myanmar, these emotions are cognitively and socially processed and experienced as they are usually expressed in relation to others and communicated in ways that the in-group understands.<sup>2</sup> Given how these elements are cognitively interpreted and culturally constructed,<sup>3</sup> ethno-religious emotions are best understood in specific contexts of shared experiences.

In the Philippines' case, for example, by the time the Spaniards arrived and introduced Christianity during the sixteenth century, Islam was already well established in Mindanao (southern region), as well as in some pockets of Luzon

<sup>1</sup> Author's correspondence, August 9, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmed, "Collective Feelings"; Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Hutchison and Bleiker, "Theorizing Emotions in World Politics."

<sup>3</sup> On the cognitive structure of emotions, see, for example, Ortony, Clore, and Collins, *The Cognitive Structure of Emotions*; Öhman and Wiens, "The Concept of an Evolved Fear Module and Cognitive Theories of Anxiety." On the socio-cultural interpretation of emotions, see, for example, Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Harré, *The Social Construction of the Emotions*; Smith, "Social Identity and Social Emotions." On the socio-psychological character of emotions, see, for example, Bar-Tal, "Conflicts and Social Psychology" and *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Smith and Collins, "Dual-Process Models: A Social Psychological Perspective"; Turner, "Cognition and Social Context."

(northern region) and the Visayas (central region). Nevertheless, this did not prevent Spain from colonizing and converting the northern and central islands of the archipelago to Hispanic Christianity in as early as 1350.<sup>4</sup> Once thriving, their desire to completely colonize and Christianize the entire Philippines drove them to venture further down south.<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding the Christian missionaries' fervor to "save souls," the Spanish authorities' early campaigns to defeat and subjugate the Muslims went largely unsuccessful. With assistance from the British and Dutch authorities, the Islamic sultanates in Mindanao were able to thwart the Spanish offensives for centuries. Notable among these resistance movements were the Tausug's *jihad* in 1878 and the guerrilla wars fought by the Maranao.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the eventual defeat of the Muslims in the late nineteenth century, Spain never succeeded fully in ruling over the south. Consequently, popular texts chronicling Philippine history routinely featured the prevalent view among many Filipino Catholics that their story and identity were intimately linked to the Spanish colonization era. The entire 333 years of colonial rule by Spain was conveniently interpreted by many as Christianity's crusade against the "poisonous" religion of Islam and its Muslim followers.<sup>7</sup> These interviews with ordinary Filipino Catholic citizens illustrate the deep emotional impact of Catholic nationalism on them:

I do not have a lot of Muslim friends, and, in a way, I think that says a lot about how and where I was raised. I grew up in a family where everyone believes that much of the problems that we persistently encounter as Filipinos like poverty, terrorism, drugs, and organized crimes, have a lot to do with the Muslims, especially those living here in Luzon. And I resent them for that. . . . Imagine if we are all Catholics and Christians, there would probably be no more wars and conflicts in Mindanao. That means our government can just focus on developing our economy and providing jobs for those who really want to be and are proud to be Filipinos.<sup>8</sup>

If the Muslims do not want to be Filipinos, we also do not want them to live here in our communities. The Muslims always portray themselves as victims, but since the Spanish time, they have always caused so much problems in our society. . . . They think that Christianity is a sin, that only Islam is the correct religion. . . . Whenever I see Muslims, I try to stay away from them because I find it hard

<sup>4</sup> Agoncillo and Guerrero, *The History of the Filipino People*; Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*.

<sup>5</sup> Abinales, *Making Mindanao*; McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*.

<sup>6</sup> For detailed accounts of these earlier forms of Muslim resistance in Mindanao against the Spanish colonial administration, see Ewing, "Juramentado: Institutionalized Suicide among the Moros of the Philippines"; McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*.

<sup>7</sup> Gowing, "Muslim and Christian Perceptions of the Mindanao Problem"; Sapidula, "Articulations of Religiously Motivated Nationalism within Philippine Catholicism"; Stark, "Muslims in the Philippines."

<sup>8</sup> Author's interview, August 5, 2017, Philippines.

to trust them. I am not just comfortable being around them. Maybe you will think that I am bigoted and racist, but my fear and paranoia did not just come from nowhere. When I watch the news, for example, I always see Muslims being involved in many crimes.<sup>9</sup>

Honestly, I do not have any negative experience with Muslims. I think that they are just like us Catholics who also want a peaceful and comfortable life. But it is difficult to go out of my way and try to engage or be friends with them because I feel that they are not very open to Christians... . On those occasions where I find myself surrounded by Muslims wearing hijab and long black clothes that only show their eyes, I feel threatened. It's like my flight mode gets instantly activated... . Based on how I experience it, it's also biological. I feel the threat deep inside me.<sup>10</sup>

Here, we see how hostile emotions serve as powerful drivers of individual and societal motivations and actions by helping curtail behaviors or attitudes that are seen as detrimental by a specific community while encouraging those cultural values or characters that are deemed ideal.<sup>11</sup> Similar to what has been observed in Indonesia and Myanmar, the Filipino Catholics and Moro Muslims who associate themselves with their respective ethnoreligious groups are exposed to these communal emotions and experience them on behalf of their community members. Thus, when one member suffers in the hands of an out-group, the entire community of that member is able to access and internalize those hostile emotions toward the outsiders.<sup>12</sup> Fear, hatred, resentment, anger, and rage toward the outsiders become “shared expectations” which ethnoreligious communities prescribe in response to specific scenarios.<sup>13</sup> And by doing so, the out-group's state of being and status within a pluralistic polity are reconstructed and renegotiated.

Such negative views and sentiments toward the Muslims, particularly the Moro, were heavily reinforced through the country's public educational system, which propagated the narrative (whether intentionally or not) that peace and unity among the “legitimate” Filipino people could only be achieved if the Muslims deserted Islam and embraced Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the state's framing of its socio-economic policy programs for Mindanao also reinforced the notion that the

<sup>9</sup> Author's interview, August 5, 2017, Philippines.

<sup>10</sup> Author's interview, August 6, 2017, Philippines.

<sup>11</sup> This inference is drawn from works of Ahmed, “Collective Feelings”; Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics”; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Harré, *The Social Construction of the Emotions*; Mercer, “Social Emotion and Identity”; Smith, “Social Identity and Social Emotions.”

<sup>12</sup> Based on the studies conducted by Bar-Tal, “Sociopsychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts”; Mackie, Devos, and Smith, “Intergroup Emotions”; Porat, Halperin, and Tamir, “Group-Based Emotional Preferences and Conflict Resolution”; Smith, “Social Identity and Social Emotions”; Smith, Seger, and Mackie, “Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level?”

<sup>13</sup> See Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics,” 129.

<sup>14</sup> Kaufman, “Studying Ethnic war in the Philippines”; Majul, *Muslims in the Philippines*.



“Moro problem” was linked to the “inherent” ignorance and religious fanaticism of the Muslims in Mindanao.<sup>15</sup> These factors naturally influenced how the Filipino non-Muslims came to understand the situation in the south: that the poverty, violence, and disorder endemic to the region were all rooted in the inferior nature and qualities of the Moro Muslims.<sup>16</sup> From being portrayed as vicious pirates and slavers on theater stages, to being used as a terrifying caricature of control by Catholic parents to discipline their children, the Moro Muslims had been reduced to a pejorative name and image.<sup>17</sup> Responses from some Catholic professionals interviewed highlight how these deeply embedded sentiments continue to affect day-to-day interactions between Catholic and Muslim communities:

The Muslims complain about being discriminated against by the Catholics, but they are also guilty of discriminating against the Catholics. They prioritize their identity as Moros and Muslims over their identity as Filipinos, and many of them look down on the Catholics here in Mindanao... . They believe that they have the absolute right to rule and dominate it because they are the first settlers in Mindanao. They are just using the idea of being perpetually discriminated against as a tool for promoting their desire for independence, portraying themselves as victims even when they are not really marginalized... . The truth is, many of these influential Muslims are the ones corrupting the existing political structures in Mindanao to gain more power and wealth for themselves. That is why, for me, they are the perpetrators and not the victims... . The real victims of discrimination here are not the Moro Muslims but the indigenous people. So, how can you entrust them with their own autonomy?<sup>18</sup>

Although the Christians and Muslims in our community try to co-exist, the reality is that many Christians do not really like the Muslims. They are not vocal about it because the Muslims, especially the Maranao, have the power and the resources. There is that fear factor that is certainly at play, and when you combine that with stigma, the atmosphere enveloping Muslim and Christian relations feels even more sinister and threatening. This has been particularly true during the Marawi siege that took place in 2017. The level of othering between the Muslims

<sup>15</sup> For an in-depth historical analysis of the long-standing “Moro problem,” see Caballero-Anthony, “Revisiting the *Bangsamoro* Struggle”; Majul, “The Moro Struggle in the Philippines”; San Juan Jr., “Notes on the Moro Struggle in the Philippines”; Tuazon, *The Moro Reader: History and Contemporary Struggles of the Bangsamoro People*.

<sup>16</sup> Gowing and McAmis, *The Muslim Filipinos*; McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*; Blanchetti-Revelli, “Moro, Muslim, or Filipino?”

<sup>17</sup> See Angeles, “Moros in the Media and Beyond”; Blanchetti-Revelli, “Moro, Muslim, or Filipino?”; Eder, “Ethnic Differences, Islamic Consciousness, and Muslim Social Integration in the Philippines”; and Gowing, “Muslim and Christian Perceptions of the Mindanao Problem” for examples of the many negative Muslim images that have been constructed and propagated through various socio-institutional channels.

<sup>18</sup> Author’s interview, September 21, 2019, Philippines.

and Christians was significantly heightened.<sup>19</sup> . . . The Christians see the Muslims as troublemakers who love to take revenge against their enemies. They don't have respect for the laws of the land and mostly just follow their own rules. To that extent, you can't blame the Christians for feeling the way that they do toward the Muslims. But discrimination is two-way, the Christians discriminate against the Muslims, and the Muslims discriminate against the Christians.<sup>20</sup>

Here, we see how ethnoreligious group members constantly evaluate and appraise the events that lead (or may lead) to structural changes in their respective communities vis-à-vis their security, power, and status. Specifically, the behaviors and actions being displayed by the out-group in response to these events are cognitively appraised and emotionally responded to, in line with the cognitive and emotional dispositions and outlooks of all community members.<sup>21</sup> On such occasions, collective victimization and unresolved hostile feelings significantly influence how rival ethnoreligious groups view and respond to each other's conduct and behavior.<sup>22</sup> And in many cases, these factors lead to the framing of the out-group's actions, including those relatively benign and ambiguous ones, as serious existential threats.

This has been particularly relevant in the Philippines, where chauvinistic feelings and attitudes toward the Moro Muslims remain prevalent among a significant number of Filipino Catholics. The Moro wars that were waged to integrate the south mainly through Christianization did nothing to appease the relations between the two conflicting factions but only intensified the Muslims' resentment and opposition against the state and its favored Filipino Catholic citizens.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, with the production and proliferation of the Spanish-crafted idea of an existing Filipino unity anchored on Catholic nationalism, a form of spiritual bond emerged among those who accepted their affinity with Spain and her Church. This led to the erection of cultural boundaries that had since separated the Catholics from the othered Muslims. As the Catholicized Filipinos began to embrace this identity within their newly imagined community, the Moro Muslims

<sup>19</sup> Author's interview, September 23, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>20</sup> Author's interview, September 21, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>21</sup> For a systematic exploration of the dynamics underpinning this process, see Halperin, "Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution"; Turner, "Cognition and Social Context"; Porat, Halperin, and Tami, "Group-Based Emotional Preferences and Conflict Resolution"; Wohl and Branscombe, "Forgiveness and Collective Guilt Assignment to Historical Perpetrator Groups Depend on Level of Social Category Inclusiveness."

<sup>22</sup> Bar-Tal et al., "A Sense of Self-perceived Collective Victimhood in Intractable Conflicts"; Noor et al., "The Psychology of Competitive Victimhood in Adversarial Groups in Violent Conflicts"; Shnabel and Nadler, "Satisfying the Differential Emotional Needs of Victim and Perpetrator as a Key to Promoting Reconciliation."

<sup>23</sup> Iletto, "Philippine Wars and the Politics of Memory"; Kaufman, "Studying Ethnic War in the Philippines"; Neumann, "Identity-Building and Democracy in the Philippines"; Stark, "Muslims in the Philippines"; Vitug and Gloria, *Under the Crescent Moon*.

continued to endure their lives as strangers, forcing them to re-imagine and re-establish their distinctive ethnoreligious identity and homeland based on Islamic nationalism.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, and as also observed in Indonesia and Myanmar, these competing ethnoreligious nationalisms in the Philippines, alongside their attached hostile emotions, can be viewed as world-making devices through which rival ethnoreligious groups are constituted differently in terms of meaning and belonging.<sup>25</sup> These separate discussions with some former local chiefs reveal the persistence of hostile emotions engendered by Catholic and Islamic nationalisms, which continue to define the relations between the two groups:

Many of the Muslims residing in our *barangay* are criminal gang members involved in illegal drugs, kidnappings, thefts, and murders, among other things. That's why many of us don't trust them because we are scared of what they might do to us. It's hard to feel safe when you know you have neighbors who don't have the same values as the majority... . The worst part is that they don't only keep having children, they also bring their other relatives here to our place that's why their numbers are increasing. If you confront them about it, they get angry and violent. Our elders are concerned that they might tempt our people to convert to Islam, especially our youths, by promising them money that they get from their illegal activities.<sup>26</sup>

The Christians in our village always think that they have special privileges, that they can just take whatever they want from the Muslims because the government backs them. They arrive in our towns believing that they are superior because they have been colonized by the Spanish and, therefore, are more civilized than us... . As a community, we are doing our best to protect our Islamic values and our morality so that our children will grow up as decent and respectable Muslims... . Our ancestors suffered so much in the hands of the Christians back in the day... . Although we haven't personally experienced those hardships, we witnessed how our elders suffered from the trauma and the pain caused by the Christians and the government. And those wounds don't heal easily.<sup>27</sup>

This inspection of the emotive mechanistic evidence (Stage 1) of ethnoreligious othering revealed how the hostile emotions emanated from competing forms of

<sup>24</sup> Buendia, "The State-Moro Armed Conflict in the Philippines"; Caballero-Anthony, "Revisiting the *Bangsamoro* Struggle"; Podder, "Legitimacy, Loyalty and Civilian Support for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front"; Rivera, "The Struggle of the Muslim People in the Southern Philippines."

<sup>25</sup> Drawn from Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, 92–93; Hutchison, "Affective Communities and World Politics"; and Hutchison and Bleiker, "Theorizing Emotions in World Politics."

<sup>26</sup> Author's interview, August 3, 2017, Philippines.

<sup>27</sup> Author's interview, August 9, 2017, Philippines.

ethnoreligious nationalism compelled rival factions to rethink and re-adjust their respective relationships within the Philippines' pluralistic polity. These emotive effects were particularly apparent and crucial amid structural changes precipitated by combinations of rational, non-rational, and elite/instrumental factors. The structural shifts emerging against the backdrop of contending chauvinistic ethno-religious beliefs ultimately triggered hostile communal emotions that prepared them to satisfy their pressing concerns and address the resulting situational challenges, both physically and cognitively. Throughout this process, the emotional weight and content of everyday interactions and exchanges among ethno-religious members (both the elites and non-elites) determined and directed group attitudes and actions with respect to the others. To this end, these opposing ethno-religious nationalisms provided the necessary affective vernaculars, which were routinely accessed and utilized by the rival groups to secure their ideal conceptions of ethno-religious identity and homeland amid the structural changes.

### **Securitizing the Othered Muslim (vs. Filipino Catholic) Threat**

Immediately after the Spanish-American war ended in 1898, the Philippine colony came under the US administration. During this period, the colonial regime deployed policy strategies to attract the *sultans* and the *datus* in Mindanao. While some of these local clan leaders continued with their military resistance against the new masters, others took advantage of the newly set up patronage system to seize more power for themselves. This split highlighted the absence of a central authority figure in the region which the Americans exploited to fortify their position and legitimize their rule further.<sup>28</sup> In this regard, the following discussions demonstrate how the symbolic causal mechanism of ethno-religious othering (Stage 2) facilitated the hostile securitization of the out-group as a threat to the in-group's security, power, and status in the Philippines. State and non-state elite efforts to frame the perceived Islamization or "Filipinization" (i.e., Catholicization) of the entire Philippines as a security threat against the Catholic and Muslim communities, respectively, were designed to effectively connect with the hostile symbolic predispositions of their members to stimulate actions.

This necessitated the simultaneous configuration of the self and the reconfiguration of the others as enemies based on the dominant prejudices and ideologies informed by the hostile emotive effects of Catholic and Islamic nationalisms. Parallel to the experiences of Indonesia and Myanmar, the securitization of ethno-religious others in the Philippines fueled mass hostility, ethnocentric mobilization,

<sup>28</sup> Abinales and Amoroso, *American Military Presence in the Southern Philippines*; Abinales and Amoroso, *State and Society in the Philippines*; Pertierra and Ugarte, "American Rule in the Muslim South and the Philippine Hinterlands."

and security dilemma, which, in turn, warranted the adoption of chauvinistic measure deemed necessary for securing the identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states in question: the violent Catholic-Muslim “just wars” that destroyed thousands of lives. These separate interviews with some members of Catholic and Islamic religious organizations underscore how these hostile symbolic predispositions propel the securitization of ethnoreligious others and give crucial evidence of how the members (un)consciously take part and consent to this process:

I don't think we can separate our being Filipinos from being Christians. I am both Filipino and Christian... . Being a Christian has changed my heart. Our country will be a lot better and stronger if all Filipinos develop a Christian heart as it will want us to stay and serve our nation... . At the end of the day, I am still thankful that the Philippines was conquered and colonized by Spain because that enabled us to build a relationship with God... . The Catholic Church needs to assert its power to influence day-to-day politics in our country. The rules and laws of the land must be based on what God teaches us in the Bible. Filipino Catholics, especially our politicians and government officials, need to understand their Catholic faith and their responsibilities as Catholics better and use their power and position to create and institutionalize policies and programs that promote our Filipino Catholic values.<sup>29</sup>

The great majority of the Moro Muslims definitely supports the MILF. Many of us sympathize with the group's principles and causes because we personally experienced the monstrous acts committed against us by the Philippine military and its Christian militia. We will not forget the unspeakable crimes and atrocities that our families had suffered at the hands of the military. Most, if not all, of them, were Christians. We've lost count of the number of times that they massacred our men and women, including our children and elderly. They killed hundreds and hundreds of Muslims... . That's why we are thankful to the Muslim *ummah* across the world who fought for us and helped us during those tough times... . But to honor the sacrifices of our *mujahideen* ..., we need to continue fighting for our Islamic identity and Bangsamoro homeland. And one important step to ensure this is the Islamization of all aspects of our life as Bangsamoro people.<sup>30</sup>

As with the symbolic predispositions examined in Indonesia and Myanmar, these widespread beliefs, prejudices, and ideologies among the Catholic and Muslim communities in the Philippines are significantly connected to the hostile emotive effects of competing forms of ethnoreligious nationalism. As such, experiencing these hostile emotions influences the types of predisposition that develop

<sup>29</sup> Author's interview, September 11 and 12, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>30</sup> Author's interview, August 7, 2017, Philippines.

and emerge between rival groups and how these are accepted and observed by the members.<sup>31</sup> Like hostile emotions, the resulting hostile predispositions are largely conditioned by experiences at personal (via individual memories) and mediated (via societal institutions) levels.<sup>32</sup> In embracing and espousing these predispositions, the members are compelled to look beyond the evidence and prioritize their instinctive inferences instead.<sup>33</sup> Yet, by relying on these internally drawn biases and dispositions, individual and group appraisals vis-à-vis the ethnoreligious others can be seriously impaired and, in turn, trigger even more damaging motivations and destructive actions.

This condition has been highly evident in the chauvinistic measures attempted by the American colonial power to artificially assimilate the Moro Muslims in Mindanao and annex their lands into the wider Philippine territory. One of the critical policy strategies used during this era was transmigration which facilitated the large-scale relocation of vast numbers of Catholic settlers from densely populated areas of Luzon to the relatively underpopulated locales of Mindanao. These initiatives inevitably resulted in the gradual but steady displacements of many local Muslims, leading to bitter rivalries over land and resources between the native Moro people and migrant Catholics. The demographic shift that saw the once-dominant Muslim inhabitants dramatically shrink to less than twenty percent of the region's current population could be traced back to this policy.<sup>34</sup> Rather than fostering the conditions necessary for creating a more integrated society, the plan only ignited mutual suspicions and hatreds that further divided and polarized the two factions.

The situation turned for the worse when the US began transferring administrative powers to the Filipino bureaucrats in 1920. In preparation for the country's eventual independence, aggressive plans to Filipinize the Moro Muslims came into view, which forced them to redirect their opposition and animosity away from the American colonizers and toward the developing Philippine state.<sup>35</sup> This Filipinization program, as a retired Muslim politician noted, was seen by the Moro political elites as an evangelical device set up by the Catholic administrators from

<sup>31</sup> This proposition is based on the works conducted by Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, *Emotions and Beliefs*; Keeland et al., "Beliefs about Emotion's Malleability Influence State Emotion Regulation"; and Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs."

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice" and "War as Symbolic Politics"; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs"; Sears, "Symbolic Politics"; Smith and Collins, "Dual-Process Models: A Social Psychological Perspective."

<sup>33</sup> Frijda and Mesquita, "Beliefs through Emotions"; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs."

<sup>34</sup> Wernstedt and Simkins, "Migrations and the Settlement of Mindanao"; see also Chalk, "Separatism and Southeast Asia"; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; Quimpo, "The Pitfalls of Working for Peace in a Time of Political Decay."

<sup>35</sup> This point about the resistance of the Moro Muslims against the burgeoning Philippine state is examined extensively in Federspiel, "Islam and Muslims in the Southern Territories of the Philippine Islands During the American Colonial Period"; Hawkins, *Making Moros*; Islam, "Ethno-Communal Conflict in the Philippines"; Jubair, *Bangsamoro: A Nation under Endless Tyranny*.

the north to transform the entire archipelago into a Christian country by seizing ownership and control over their ancestral lands and, therefore, was a direct assault against their sovereign Islamic way of life.<sup>36</sup> Paradoxically, the Moro Muslims' mounting grievances and discriminations forced many of them to demand the restoration of direct US administration of the southern islands,<sup>37</sup> refusing to be assimilated into what they perceived was a burgeoning "Filipino Catholic" nation-state.<sup>38</sup>

These concerns proved to be well founded since once the Commonwealth of the Philippines was successfully established in 1935, the central government's chief architects in Manila began implementing suppressive policies in Mindanao, which they believed would nurture and strengthen the infant state. By assimilating the Moro Muslims in an artificial and exploitative manner—mainly through unfair land resettlement and resource redistribution programs that disproportionately benefited the Catholic settlers—the new government came to be seen as a mere proxy of their previous colonial enemies.<sup>39</sup> These hardened Muslim predispositions against the Catholic-centric Filipinization project are exemplified well in the responses given by some Maranao and Tausug Muslims during the discussions with them:

When I was in elementary, my grandmother would often tell us not to be friends with the Filipinos because we might also become Christians. Many Muslims, especially the older generations, did not have the same education that we now have because their parents did not allow them to study in public schools. They were afraid that ... they would be forcefully Christianized by their teachers and converted to Christians or Catholics. So, they only enrolled in *Madrasah*, where they studied and learned about the Quran. The idea was to ensure that they correctly understood Islam so that no matter what happens, they would always be Muslims. In that sense, our identity is very much tied up to our religion and ethnicity... . As Muslims, we don't believe that there is a concept of a Filipino nation... . I only learned about the concept of being a Filipino when I started learning about Philippine history in school.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Author's interview, August 8, 2017, Philippines; see also, Blanchetti-Revelli, "Moro, Muslim, or Filipino?"; Charbonneau, *Civilizational Imperatives*.

<sup>37</sup> Hutchcroft, *Mindanao: The Long Journey to Peace and Prosperity*; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; Stark, "Muslims in the Philippines."

<sup>38</sup> Blanchetti-Revelli, "Moro, Muslim, or Filipino?"; Buendia, "The State-Moro Armed Conflict in the Philippines"; San Juan, Jr., "Notes on the Moro Struggle in the Philippines."

<sup>39</sup> Islam, "Ethno-Communal Conflict in the Philippines"; Tigno, "Migration and Violent Conflict in Mindanao"; Vellema, Borrás, Jr., and Lara, Jr., "The Agrarian Roots of Contemporary Violent Conflict in Mindanao, Southern Philippines," provide complementary analyses of the politics and impact of transmigration on inter-ethnic/religious relations across Mindanao.

<sup>40</sup> Author's interview, September 28, 2019, Philippines.

Between being a Muslim and a Maranao, being a Muslim is more important for me. But between being a Maranao and a Filipino, being Maranao definitely has more relevance and meaning to me. Had I realized that sooner, I would have joined the call and the struggle for an independent *Bangsamoro* state a lot earlier. I would have started carving out some of the steps that I'm only doing now. That's because I now completely understand what the less privileged Moro Muslims have been fighting for and wanting to achieve throughout the past centuries... Before, I didn't think about it as a quest for social justice. But after years of marginalization and exclusion, I finally get it. But you know what, every time we face discrimination, the reaction is to be more Muslim, instead of saying, let's jump ship or let's pretend that we're not Muslims anymore.<sup>41</sup>

I don't consider myself a Filipino. I write Filipino on paper, but it's not in my stream of consciousness. But my being a Muslim and being a Tausug are linked and connected to my consciousness and feelings through Islam. Calling yourself a Filipino assumes a secular perspective, and I am not a secularist... If it were just up to me, I would re-establish the old Muslim sultanate because I don't believe in democracy, let alone a Philippine brand of democracy. It flies in the face of what traditional Islam is, which begins with the remembrance of Allah... When a sultanate remembers Allah, the members of that sultanate tread the path of sainthood, of holiness... The full implementation of *Shari'a* is instrumental in achieving this dream.<sup>42</sup>

Such symbolic predispositions are crucial in defining and shaping the central values and interests of rival ethnoreligious factions and the "extraordinary measures" that are judged effective for securing them. More specifically, the heightened sense of threat emanating from these emotionally charged predispositions reinforces support for bold approaches, particularly in pluralistic polities plagued by various physical and social threats to individual security and group survival.<sup>43</sup> In these contexts, aggressive actions are often seen as necessary for defeating the source(s) of danger, allowing aggressive leaders to convince and prepare their respective members to develop and implement hostile strategies against the targets.<sup>44</sup> Successfully persuading the public, however, not only depends on the collective feelings of threat but also on the intensity at which these threat frames resonate and connect with the predispositions and emotions of the members.<sup>45</sup> Yet, the

<sup>41</sup> Author's interview, September 3, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>42</sup> Author's interview, September 5, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>43</sup> Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Sears, "Symbolic Politics."

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice"; Hirschberger and Pyszczynski, "An Existential Perspective on Ethno-Political Violence"; Spanovic, "Fear and Anger as Predictors of Motivation for Intergroup Aggression."

<sup>45</sup> The importance of credibility in constructing threat frames is examined in detail in Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements"; and Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics." See also



more these hostile predispositions and hostile emotions are socialized and institutionalized within groups, the more these ethnoreligious communities become symbolically and emotionally estranged and divided.

In the Philippines' case, the deep-rooted animosity and resentment on the part of the Moro Muslims eventually led to the eruption of Islamic insurgency and revolt in separate areas of Mindanao. In fact, as early as the 1960s, the Moro Muslim rebels were already prepared to take up an armed struggle against the "foreign" government in Manila in the hope of establishing a separate and autonomous region for themselves, which would comprise Sulu, Basilan, and Zamboanga.<sup>46</sup> By 1968, the Moros succeeded in forming the Muslim Independence Movement (later renamed the Mindanao Independence Movement) which vowed to employ *jihād* in protecting the Bangsamoro identity and homeland.<sup>47</sup> The Philippine government, then ruled by the former dictator President Ferdinand Marcos, responded to the threats posed by these secessionist groups by launching a string of brutally repressive policies, which occasionally led to the massacres of Moro Muslims.<sup>48</sup> The enormous political backlash and violence which resulted from these measures ultimately escalated into a civil war that took on a markedly ethnoreligious character.

Excerpts from the interviews and discussions with other Muslim and Catholic participants familiar with these historical events in Mindanao expose the impact of hostile symbolic predispositions on the targeting of ethnoreligious others as scapegoats and enemies and how this, in turn, modified inter-group understandings of who the real threats and victims were:

To be a Moro Muslim in the Philippines is to be a second-class citizen. The government has neglected us for so long. Whenever a Catholic would ask us if we see ourselves as Filipinos, we do not know what to answer because we do not know if our fellow Filipinos, especially the Catholics, think that we are Filipino enough.<sup>49</sup> ... My birth certificate tells me that I am a Filipino. But as I grew older, I started to experience many forms of discrimination just because I am a Moro Muslim. Many Catholics think that we are not trustworthy, that we are uneducated, dirty, criminals, and terrorists. That is when I realized that a piece of paper does not make

Bosco, *Securing the Sacred*; Liow, *Religion and Nationalism in Southeast Asia*; and Kaufman, "Studying Ethnic War in the Philippines" for other context-specific examples of how these threat frames are implemented and their impacts on communal relations and conflicts.

<sup>46</sup> Cline, "The Islamic Insurgency in the Philippines"; McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*; Noble, "Muslim Separatism in the Philippines."

<sup>47</sup> See the historical accounts offered by Rivera, "The Struggle of the Muslim People in the Southern Philippines"; Rood, "Interlocking Autonomy: Manila and Muslim Mindanao"; Sony, *Revolt in Mindanao*; Islam, "Ethno-Communal Conflict in the Philippines."

<sup>48</sup> Some of these brutal events are examined closely in Abinales, *Making Mindanao*; Noble, "The Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines"; Quimpo, "Back to War in Mindanao"; Ringuet, "The Continuation of Civil Unrest and Poverty in Mindanao"; Rood, "Interlocking Autonomy: Manila and Muslim Mindanao"; Vitug and Gloria, *Rebellion in Mindanao*.

<sup>49</sup> Author's interview, September 5, 2019, the Philippines.

one a Filipino.<sup>50</sup> ... The truth is, many of our elders and ancestors who fought for our freedom as Muslims still find it hard to accept that we are Filipinos because we never surrendered to the Spaniards. The Filipino Catholics were colonized, but we, the Moro Muslims, fought hard for our own independence.<sup>51</sup>

The Muslims are not the only victims of these conflicts. Our grandparents and great-grandparents were also murdered by the Muslims when they relocated to Cotabato back in the sixties. They were innocent people. They had nothing to do with the Muslim problem. They just wanted to find a better place where they could raise their families but were targeted... . Our parents could not even properly grieve the death of their loved ones because they couldn't find their bodies. How do you forget about such tragic events ... when you can't even find justice?<sup>52</sup> ... A lot of times, their actions toward us make us angry and scared, but what can we do? ... If you fight with a Muslim, his entire clan will take their revenge on your whole family by killing as many members as they can. That's why a lot of innocent people die. It's because of their stupid and ridiculous concept of honor and pride. Where is the honor in killing innocent Christians because your pride got hurt? Only the Muslims.<sup>53</sup>

Here, we see how despite the utility of symbolic securitization in satisfying the socio-psychological need of ethnoreligious groups to construct a "meaningful" worldview (that gives them a clear and organized picture in times of crisis, breakdown, and threat), it does so by motivating them to pursue political dominance and predatory interests that ultimately leads to security dilemma spirals.<sup>54</sup> Akin to the dynamics of the spiraling security dilemma observed in Indonesia and Myanmar, the more hostile the insiders' predispositions and emotions against the ethnoreligious others are, the more they will be threatened by the outsiders' efforts in fulfilling their own security demands. Under this condition, the threatened group counter-mobilizes in self-defense by escalating rather than simply matching the level of threat perceived, thus preventing both camps from fulfilling their needs at the same time.

This has been particularly salient in the Philippines when a mixed group of modern and traditional Muslim elites joined forces to form the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) immediately after the Martial Law was declared in 1972, signaling the start a contemporary Bangsamoro separatist movement.<sup>55</sup> The group's primary goal was to create the Bangsamoro Republic, which would give

<sup>50</sup> Author's interview, September 7, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>51</sup> Author's interview, September 25, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>52</sup> Author's interviews, August 3, 2017, Philippines.

<sup>53</sup> Author's interviews, August 4, 2017, Philippines.

<sup>54</sup> This assertion is anchored on the works of Barry, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict"; Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Melander, "The Geography of Fear"; and Roe, "The Intrastate Security Dilemma."

<sup>55</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the rise and decline of the MNLF, see May, "Muslim Mindanao: Four Years after the Peace Agreement"; Molloy, "The Decline of the Moro National Liberation Front

Mindanao an absolute sovereignty after tens of thousands of victims were killed and more than a million people were displaced during the civil war. To do this, the MNLF facilitated the recruitment, training, and arming of the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA), which was mandated to counter the Philippine state's apparent imperialism and secure the backing of the global Islamic community. However, the signing of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement and the 1996 Peace Agreement between the Philippine government and the MNLF significantly altered the main thrust of the coalition. The ensuing decision of its chairman, Nur Misuari, to abandon his group's aspiration for complete secession in exchange for Bangsamoro's political autonomy (within the bounds of the overarching Philippine state sovereignty and territory) caused deep polarization among the MNLF members.<sup>56</sup>

The widening fractures within the organization eventually led to the establishment of the MILF, which was engineered and headed by MNLF's former vice-chairman, Hashim Salamat, who accused Misuari of secularizing the latter and transforming it into a Marxist/Maoist platform stripped of Islamic interests and ideals.<sup>57</sup> In contrast, the new MILF leadership made it a mission to highlight the Islamic roots and qualities of the movement and its members. In doing so, they bolstered their aspiration to deliver an independent Islamic state in the Bangsamoro region by rejecting the prior peace agreement.<sup>58</sup> Predictably, the government's strategic approach vis-à-vis the MILF has since been characterized by an alternating cycle between bloody collisions and tentative ceasefires.<sup>59</sup> In the eyes of one Muslim insurgent, this was intended to ensure the continued survival and legitimacy of the dominant Catholic nation-state by systematically stifling the germination of an Islamic alternative.<sup>60</sup>

Despite these fierce contentions the negotiation channels between the MILF and the Philippine government were temporarily made available in 2002. This enabled the two parties to recommence their talks and conclude the Memorandum of Understanding on the Ancestral Domain (MOU-AD) by 2008.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately,

in the Southern Philippines"; Noble, "The Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines"; Plank, "The Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the Mindanao Final Agreement"

<sup>56</sup> Bertrand, "Peace and Conflict in the Southern Philippines"; Buendia, "State-Moro Armed Conflict in the Philippines."

<sup>57</sup> For more information regarding the MILF including its narrative history, organizational structure, and political activities since its inception, see the Stanford Centre for International Security and Cooperation, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/moro-islamic-liberation-front>.

<sup>58</sup> Abuza, "The Moro Islamic Liberation Front at 20"; Magdalena, "The Peace Process in Mindanao"; Podder, "Legitimacy, Loyalty and Civilian Support for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front"

<sup>59</sup> The implications of these hostile exchanges between the military and MILF members on the prospects of peacebuilding in Mindanao are assessed in Quimpo, "Dealing with the MILF and Abu Sayyaf" and "Back to War in Mindanao"; and Rogers, "Beyond the Abu Sayyaf: The Lessons of Failure in the Philippines."

<sup>60</sup> Author's correspondence, August 9, 2017; see also, Majul, "The Moro Struggle in the Philippines"; McKenna, *Muslim Rulers and Rebels*; Jubair, *Bangsamoro: A Nation under Endless Tyranny*.

<sup>61</sup> Hicken, "Peace-Building, War-Fighting, and Crisis Management"; Mendoza, "The Legal Significance of the MOA on the Bangsamoro Ancestral Domain"; Williams, "MoA-AD Debacle: An Analysis of Individuals' Voices, Provincial Propaganda and National Disinterest."

this appeasement approach did not last long as influential non-Muslim representatives began questioning the legality of the said agreement. Within two months after its initial signing, the Philippine Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional, thereby reigniting the periodic clashes between these Muslim rebels and the government's security forces.

These episodes in the historical relations between the Filipino Catholics and Moro Muslims underscore the centrality of broad human and societal experiences to understanding why and how specific ethnoreligious communities get trapped in a perpetual security dilemma, since the predispositions and emotions (along with their consequent motivations and actions) underpinning this condition are intrinsically connected to those events. These separate discussions with a Muslim and Catholic community leaders stress the enduring symbolic and emotional repercussions of those vicious battles on inter-group predispositions:

The Muslims are victims of history. Because of our fierce opposition to all those who tried to colonize us, the Spanish, the Americans, and the Japanese, the Muslims could not write their own version of history after being forced to be a part of the Philippine republic. As a result, our character and reputation as Muslims had been tarnished and destroyed in those history books... . Journalists ... continue to use these stereotypes about the Muslims every time they present our story to the public or when they discuss the conflicts happening in Mindanao... . That is why many of us still find it very hard to accept that we are Filipinos. We believe that the Philippines came from King Philip, and we certainly did not surrender to King Philip. We do not feel that the government is sincere in giving us the independence that we need. It is using the conflicts happening in Mindanao to attract donations and aid from countries all over the world, but those resources do not even benefit the ordinary Muslims because they are being corrupted... . Because of all the bad things that we had and continue to experience, many Muslims become vulnerable to extremist ideologies ..., which demonize us even more.<sup>62</sup>

For centuries, the Muslims have always blamed the Catholics and the Christians for all the misfortunes and tragic events in their lives... . Until when will they blame the government and the Catholics who decided to settle in Mindanao permanently? They are using us as an excuse for their miseries and failures when they should be blaming their wrong religious ideologies and beliefs instead. Why? Because their religion inspired so many terrorist groups like the *Abu Sayyaf*... . These Muslim terrorists are destroying not only the image of Mindanao but the entire Philippines. The Catholics have nothing to do with that. Have you ever heard of a Catholic terrorist who blew himself up just to convince the non-Catholics that our God is the best? ... But the way that many Muslims recount the events that

<sup>62</sup> Author's interview, September 7, 2019, Philippines.

happened during the time of the Spanish and the Americans make the Catholics seem like the villains when, in reality, they are not heroes either. How many innocent Christians did they kill and murder during those times? They also need to acknowledge and ask for forgiveness for all the wrong things they did to us.<sup>63</sup>

This inspection of the symbolic mechanistic evidence (Stage 2) of ethnoreligious othering revealed how the securitization of the othered ethnoreligious communities as existential threats had reconfigured the constitutive realities of the security context underlying the Philippines' pluralistic polity. Throughout this process, the state and non-state elites responsible for framing certain targets as prime suspects made symbolic appeals to their audiences' prevailing biases, particularly their prejudices and ideologies vis-à-vis the others, in the hope of convincing them to accept the reality of these threats. The zero-sum nature of hostile symbolic predispositions on which these securitizing frames were anchored induced a security dilemma in which the continued primacy and influence of the insiders depended on the continued marginalization and weakness of the outsiders. Accordingly, conflicts of interests between rival factions were regularly depicted as struggles for group security, power, and status against the menacing, evil, and sub-human others. And with the consent of their constituents, chauvinistic solutions were adopted to defeat these threats decisively.

### **Sacralizing the Indivisible Filipino Catholic (vs. Othered Islamic) Identity, Homeland, and Territorial Nation-State**

The Islamic concept of *din wa dawlah*—that Islam is a religion with a political mission at its core—continues to cast doubt on the Moro Muslims' genuine motivation for self-determination.<sup>64</sup> For many Filipino non-Muslims, the concept is a pretext for establishing a completely independent Islamic state and society and, therefore, a threat to the Philippines' national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Accordingly, the central government's responses have been limited to the production and implementation of "extractive" (as opposed to inclusive) political, economic, and social policies that further diminished equal participation and perpetuated the subordinate position of the Moro Muslims.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Author's interview, August 8, 2017, Philippines.

<sup>64</sup> This sentiment is reflected in de Castro, "The Influence of Transnational Jihadist Ideology on Islamic Extremist Groups in the Philippines" and "Confronting Militant Islam in Southeast Asia"; and Mutalib, "Islamic Revivalism in ASEAN States."

<sup>65</sup> See Buendia, "The State-Moro Armed Conflict in the Philippines"; Majul, "The Moro Struggle in the Philippines"; Podder, "Legitimacy, Loyalty and Civilian Support for the Moro Islamic Liberation Front"; Rivera, "The Struggle of the Muslim People in the Southern Philippines"; and Tuminez, "Moro Ancestral Domain and its Implications for Peace and Development in the Southern Philippines," for a broad examination of the different forms of institutional discrimination faced by the Moro Muslims.

Given this context, the following discussions demonstrate how the perceptual causal mechanism of ethnoreligious othering (Stage 3) facilitated the hostile sacralization of clashing interpretations of the ideal ethnoreligious identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state within the Philippines' pluralistic polity. The perception that these primary security referents were intended to be pure and indivisible forced state and non-state actors from the contending communities to take control over the nature and content of the state's security superstructures (rhetoric, policies, strategies, and institutions) by ensconcing their own ethnoreligious substructures (myths, doctrines, norms, and dogmas) into these instruments. The incapacity to do so highly risks the rights and space of an ethnoreligious community within the given status-quo.

In this case, the Filipino Catholics, like their Indonesian Muslim and Burman Buddhist counterparts, have successfully embedded their ethnoreligious substructures in the development and execution of state security superstructures, allowing them to sustain their dominant power and position relative to the othered Muslims. Meanwhile, the sidelining of the Muslim elites to the fringes substantially undercut their influence and the capacity of their group's ethnoreligious substructures to engender the security superstructures required for the promotion of their own conception of identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state. These discussions with some internally displaced Muslims in Mindanao highlight the perils of losing power and control over the state's security superstructures by rationalizing and preserving the status quo arrangement between the Filipino Catholics and Moro Muslims as being just and natural:

In this country, the Muslims are always ridiculed and laughed at by those who do not understand our religion and beliefs, including the Catholics and the Christians. It hurts so much when your faith is criticized and blamed for all the evil things happening to us here, but the reality is that we have less power and wealth than the Christians. Sometimes I wish that all Filipinos are Muslims so that they would understand the beauty and morality of Islam. I believe that if everyone in the Philippines is Muslim, we won't have conflicts and misunderstandings between us. After all, before the Spanish arrived and conquered the Philippines, we were all Muslims.<sup>66</sup>

It's difficult for us not to feel this way, especially when the government does not do much to protect our rights and lands. Look at what the government did to our homes. They indiscriminately bombed our villages and burned our houses. The military said they had no choice because the terrorists were hiding in our homes, even though that's not true. Why was it so easy for the president to call for all-out war? Is it because we are Muslims? Can you imagine him doing the same thing in Cebu or in Manila, where the majority are Catholics?<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Author's interview, September 18, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>67</sup> Author's interview, September 19, 2019, Philippines.

We've already accepted the fact that here in the Philippines, the Catholics are the most favored group. They have the power, the resources, and the influence. The Muslims like us are the minority here, and because of that, we are not given equal rights and privileges. We have endured so much discrimination and humiliation because of this order wherein the Christians are at the top, and the Muslims are at the bottom.<sup>68</sup>

Yes, the Catholics and Christians are the ruling class in this country, but that doesn't mean that our dignity, pride, and honor no longer matter. We care about these things because we are pure Muslims and pure Maranao. Maybe if the president is also a pure Muslim, our lives will be a lot better. A Muslim president will not be corrupt and unjust because he believes in Allah and he follows what the Qur'an says.<sup>69</sup>

Similar to what has been uncovered in Indonesia and Myanmar, the prevailing emotional and symbolic relationships between rival ethnoreligious groups in the Philippines significantly influence the members' perceptions of the others' behaviors and the motives or intentions that they attribute to those actions. In other words, group perceptions are fundamentally attached to prior emotions and predispositions being held by the group members as they routinely assign emotional and symbolic classifications to their relationships with the others.<sup>70</sup> The underlying fear, hatred, resentment, or anger, on the one hand, and unsettled biases, prejudices, beliefs, or ideologies, on the other, induce and amplify hostile perceptions of pure identity, sacred homeland, and indivisible nation-state. The results are generally inaccurate and damaging appraisals of the ethnoreligious others and their conduct which, in turn, exacerbate the psychological and cultural partitions between the in-group and the out-group, precluding them from perceiving each other's emotions and predispositions as familiar and benign. The more the insiders identify and stick with their own group, the more they tend to differentiate and discriminate against the outsiders as the mutual misperceptions between them intensify.<sup>71</sup>

In the case of the Philippines, as one Muslim representative pointed out, the state's failure to bring about much more inclusive institutions underlines the

<sup>68</sup> Author's interview, September 18, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>69</sup> Author's interview, September 19, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>70</sup> Based on the arguments and evidences presented in the works of Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, *Emotions and Beliefs*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Mackie and Hamilton, "Cognitive and Affective Processes in Intergroup Perception"; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs."

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Gaertner et al., "The Common Ingroup Identity Model"; Halperin, Porat, and Wohl, "Extinction Threat and Reciprocal Threat Reduction"; Mercer, "Social Emotion and Identity"; Saguy and Halperin, "Exposure to Outgroup Members Criticizing their Own Group Facilitates Intergroup Openness"; Smith, "Social Identity and Social Emotions."

unwillingness of the previous colonial rulers and the local administrators who replaced them to genuinely integrate the Bangsamoro and her people into the wider Philippines, particularly on issues concerning national politics.<sup>72</sup> On the contrary, the dismantling of traditional sultanate system in Mindanao was intended to transfer decision and policymaking processes into the hands of non-Muslim dynasties with solid connections to the government.<sup>73</sup> These tensions were aggravated further by the ensuing terror induced by widespread talks about state-led genocide operations against the Muslims during the Marcos regime, and the subsequent revelation that the Philippine army and the police were indeed collaborating with a Christian extremist paramilitary group.<sup>74</sup> Understandably, these incidents helped reignite their sense of Moro Muslim nationalism that drove the nationalist movements of the seventies.<sup>75</sup>

Today, a significant number of Muslims from various parts of Mindanao continue to see themselves as being Filipinos only on papers, preferring to be identified based on their respective ethnicities and clans.<sup>76</sup> These exchanges with some Moro Muslim scholars emphasize how the state's Catholic-centric security superstructures have significantly undermined their people's ethnoreligious identity and claim over their homeland after centuries of othering and exclusion:

When the earthquake struck Bohol, the government quickly mobilized cultural workers and the funds needed to reconstruct the damaged Catholic churches. But when our mosques were destroyed . . . not one from the national government even cared about how we could rehabilitate them. . . . Just look at how the government responds every time there's a crisis in Mindanao—it's always through militarization and martial law. We don't need martial law. What we need is humane support that will help us meet our basic needs. Instead, our human rights are violated even more during a crisis because of martial law. . . . They would spread rumors about massive recruitment among Muslim students by *Maute* and *Abu Sayyaf* groups and then start tagging them as terrorists even though they are fully aware

<sup>72</sup> Author's interview, August 6, 2017, Philippines; see also Abinales, "Muslim' Political Brokers and the Philippines Nation-State"; Coronel Ferrer, "Forging a Peace Settlement for the Bangsamoro"; Eder, "Ethnic Differences, Islamic Consciousness, and Muslim Social Integration in the Philippines"; Yamamoto, "Nation-Building and Integration Policy in the Philippines."

<sup>73</sup> This point is explored further in Magdalena, "The Peace Process in Mindanao: Problems and Prospects"; Montiel, Rodil, and de Guzman, "The Moro Struggle and the Challenge to Peace Building in Mindanao, Southern Philippines"; Oliveros, "Islam in the Moro-American War (1899–1913)."

<sup>74</sup> See Chalk, "Militant Islamic Extremism in the Southern Philippines"; Gutierrez, "New Entrepreneurs in Violence and their Impact on Local Politics in Mindanao"; Islam, "Ethno-Communal Conflict in the Philippines."

<sup>75</sup> For insightful reflections on some of these events and how they contributed to the Moro Muslim nationalist uprisings, see Cline, "The Islamic Insurgency in the Philippines"; George, *Revolt in Mindanao*; Noble, "The Moro National Liberation Front in the Philippines"; Jubair, *Bangsamoro: A Nation under Endless Tyranny*; Aljunied and Curaming, "Mediating and Consuming Memories of Violence."

<sup>76</sup> Blanchetti-Revelli, "Moro, Muslim, or Filipino?"; Caballero-Anthony, "Revisiting the Bangsamoro Struggle"; Neumann, "Identity-Building and Democracy in the Philippines."



of the inaccuracies of their reports. They don't care about the repercussions of their actions because we are just Muslims... . No wonder why we have so many missing relatives and friends, and many of them are probably already dead. They just dump their bodies in mass graves. There's no effort from the national government to name them when they definitely should be doing that because they are not just dogs. They're humans. How could Muslims not feel that they're just second-class citizens?<sup>77</sup>

Although the Muslims have a longer history than the Philippine republic itself, our history is not being taught in our classrooms. Instead, our history teachers just tell us to memorize the names of those Catholic and Christian heroes whom we never heard of, places in Luzon and Visayas that we had never been to, and dates of certain historical events that we were not a part of... . This has always been the Muslim experience since we have been artificially annexed to the Philippine territory because of the Treaty of Paris without our consent. To this day, many of us continue to resist this illegal annexation of our homeland, which explains why integration or assimilation has mainly been problematic for Muslims... . Consequently, Mindanao has become a fertile ground for Islamic extremism, especially for those who have been totally disenchanted with and disenfranchised by the existing order between the Muslims and Christians. The current political and social arrangements make it very difficult for a Muslim to become a senator, let alone a president. The only time that a Muslim can win during a national election is if we rig that election. You can never have a Muslim senator or a president in a clean election because of the negative perceptions that many Catholics and Christians have toward us. Who would represent and fight for the Muslims' interests in the national government then?<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the Moro Muslims have been relatively more successful in delineating and upholding their own imagined community than other ethnoreligious minorities in Southeast Asia. This is due to their relative effectiveness in generating, accessing, and utilizing the very same emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering that have served the majority Catholic group's interests. Specifically, their vigorous and compelling efforts in cultivating Moro Islamic nationalism, securitizing the threat of othered Filipino Catholics, and sacralizing the Moro Muslim identity and homeland, have all been crucial to their struggle for greater autonomy. In doing so, they have significantly enhanced their capacity to push for the recognition of their ethnoreligious substructures and use these to mobilize for the institutionalization of their preferred security superstructures strategically.

<sup>77</sup> Author's interview, September 25, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>78</sup> Author's interview, September 25 and 28, 2019, Philippines.

Concrete evidence of this is the ratification of Republic Act No. 11,054 or the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) signed by President Rodrigo Duterte on July 26, 2018.<sup>79</sup> Following the agreements outlined in the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) between the government and the MILF, the BOL would replace the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) with the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) and provide for an overarching structure of government. Yet, despite the Commission on Elections (COE)'s announcement in January 2019 that the BOL was deemed ratified after the first part of the referendum showed a majority support for its ratification, the new law is still being attacked on various fronts by different factions. For one, as some non-Muslim religious leaders in the region pointed out, a significant chunk of the Catholic and Christian groups and other indigenous communities living in several vital areas of the proposed BAR (notably in Basilan, Cotabato, Zamboanga, and Lanao del Norte), vehemently denounced their inclusion in the Bangsamoro territory, fearing that they might be abused and exploited under a new Islamic-controlled regional government.<sup>80</sup> The decision made by the Congress and Senate allowing the BAR to apply *Shari'ah* Law only to the Muslims within the territory did little to placate these groups.

Indeed, ethnoreligious members in pluralistic polities like the Philippines can be highly biased toward threat perception and defensive behaviors. Although cognition and socialization both play crucial roles in identifying and giving meanings to threats, the low threshold for threat detection inherent among individuals and groups compels them to initialize defense responses even in relatively non-threatening contexts.<sup>81</sup> This tendency magnifies and escalates the already hostile emotional and symbolic relationships between rival factions and prevents them from taking the necessary steps to re-evaluate the undesirable emotional and symbolic categories they assign to each other.<sup>82</sup> Notwithstanding these feelings of threat from the non-Muslims, these separate interviews with some of the key experts on BAR-related issues help explain the importance of these developments in the Bangsamoro region, particularly with respect to how the Moro Muslims perceive their identity and homeland:

<sup>79</sup> A copy of full text is available online at [http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/republic\\_acts/ra%2011054.pdf](http://legacy.senate.gov.ph/republic_acts/ra%2011054.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> Cepeda, "Bicam Approves Creation of *Shari'ah* High Court in Bangsamoro," <https://www.rappler.com/nation/bicameral-conference-committee-approval-shariah-high-court-bangsamoro>; Fonbuena, "Why Catholics Took Opposing Sides in Bangsamoro Plebiscite," <https://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/isabela-cotabato-cities-reasons-catholics-opposing-views-bangsamoro-plebiscite>.

<sup>81</sup> See Damasio and Carvalho, "The Nature of Feelings"; Öhman, "Fear and Anxiety as Emotional Phenomena."

<sup>82</sup> This argument is informed by the works of Bar-Tal, "A Sense of Self-Perceived Collective Victimhood in Intractable Conflicts"; Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Gaertner et al., "The Common Ingroup Identity Model"; Smith, "Social Identity and Social Emotions"; Wohl and Branscombe, "Forgiveness and Collective Guilt Assignment to Historical Perpetrator Groups Depend on Level of Social Category Inclusiveness."

Speaking as someone who's a community member and whose father-in-law is an MILF commander, although the BOL is a diluted version of what we really want for the *Bangsamoro* Muslims and our homeland, I think that the agreement recognizes our dignity. Specifically, the annex for normalization gives space for transitional justice, which in my opinion is a beautiful thing as it demonstrates the government's attempts to acknowledge and address its legacy of large-scale past abuses against the Muslims. This is a necessary first step in ensuring accountability, serving justice, and achieving reconciliation between the two parties moving forward. The problem, of course, is that sometimes what is written on paper does not necessarily translate to and deliver the expected outcomes.... The fight does not and should not stop with the BOL... . The BOL is just part and parcel of the CAB, which is what we need. So, to be clear, while we may have accepted the BOL, we have not surrendered our basic principles and our key aspirations for the *Bangsamoro*.<sup>83</sup>

We have the historical right, an internationally recognized historical right, to govern ourselves and our territory. This is something that we care deeply about and will keep fighting for until our last *jihadist* falls. It may sound like a cliché, but the BAR is an antidote to the influence of foreign militant Islam, particularly among the Muslims in Mindanao... . It's crucial to point out here that the *Bangsamoro* is also a heterogeneous bloc. Although there are still many of us who continue to deny and reject the idea of being a Filipino and hate the word integration because it's equivalent to assimilation, there are also those who now begin to acknowledge that they are part of a bigger nation. But while the idea of having multiple layers of identity is now increasingly being recognized, particularly by those who have been through the Philippine education system, they still prioritize their Muslim and Moro identities over their being Filipinos. Many Moro writers still question whether there is such a thing as a "Filipino nation."<sup>84</sup>

The biggest challenge is to ensure that the BAR will succeed and not become a failure like the ARMM; otherwise, that might lure other Muslims into joining the ISIL and other extremist groups... . I used to think that if the *Bangsamoro* people got their full sovereignty, the other regions in the Philippines could finally have their peace and order. But when I witnessed the signing of the CAB, I realized that in the meantime, the Muslims do not need to carve their own independent nation-state... . If your house is damaged and you don't have the budget to purchase a new one, the best thing to do is to repair the damages... . you make do with what you have. Let's put it this way: if the Philippines is the parent and *Bangsamoro* is her

<sup>83</sup> Author's interview, September 25, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>84</sup> Author's interview September 28, 2019, Philippines.

child, the parent should teach the child how to walk. And when the child already knows how to walk, you let her be independent and make her own choices...<sup>85</sup>

Unfortunately for the Moro Muslims, strong antagonistic views toward the very idea of a “Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao” have remained strong and persistent among many Filipino Catholics, particularly in the aftermath of two major crises involving the state’s security forces and Islamic insurgents. In January 2015, the Philippine National Police (PNP) launched *Oplan Exodus* to capture or kill wanted Malaysian terrorists and other high-ranking officials of the MILF’s splinter group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). The operation took an unexpected turn when forty-four members of the PNP Special Action Forces deployed in Mamasapano, Maguindanao, to carry out the mission were killed by the BIFF and MILF members.<sup>86</sup> The gravity of the situation forced the government peace panel to intervene by requesting a ceasefire from the MILF to allow the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to save the remaining twenty-nine survivors surrounded by the Muslim rebels.<sup>87</sup>

Less than two years later, the Muslims in the south found themselves once again at the center of another brutal conflict that lasted from May to October 2017. After receiving a report that a leader of the ISIL-affiliated *Abu Sayyaf* group was in Marawi City, the AFP launched an offensive operation against the radical Islamist militants, including the *Maute* and *Abu Sayyaf* Salafi *jihadi*st groups.<sup>88</sup> The severity of the clashes prompted Duterte to declare Martial Law in Mindanao that continued until December 31, 2019.<sup>89</sup> Despite the government’s claim of a decisive victory, the Marawi crisis claimed more than a thousand casualties (978 militants and 168 government forces) and displaced nearly 1.1 million civilians, the majority of whom were Moro Muslims.<sup>90</sup> These regrettable events have significantly undermined the broader public support needed to provide government concessions to the Bangsamoro region and its people.

As in Indonesia and Myanmar, these lingering hostile perceptions among many Filipino Catholics and Moro Muslims in the Philippines are not only triggered by the existing emotional and symbolic relations between them but are also underpinning and co-producing their mutually hostile emotions and predispositions.

<sup>85</sup> Author’s interview September 23, 2019, Philippines.

<sup>86</sup> Mendez, “What Went Wrong with *Oplan Exodus*?” <https://news.abs-cbn.com/nation/02/11/15/what-went-wrong-oplan-exodus>.

<sup>87</sup> Villareal, Jr., “Operation Exodus: The Massacre of 44 Philippine Police Commandos in Mamasapano Clash,” <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/81222297.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> Betteridge-Moes, “What Happened in Marawi?” <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2017/10/29/what-happened-in-marawi>.

<sup>89</sup> BBC, “Philippines President Duterte Declares Martial Law on Mindanao Island,” <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-40022529>.

<sup>90</sup> Fonbuena, “Marawi One Year after the Battle,” <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2018/may/22/marawi-one-year-siege-philippines-ghost-town-still-haunted-threat-isis>.

Their reciprocal perception of not possessing enough power to protect themselves against each other's threats amplified mutual fear and chauvinistic beliefs.<sup>91</sup> Their reciprocal perception of the other as the main perpetrator of violence and discord intensified mutual anger and narrow prejudices.<sup>92</sup> And their reciprocal perception of being dominated or controlled by an underserving group increased mutual resentment and ethnocentric biases.<sup>93</sup> The stickiness and persistence of these intersecting hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions continue to pose serious political dilemmas that thwart the ultimate realization of the Bangsamoro cause and struggle. Hashim Salamat's old interview with *Nida'ul Islam* in 1998 captures the principal ethos behind the MILF's attempts at sacralizing the perceived indivisibility of the Moro Muslim identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state:

Islam made its foundation here in about the year 1310 CE, and independent Islamic principalities were established in the beginning of the 15th century. After one hundred years of Islamic grandeur in this part of the globe, the blooming Islamic states were invaded by foreign intruders. Since then and until now, the *Bangsamoro* Muslims were still fighting to preserve their Islamic identity and regain their usurped freedom and independence... . They were independent hundreds of years before the creation of the Philippines by Spain and the USA, her colonial masters. With the help of the latter the newly created imperialist puppet succeeded in her plot to annex the Bangsamoro homeland when she was granted independence by the USA... . The Bangsamoro people fought for 469 years to preserve their Islamic faith and identity and to defend their legitimate rights to freedom and self-determination... . The barbarous massacres and heinous crimes perpetuated by the Government of the Philippines against the Bangsamoro people have a serious repercussion in their life... . The Filipino government's accusation against the *Mujahideen* of crimes against the Filipino people is black propaganda against Islam and its followers and a brazen lie which aims at inverting the issue. The Bangsamoro *Mujahideen* are strictly following the teachings of Islam. As such, they do not commit any crime... . Hence, we are calling upon the Muslim *Ummah* all over the world to stand by our side... .

<sup>91</sup> On fear and chauvinistic beliefs, see, for example, Melander, "The Geography of Fear"; Öhman, "Fear and Anxiety as Emotional Phenomena"; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*; Ross, *Mixed Emotions*.

<sup>92</sup> On anger and prejudice, see for example, Dovidio, Glick, and Rudman, *On the Nature of Prejudice*; Halperin and Gross, "Intergroup Anger in Intractable Conflict"; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*; Spanovic et al., "Fear and Anger as Predictors of Motivation for Intergroup Aggression"; Smith, "Social Identity and Social Emotions."

<sup>93</sup> On resentment and bias, see, for example, Bonikowski, "Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment"; Hirsch, "The Agonistics of Respect, Resentment, and Responsibility in Post-Conflict Society"; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*; Zembylas, "Reflections on the Politics of Resentment and the Politics of Empathy in Post-Conflict Societies."

This inspection of the perceptual mechanistic evidence (Stage 3) of ethnoreligious othering revealed how the injection of the dominant group's ethnoreligious substructures into the state's security superstructures sacralized its members' perceived identity, homeland, and preferred version of the nation-state with the Philippines' pluralistic polity. More specifically, whereas the majority's ethnoreligious myths and doctrines (substructures) heavily informed the security rhetoric and policies (superstructures) crafted by the state elites; the security strategies and institutions (superstructures) adopted by the state officials further entrenched the legitimacy and power of the majority's ethnoreligious norms and dogmas (substructures). This made the prevailing order seemed natural and right despite the marginalization of the weaker group. Throughout this process, the oppositions launched by the minority against this majority-centric arrangement were treated as security threats against the "national" identity and homeland and the general cohesion and integrity of the overarching nation-state. With the reduction of the ethnoreligious others into inhumanity, chauvinistic just wars believed to prevent the "dirty" and "evil" outsiders from contaminating the "pure" and "holy" insiders were regularly employed and defended by members of the rival factions.

### **Conclusion**

The foregoing discussions in this chapter reveal how the emotive, symbolic, and perceptual causal mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering facilitate the reimagination of ethnoreligious others into existential security threats within the Philippines' pluralistic polity. As a whole, they act as a medium through which the existing relations and arrangements between the Catholic and Muslim communities are either reinforced or recalibrated. As in Indonesia and Myanmar, the constitutive structures of ethnoreligious othering are simultaneously fueled by and induce emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions.

In Stage 1, we see how the two-way shared cultivation of chauvinistic Catholic and Islamic nationalisms emitted hostile emotions, impelling the members of these competing camps to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic with respect to their own identities and territories. Far from being the antithesis of rationality, these emotions were the natural and rational reactions vis-à-vis the threatened referents that mattered enormously to the members of competing ethnoreligious communities, particularly amid a loss of equilibrium or value, both real and perceived. Indeed, the communal fear, hatred, resentment, anger, and rage that the Filipino Catholics and Moro Muslims experienced were expressions of their insecurity toward each other and manifestations of their vulnerability toward events beyond their control. As the Philippines case illustrates, these emotions are also tightly linked to multidimensional and multidirectional historical memories (whether real and artificial) which have not only defined the past hostile relations

between the Catholic and Muslim groups but are also continuously guiding the present (and potentially the future) dynamics between them.

In Stage 2, we see how this survivalist, zero-sum security logic, in turn, prompted state and non-state elites to securitize a target cluster as a threat to their own group's security, power, and status using the hostile symbolic predispositions shaped by the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism, and with the active consent and participation of their members. These chauvinistic ideologies, prejudices, and values that emanated from the chauvinistic propagandas, stories, and metaphors of competing ethnoreligious nationalisms not only rationalized the framing of ethnoreligious others as strangers and enemies but also legitimized the chauvinistic measures that such act entailed. As the Philippine case illustrates, the hostile emotions engendered by Catholic and Islamic nationalisms lend support to these securitizing moves by enhancing the salience and resonance of "Moro Muslim" and "Filipino Catholic" threat frames, respectively. The reciprocal securitization between these rival ethnoreligious communities rouses them to develop and implement predatory goals and strategies, ultimately leading to a security dilemma where one faction's pursuit of dominance within a disputed polity is deemed as a lethal threat by another section.

And in Stage 3, we see how the key state and non-state elites from the politically powerful ethnoreligious faction (e.g., Filipino Catholics) buttressed their legitimacy, authority, and primacy further by embedding their (e.g., Catholic) ethnoreligious substructures into the overarching state's security superstructures, thereby sacralizing their idealized version of (e.g., Filipino Catholic) identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state. The perceived indivisibility and sacredness of these security referents meant that for rival ethnoreligious groups, these objects or subjects could neither be partitioned without considerably reducing their ideational cohesion and material integrity, nor could they be replaced or traded off for something of equivalent worth. What matters is not whether the issue in question can actually be split tangibly but whether the parties involved perceive the issue as something that can be divided. As the Philippine case illustrates, the intersubjective perceptions of pure, holy, and divine Filipino Catholic or Moro Muslim identity and homeland not only create chauvinistic "social facts" that some lives and spaces are more grievable and sacrosanct than others but also justify the chauvinistic wars being waged to secure those grievable lives and sacrosanct spaces.

## The Divine Tragedy of Securing the Sacred

How does a once familiar and benign ethnoreligious community become a stranger and a threat? Anyone who has directly or indirectly experienced violent protracted conflicts such as those witnessed across Southeast Asia is fully aware that behind these phenomena are powerful and deeply entrenched emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions. Indeed, for those who have survived and continue to live through these extraordinary events, the emotional, symbolic, and perceptual externalities of their experiences are potent and real as the arms and capital that define the mainstream rationalist views of conflict.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the enormous passions being spent on these long and brutal battles require an explanation that explicitly recognizes their presence and role in conflicts. Bloody phenomena, like the ethnoreligious otherings and passionate conflicts examined in this book, cannot be simply rationalized and explained by bloodless theories.<sup>2</sup>

As such, I have deviated from the standard practice and conventional wisdom in conflict studies to offer an alternative account of how internal and intrastate conflicts erupt and protract by incorporating these unduly neglected elements in my investigation and analysis. Applying the ethnoreligious othering concept and framework that I have developed, I uncovered and explained the underlying dynamics and processes through which the very first stage of all internal and intrastate conflicts gets set in motion and crystallized: the manufacturing of the ethnoreligious others as security threats. As I have argued and demonstrated throughout the book, the reinvention and reconstitution of specific target groups into strangers and enemies is being driven by a three-stage *ethnoreligious othering* causal mechanism: cultivation of the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism, securitization of ethnoreligious others using hostile symbolic predispositions, and sacralization of hostile perceptions of ethnoreligious identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states (**Thesis 1**).

Collectively, these constitutive structures of ethnoreligious othering are the channels through which the prevailing arrangements and relations between the insiders and outsiders are either reconfigured or reinforced. More specifically, they

<sup>1</sup> Informed by the major works of “non-materialist/rationalist” conflict scholars, including Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Hassner, *War on Sacred Grounds*; Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>2</sup> Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*.



are the invisible engines that facilitate the recalibration and rebalancing of the relative security, power, and status between the referent and target ethnoreligious factions within pluralistic polities. Throughout the whole process, these “structural engines” are simultaneously producing and are being powered by the hostile and chauvinistic elements of emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions and, therefore, are pivotal to reimagining and renegotiating the ethnoreligious others’ state of being and position. Using the interpretive process tracing method, I have theoretically and empirically probed how these identified causal mechanisms work in actual cases by comparatively examining the experiences of rival ethnoreligious communities with violent internal and intrastate conflicts in the predominantly Muslim Indonesia, Buddhist Myanmar, and Catholic Philippines. The evidence I have gathered and analyzed from these cases reveals how the whole ethnoreligious othering process proceeds.

First, the two-way shared cultivation of chauvinistic ethnoreligious nationalism (emanating from the amalgamation of ethno-nationalist and religious factors and influences) between elite and non-elite actors (either for tactical or substantive reasons) generates hostile emotive effects that induce rival groups within pluralistic polities to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic vis-à-vis identity and territory (**Proposition 1-Stage 1**).

Second, this survivalist, zero-sum security logic, in turn, motivates the relevant state and non-state elites (e.g., political officials, ethno-nationalist leaders, religious chiefs) to securitize rival factions as threats to their security, power, and status (either for tactical or substantive reasons) based on their own symbolic predispositions informed by the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism, and with the active participation and consent of their respective constituencies (**Proposition 2-Stage 2**).

And third, with the successful cultivation of the hostile emotive effects of ethnoreligious nationalism and effective securitization of the othered ethnoreligious group using hostile symbolic predispositions, the state and non-state elites are now better positioned to solidify their groups’ legitimacy, authority, and primacy further (either for tactical or substantive reasons) by sacralizing their hostile perceptions of indivisible ethnoreligious identities, homelands, and nation-states (**Proposition 3-Stage 3**).

Indeed, ethnoreligious othering is routinely employed by state and non-state agents as a defense strategy for protecting and preserving the primary security referents of their respective groups—their claimed identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states—particularly in times of crisis, breakdown, and threat. Whereas for states, ethnoreligious othering is mainly about the security of the conceptual cohesion and territorial integrity of their polities for survival, for ethnoreligious groups, it is primarily about securing their identities and homelands within those polities to survive (**Thesis 2**). This has presented significant challenges for heterogeneous polities where disagreements and conflicts over the meaning of security and what survival entailed were not just between rival ethnoreligious

groups but also between states and specific ethnoreligious clusters. In Southeast Asia, for example, the “security value” (i.e., positive security toward insiders) and “security curse” (i.e., negative security or insecurity toward outsiders) that have been simultaneously engendered by chauvinistic ethnoreligious othering in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines ultimately secured and legitimized the referent groups’ ideal identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state at the expense of the othered groups.

Moreover, given its double-edged security effect, securing the in-groups via ethnoreligious othering has invariably led to immense tragedies, particularly on the part of the out-groups. This situation has been markedly evident in heterogeneous polities where the “national identity” was conflated with the ethnic and faith of the preponderant ethnoreligious community. In Southeast Asia, for instance, while the majority’s ethnoreligious substructures (i.e., myths, doctrines, norms, dogmas) heavily informed the security superstructures crafted by the state elites in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines, the security superstructures (i.e., rhetoric, policies, strategies, institutions) that state officials ended up implementing further sanctioned and entrenched the ethnoreligious substructures of the majority in these countries.

Hence, without proper recognition for these intangible yet inherently crucial emotive, symbolic, and perceptual causal mechanisms, violent internal and intrastate conflicts such as those examined in the region are always bound to re-emerge and protract. The constant production and utilization of hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions via these ethnoreligious othering causal mechanisms entrap the members of competing groups into a series of mass hostility, security dilemma, and chauvinist political mobilization. Consequently, conflict resolution strategies and peace settlement negotiations that do not recognize, regulate, and reconcile these emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms (and their associated externalities) are as durable as a house of cards.

### **Hostile Emotions, Symbolic Predispositions, and Perceptions in Ethnoreligious Otherings and Passionate Conflicts**

Following the methodological logic of interpretive process tracing, I have systematically examined how the whole process of ethnoreligious othering works in the pluralistic polities of Southeast Asia. As mentioned, I have specifically focused on the protracted internal and interstate conflicts involving the Muslim and Christian groups in Indonesia, the Buddhist and Muslim factions in Myanmar, and the Catholic and Muslim communities in the Philippines. In investigating and analyzing the empirical fingerprints of ethnoreligious othering in these contexts, I have provided more holistic, nuanced, and realistic explanations of how its constitutive structures played out at the level of agents; how these were reproduced and

transformed within particular settings; and how such actions and behaviors, in turn, resulted in specific macro-level outcomes. Agency and intentionality were treated as the agents' emergent properties, thus placing their intersubjective meanings at the center of the mechanisms that explain continuity and change in social institutions.<sup>3</sup>

As explained earlier, although process tracing is quintessentially a single-case method, the patterns discovered and observed within a specific context could also be relevant and transferrable to other areas, especially when looking for explanations for particular outcomes in those settings.<sup>4</sup> And, indeed, in all the three cases, I have methodically exposed and elucidated how the causal mechanisms underpinning ethnoreligious othering (i.e., emotive, symbolic, and perceptual) stimulated the chauvinistic cultivation of ethnoreligious nationalisms and emotions, propelled the chauvinistic securitization of the ethnoreligious others as existential threats, and legitimized the chauvinistic sacralization of idealized ethnoreligious identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states.

### Hostile emotions in ethnoreligious othering

Investigating the emotive mechanism of ethnoreligious othering in Southeast Asia demonstrated the major functions of hostile emotions in the eruption and protraction of internal and intrastate conflicts. Specifically, in Stage 1, we witnessed how the two-way shared cultivation of chauvinistic ethnoreligious nationalisms across the region—whether Islamic, Catholic/Christian, or Buddhist—engendered hostile emotions which compelled members of the rival groups observed in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines to adopt a survivalist, zero-sum security logic vis-à-vis their respective identities and territories.

By constructing and propagating emotional ideations and discourses about the self in relation to the other (or vice versa), ethnoreligious nationalism facilitated the differentiation and delineation between the “good” and “evil” personas and the “legitimate” and “illegitimate” inhabitants.

More precisely, ethnoreligious nationalism provided the necessary affective lexicon which the elite and non-elite actors jointly cultivated and exploited in: (1) initiating the ethnoreligious othering of a target community (by serving as a primary reservoir of identity and morale); and (2) framing and legitimizing the calls for collective mobilization (to either revise or reinforce the status quo

<sup>3</sup> As advised by Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*; and Norman, “Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations.”

<sup>4</sup> Norman, “Interpretive Process Tracing and Causal Explanations” and “Rethinking Causal Explanation in Interpretive International Studies,” offer in-depth discussion of how to apply the method in analyzing causal mechanisms, particularly in the field of politics and IR.

structural conditions underpinning the relative security, power, and status between rival factions).<sup>5</sup> The hostile emotions that crystallized through this process generated a shared feeling and understanding among the members of competing ethnoreligious communities that they were all responsible for the security and survival of their respective ethnies and faiths. This, in turn, induced them to rethink and realign their relationships with each other, ultimately rallying them to take actions against other forms of identity and versions of the territory that were viewed to damage and delegitimize their own existence.

These hostile emotive effects were particularly evident and critical during episodes of structural shift driven by a host of material, non-material, and elite-driven causes. The situational changes arising against the backdrop of competing chauvinistic ethnoreligious beliefs triggered group-based emotions which prepared the members to satisfy their concerns physically and cognitively. In effect, while the cultivation and propagation of ethnoreligious nationalism provided the in-group with a greater sense of security and control over its identity and territory, it also generated corresponding insecurity for the out-group. These efforts to produce a homogenous ethnoreligious identity and territory based on some ideal type of ethnoreligious nationalism established the “chosen glories” and “chosen traumas” eulogized, stories and symbols venerated, and relationships and loyalties preserved.<sup>6</sup> Yet, in doing so, all other sources of histories, memories, and allegiances, especially those that constituted and defined the ethnoreligious others, had to be relegated and suppressed. Accordingly, crafting an emotive vernacular or language that revives and strengthens an ideal form of identity and territory within a pluralistic polity has become a crucial component of the defense strategy used by rival ethnoreligious groups against the existential threats posed by the othered communities across Southeast Asia.

Drawing on these experiences from the region, three key inferences can be made regarding the role of emotions in ethnoreligious othering and internal and intrastate conflicts. First, rather than just being purely cognitive, hostile emotions are highly interconnected and socialized as they are ordinarily expressed in relation to target groups and articulated in a language understandable to the referent groups, particularly in contexts of shared experiences. Although they may be experienced at the individual level (i.e., “inner state”), these emotions are significantly attached to further “entailments” by which various subjects, objects, and acts are cognitively and culturally interpreted and constructed.<sup>7</sup> Put differently, emotions

<sup>5</sup> This assertion is drawn from the theoretical arguments and empirical evidences presented in the works of Brubaker, “Religion and Nationalism”; Friedland, “Religious Nationalism and the Problem of Collective Representation”; Fox, “The Rise of Religious Nationalism and Conflict”; and Juergensmeyer, *New Cold War?*

<sup>6</sup> Based on Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging*; Smith, *Chosen Peoples*; and Volkan, *Bloodlines*.

<sup>7</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; see also Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics”; Hutchison and Bleiker, “Theorizing Emotions in World Politics”; and Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs.”

neither reside exclusively in the people's minds nor do they come entirely from the social world.<sup>8</sup> Instead, they flow simultaneously from the internal domain (i.e., cognitive) toward external targets and the external environment (i.e., social) toward the internal referents.

As socio-cultural phenomena, the expressions and meanings of these hostile emotions—like fear, hatred, resentment, anger, or rage—confronting the rival ethnoreligious communities in Southeast Asia are anchored on contrasting ethnoreligious substructures underpinning the competing forms of ethnoreligious nationalism which have molded the past and continue to direct the present and future interactions between them. On the one hand, the hostile emotions which emanated from these chauvinistic thoughts and beliefs constantly pushed ethnoreligious group members to evaluate and appraise the significance of events, particularly the structural changes that were taking place within their respective polities vis-à-vis their well-being in terms of security, power, and status.<sup>9</sup> On the other, these hostile emotions and the chauvinistic behaviors associated with them were acquired and propagated through the internal and external social interactions of ethnoreligious group members and, as such, were not entirely natural.<sup>10</sup> The natural is connected with the social via a continuum—i.e., ethnoreligious nationalism—that enables the development and institutionalization of certain emotions by and within ethnoreligious communities and, as such, are best understood in their specific contexts.

Second, these hostile emotions are a form of world-making in the sense that they assist in the reconstruction and renegotiation of a particular ethnoreligious group's state of being and position within a pluralistic polity. Specifically, the resulting hostile emotive effects of conflicting ethnoreligious nationalisms illuminate how the members of rival ethnoreligious communities come to “embody both meaning and belonging” and why they are “constituted differently within two worlds.”<sup>11</sup> Because emotions are powerful engines of human behavior, they exert enormous influence on people's attitudes, actions, and motivations. And the more that individuals identify themselves with a specific ethnoreligious faction, the more they tend to experience and feel hostile emotions on behalf of the group members.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Hutchison and Bleiker, “Theorizing Emotions in World Politics.”

<sup>9</sup> For complementary analysis, see Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Halperin, Sharvit, and Gross, “Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Conflicts”; Halperin, “Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Conflicts”; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence* and *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>10</sup> See Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Fierke, *Political Self-sacrifice*; Hutchison and Bleiker, “Theorizing Emotions in World Politics”; Holmes, “The Emotionalization of Reflexivity” and “Re-searching Emotional Reflexivity.”

<sup>11</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, 65, 93.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Bar-Tal, “Conflicts and Social Psychology” and *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Smith, “Social Identity and Social Emotions.”

The socio-cultural component of such emotions implies that it is enough for one member of an ethnoreligious group to be victimized and maltreated by someone from the out-group for the entire community to assimilate and experience those hostile communal emotions simultaneously.<sup>13</sup> In the three Southeast Asian countries examined, fear, hatred, resentment, anger, and rage can be seen as “context-sensitive shared expectations” prescribed by ethnoreligious communities for specific social scenarios.<sup>14</sup> More precisely, they serve socio-cultural functions that regulate and restrain undesirable attitudes and behaviors while sustaining and promoting ideal cultural traits and values, thereby constituting and strengthening the very same thoughts and beliefs from which these emotions have also emerged.<sup>15</sup>

And third, rather than being the opposite of rationality, these hostile emotions can be viewed as the rational responses of ethnoreligious group members to events that significantly matter to them, such as the loss of equilibrium or a loss of value amid structural changes.<sup>16</sup> The group-based emotions experienced by members of opposing ethnoreligious communities are both the expressions of their insecurities toward each other and manifestations of their vulnerabilities toward events outside of their control. In essence, these hostile emotional experiences alongside their behavioral and political outcomes are the externalities of events that are regularly “appraised and emotionally responded to when all the prior cognitive and emotional dispositions” of society members are considered.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, even a target group’s ambiguous behavior can easily be interpreted as a grave threat by the referent group if its past shared victimization, lingering fears and resentments, and menacing view of the former are all considered.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, these emotions have histories and, therefore, are intrinsically related to memories which, according to Karin Fierke, include “traces of a range of other background emotions that give [these memories] specific content and cognitive specificity.”<sup>19</sup> As the Southeast Asian cases illustrate, hostile emotions are closely attached to multidirectional and multidimensional historical memories—both natural and artificial—that continue to underpin the relations between rival

<sup>13</sup> This assertion is also supported by the works of Bar-Tal et al., “A Sense of Self-Perceived Collective Victimhood in Intractable Conflicts”; Mackie, Devos, and Smith, “Intergroup Emotions”; Noor et al., “The Psychology of Competitive Victimhood between Adversarial Groups in Violent Conflict”; Smith, Seger, and Mackie, “Can Emotions Be Truly Group Level”;

<sup>14</sup> Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics,” 129.

<sup>15</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Harré, *The Social Construction of the Emotions*; Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs.”

<sup>16</sup> Drawn from de Sousa, “The Rationality of Emotions”; Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs”; Nussbaum, *The Intelligence of Emotions*; and Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

<sup>17</sup> See Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*, 9.

<sup>18</sup> For in-depth discussions of the social psychology of group victimhood, see Jacoby, “A Theory of Victimhood”; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*; Vollhardt, “Introduction to The Social Psychology of Collective Victimhood”; Shnabel et al., “Understanding and Reducing the Negative Consequences of Collective Victimhood in Dual Conflicts.”

<sup>19</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*, 91.

ethnoreligious populations across the region. The viscosity of these emotions and their attached meanings are constantly reproduced and reinforced by socio-cultural memories rooted and expressed in the chauvinistic historical narratives, cultural symbols, and identity images of opposing ethnoreligious nationalisms that members tell about themselves and the others.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, how ethnoreligious communities recreate the past by knitting it with the present and reinterpret the present by interweaving it with the past is crucial to understanding hostile emotions and how they may be tackled and reconciled.<sup>21</sup>

One further corollary inference that can be drawn from these points is that hostile emotions are not fixed but are malleable given that the nature of ethnoreligious communities and their members is also malleable rather than fixed.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, scholars like Petersen emphasized the difficulty of altering these emotions, and postulated that the likelihood of altering them is partly contingent on the “cognitive antecedents” underpinning these elements.<sup>23</sup> For instance, the anger, fear, and resentment triggered by certain events (i.e., “event-based” emotions) usually have “half-lives” as they tend to fade over time and, therefore, are deemed easier to change. Meanwhile, emotions anchored on cognitions about the inherent worth and character of an ethnoreligious group (i.e., “object-based”) such as contempt and hatred are viewed to be connected to “cultural schemas” and, as such, are more difficult to alter since they do not just possess half-lives. And in those occasions where emotion precedes cognition, like with rage, distortions in information collection and belief formation typically occur, which, in turn, skew the identification of the actual targets.<sup>24</sup> Through projection and attribution, innocent targets are labeled as enemies and used as substitute targets, allowing the rage-filled aggressors to justify their violence against them.<sup>25</sup>

### Hostile symbolic predispositions in ethnoreligious othering

Meanwhile, examining the symbolic mechanism of ethnoreligious othering in Southeast Asia also underscored the key functions of hostile symbolic

<sup>20</sup> For a more extensive examination of emotions and memory, see Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics* (particularly the “Collective Memory of Intractable Conflict” chapter) and “Sociopsychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts”; Collins, *Occupied by Memory*; Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*; and Young, “Bodily Memory and Traumatic Memory.”

<sup>21</sup> This claim is based on Fierke’s discussion of interlinking memories and emotions in *Political Self-Sacrifice*.

<sup>22</sup> Examples of experimental studies demonstrating the malleability of these elements include Cohen-Chen et al., “Malleability Beliefs, Hope, and the Willingness to Compromise for Peace”; Huntsinger, Isbell, and Clore, “The Affective Control of Thought”; and Kneeland et al., “Beliefs about Emotion’s Malleability Influence State Emotion Regulation.”

<sup>23</sup> Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*, 48; see also Goldberg, Lerner, and Tetlock, “Rage and Reason”; Scheff and Retzinger, “Shame and Rage in Destructive Conflicts.”

<sup>25</sup> Bar-Tal and Halperin, “Socio-Psychological Barriers to Conflict Resolution”; Glick, “Choice of Scapegoats”; Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*.

predispositions in the eruption and protraction of internal and intrastate conflicts. Specifically, in Stage 2, we witnessed how the resulting survivalist, zero-sum security logic (from Stage 1), stimulated state and non-state elites from the rival groups in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines to securitize each other as threats to their security, power, and status. The hostile symbolic predispositions informed by hostile ethnoreligious emotions played a critical role in framing the ethnoreligious others as existential threats. And with the involvement and approval of their respective audiences, group self-understandings and assessments of the “actual” enemies and “real” victims were challenged and altered, thereby transforming the realities of the security contexts underlying these pluralistic polities.

Throughout this process, the securitizing agents constructed credible threat frames that symbolically appealed to the prevailing biases of their ethnoreligious communities, particularly their ideologies and prejudices with respect to the outsiders, thus convincing their members of the “reality” of these threats. For instance, when confronted by suspicious actions from the target groups, the referent groups’ negative predispositions toward the latter had only magnified their feelings of threat. Similarly, when faced with what seemed like obvious threats, the insiders’ more positive predispositions toward the outsiders did not prevent them from feeling threatened but only hardened their hostile predispositions vis-à-vis the latter. Ultimately, these chauvinistic securitization frames resulted in a condition that resembled a security dilemma in which the continued dominance and influence of one group necessitated the continued suppression and weakness of the othered groups. Conflicts of interest between rival factions were routinely marketed and sold as struggles for collective security, power, and status against the outsiders.

The resulting images of these ethnoreligious others as insignificant and “ungrievable” subhumans gave the members of the referent groups the psychological assurance that they were qualitatively different and inherently superior to the non-members. But while such practice made the in-groups feel more secure and less anxious about the nature and state of their being, it also justified the projection of blame onto the out-groups, which resulted in their systematic debasement and dehumanization. With the consent and approval of their own constituencies, the securitizing actors were able to devise and deploy the “necessary” chauvinistic solutions for vanquishing their targeted enemies and were defended until they became “permanent” and “natural” features of the existing arrangements. Indeed, in fortifying their borders and walls against the enemies from the outside while eliminating the impostors from within, aggression, intolerance, and ethnocentrism guided and defined the interactions among these competing ethnoreligious communities, ultimately leading to “just wars” that have already killed and destroyed thousands of lives across Southeast Asia.

Drawing on these experiences from the region, three key inferences can be made regarding the role of symbolic predispositions in ethnoreligious othering and internal and intrastate conflicts. First, an in-group’s hostile symbolic predispositions



towards an out-group are significantly influenced and guided by hostile ethno-religious emotions. These chauvinistic beliefs, prejudices, and ideologies, to borrow Mercer's words, require ethno-religious group members to "rely on some internally generated inference to go beyond the evidence and to assume some risk that one might be wrong."<sup>26</sup> For example, the influence of fear, hatred, resentment, anger, and rage on what Kaufman labels as general (e.g., ethnocentrism) and specific (e.g., prejudice) predispositions<sup>27</sup> can be viewed as "the port through which emotions exert their influence upon human life."<sup>28</sup> Feeling these emotions affects the predispositions of rival ethno-religious communities toward each other and determines how strongly they accept them. Accordingly, rather than just being the outcomes of cognition and socialization, the hostile emotive effects of ethno-religious nationalism are co-producing hostile predispositions, which means that such emotions are not just purely the byproducts of chauvinistic ethno-religious histories, symbols, and images.<sup>29</sup>

Parallel to how emotions are produced and propagated, these biases and their consequent behaviors are also conditioned by experiences both at the individual (i.e., personal) and societal (i.e., mediated) levels. While some mutually hostile predispositions are directly rooted in personal memories and recollections of unpleasant events that happened between rival ethno-religious groups, others are indirectly created and institutionalized through narratives repetitively conveyed by government agencies, media outlets, educational systems, family circles, and other social channels.<sup>30</sup> As the Southeast Asian cases highlight, the hostile predispositions used by securitizing agents in framing the ethno-religious others as security threats are simultaneously constituted by and strengthening hostile emotions, allowing rival groups to generalize each other with conviction beyond evidence. Like extreme hyper-rational cognition, these deep-seated ethno-religious emotions, particularly the intensely hostile ones, can distort individual and community-level judgment, further aggravating the hostile predispositions (and their associated destructive behaviors) linked to chauvinistic ethno-religious nationalism.<sup>31</sup>

Second, the heightened sense of threat induced by these emotionally charged hostile predispositions increases collective support for aggressive measures against

<sup>26</sup> Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs," 2.

<sup>27</sup> Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics."

<sup>28</sup> Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, *Emotions and Beliefs*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> This view is analogous to the findings presented in Frijda and Mesquita, "Beliefs through Emotions"; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs"; Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*; Sears, "Symbolic Politics" and "The Role of Affect in Symbolic Politics."

<sup>30</sup> Fierke, *Political Self-Sacrifice*; Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics"; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs"; Smith and Collins, "Dual-Process Models: A Social Psychological Perspective."

<sup>31</sup> For further exploration of this point, see Elster, *Rationality and the Emotions*; Frijda, Manstead, and Bem, *Emotions and Beliefs*; Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice"; Mackie, Devos, and Smith, "Intergroup Emotions"; and Riek, Mania, and Gaertner, "Intergroup Threat and Outgroup Attitudes."

the ethnoreligious others.<sup>32</sup> Feeling and sensing a danger inevitably exacerbates the insiders' suspicion and distrust toward the outsiders. This helps explain why members tend to disregard those actions by non-members that indicate benign motives and intentions, fixating instead on those behaviors that may suggest hostility.<sup>33</sup> This condition is particularly salient in pluralistic polities where threats to physical safety and social welfare are rife, making it easier for the securitizing actors to prime their respective audiences (and vice versa) to respond aggressively to these threats, both real and perceived. Within these contexts, aggression is often viewed as the ultimate instrument for mitigating unpleasant feelings of threat, making hostile policies (and the leaders adopting them) more preferable and popular than reconciliatory or pacifist approaches.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to note here that the members' support for aggressive methods is not only dictated by communal feelings of threat but also by the credibility of the securitizing agents and their securitization frames.<sup>35</sup> As such, threat frames vis-à-vis the ethnoreligious others are designed to resonate and connect robustly with the symbolic and emotional faculties of the referent group. Doing so enhances the likelihood that the audience will accept the threat frame and consequently feel threatened, thereby increasing the public support for aggressive strategies against that threat's source(s).<sup>36</sup> These negative biases help define and guide the core interests of each faction and the types of aggressive actions that are expected to serve these goals. Yet, their prevalence amplifies the otherness and strangeness of the other party further, thereby adding another layer to the already existing divide between the competing groups.

The more that hostile predispositions are socialized, cascaded, and institutionalized within ethnoreligious communities, the more they become symbolically and emotionally estranged in relation to the outsiders, especially when both sides believe that their enemies would never alter their corrupt attitudes and dishonest behaviors. For instance, the predispositions of the insiders to believe that the ethnoreligious others are fundamental existential threats to their security and survival, naturally evil and filthy, and constantly deceitful and scheming, are all simultaneously informed by and are reaffirming the deep-seated fear, hatred,

<sup>32</sup> Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice" and "War as Symbolic Politics," provides supplementary analyses and evidences of how feelings of threat enhance support for more aggressive actions against the targets.

<sup>33</sup> See Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs."

<sup>34</sup> Hirschberger and Pyszczynski, "An Existential Perspective on Ethno-Political Violence"; Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice"; Spanovic et al., "Fear and Anger as Predictors of Motivation for Intergroup Aggression."

<sup>35</sup> On the issue of "credible" framing and securitization acts, see Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements"; Bosco, *Securing the Sacred*; McDonald, "Securitization and the Construction of Security"; Stritzel, "Towards a Theory of Securitization"; and Van Rythoven, "Emotions, Imaginaries, and Limits in the Politics of Securitization."

<sup>36</sup> See Kaufman, "War as Symbolic Politics."

resentment, anger, and rage coming from both sides. These intertwining hostile predispositions and emotions ultimately prevent the rival camps from making the necessary symbolic concessions (i.e., in terms of their chauvinistic ideologies, ethnocentric values, and partisan biases) that can potentially bridge the gaps between them because doing so might only be interpreted as an admission of one's guilt and culpability for all its immoral and unjust acts against the other.

The evidence gathered from Southeast Asia proved consistent with some of the findings of cognitive scientists and behavioural experts who studied the relations between emotive appraisals and motivations and their impact on the provision of concessions required to pursue peace.<sup>37</sup> For example, amid mutual fear and paranoia, the competing ethnoreligious communities avoided making concessions toward the enemies, believing that such actions would only undermine their security and survival. Likewise, their mutual hatred and resentment compelled them to reject efforts to facilitate peaceful dialogues and negotiations, believing that these would neither yield meaningful results nor effectively transform the harmful behaviors and motives of the outsiders. Moreover, their anger and rage drove them to implement extremely aggressive measures, including rape, murder, and genocide, believing that the targets were perpetual risk carriers and should be blamed for everything.

And third, these interplays between hostile predispositions and hostile emotions, along with the chauvinistic motivations and actions that they precipitate, are at the core of escalating security dilemma where one group's pursuit of uncontested dominance and predatory goals is deemed by the other as dangerous and destructive to its own survival and interest. The more aggressive and antagonistic the in-group's predispositions and emotions vis-à-vis the out-group are, the more the former will feel threatened by the latter's moves to meet its security requirements. Consequently, under such a condition, neither ethnoreligious community feels secure enough unless its relative security, power, and status requirements are satisfied, yet both sets of needs could not be fulfilled at the same time.<sup>38</sup>

Contrary to what many security dilemma theorists argued, the actors' political and social experiences are incredibly crucial in explaining this phenomenon since the predispositions, emotions, and actions fueling the security dilemma are intrinsically connected to those experiences. Indeed, across the three Southeast

<sup>37</sup> Some of these key works include Bebko et al., "Attentional Deployment Is Not Necessary for Successful Emotion Regulation via Cognitive Reappraisal or Expressive Suppression"; Cohen-Chen, Crisp, and Halperin, "A New Appraisal-Based Framework Underlying Hope in Conflict Resolution"; Halperin et al., "Fear and Hope in Conflict"; Lee, Sohn, and Fowler, "Does Reappraisal Decrease Support for Conservative Policies?"; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*; Sternberg, "A Duplex Theory of Hate."

<sup>38</sup> For extensive discussions of spiraling security dilemma in conflict situations, see Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice" and "Studying Ethnic War in the Philippines"; Melander, "The Geography of Fear"; Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict"; Roe, "Intrastate Security Dilemma."

Asian countries examined, these chauvinistic beliefs, prejudices, ideologies, and values, alongside fear, hatred, resentment, anger, and rage, are not just rational economic choices subject to the laws of supply and demand but are evidence of how broad human and societal experiences translate into predatory motivations and actions that trap them into a security dilemma.

Nevertheless, despite the stickiness of these predispositions and their tendency to become enduring, like emotions, they are neither fixed nor permanent. Several experts argued that the ethnocentric biases and chauvinistic feelings being harbored by rival ethnoreligious groups could be moderated through conditioning and socialization activities.<sup>39</sup> A few studies showed how changing beliefs about group malleability (i.e., by indirectly spreading and testing the idea about the malleable nature of groups in general among the participants) transformed the referent group's appraisal of the target group as fixed, which, in turn, reduced hatred appraisals and increased support for the concessions necessary for peace.<sup>40</sup> These findings underscore the central role of regulating and reconciling hostile predispositions and emotions in de-escalating the security dilemma and help explain why group reactivity to these elements vary across contexts.

### Hostile perceptions in ethnoreligious othering

Finally, examining the perceptual mechanism of ethnoreligious othering in Southeast Asia illuminated the main functions of hostile perceptions in the eruption and protraction of internal and intrastate conflicts. Specifically, in Stage 3, we witnessed how the powerful state and non-state elites from the politically preponderant ethnoreligious factions sacralize their idealized versions of identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state by implanting their ethnoreligious substructures into the overarching state's security superstructures, thereby solidifying their legitimacy, authority, and primacy further.

In sacralizing these security referents, hostile perceptions of chosenness, pureness, and holiness, especially on the part of the dominant ethnoreligious groups, transformed these subjects or objects into indivisible, infallible, and transcendental markers of communal identity and territory. What mattered, therefore, was not whether the referent subject or object in question could actually be concretely partitioned and divided but whether the competing actors involved perceived it as something that could be shared or replaced. Such intersubjective perceptions created chauvinistic "social facts" that some lives and spaces were more grievable

<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Cohen-Chen, Crisp, and Halperin, "Perceptions of a Changing World Induce Hope and Promote Peace in Intractable Conflicts"; Gaertner et al., "Recategorization and the Reduction of Intergroup Bias"; Kneeland et al., "Beliefs about Emotion's Malleability Influence State Emotion Regulation."

<sup>40</sup> Cohen-Chen et al., "Malleability Beliefs, Hope, and the Willingness to Compromise for Peace"; Halperin et al., "Anger, Hatred, and the Quest for Peace"; Saguy and Halperin, "Exposure to Outgroup Members Criticizing their Own Group Facilitates Intergroup Openness."

and sacred than others which, in turn, justified the chauvinistic just wars waged to protect those grievable lives and sacred spaces. This significantly curtailed the right and capacity of the weaker target groups to express their own ethnoreligious substructures and influence the existing security superstructures as means of asserting their position and legitimacy within these pluralistic polities. Meanwhile, the ability of dominant and chauvinistic political and ethnoreligious actors to exercise control and jurisdiction over the ideational and material constitutions of their own identities, homelands, and nation-states, inevitably led to the desacralization, delegitimization, and dispossession of the othered communities across Southeast Asia.

Drawing on these experiences from the region, three key inferences can be made regarding the role of perceptions in ethnoreligious othering and internal and intrastate conflicts. First, hostile perceptions are fundamentally linked to pre-existing hostile emotions and predispositions harbored by ethnoreligious group members. More specifically, how the insiders attribute motives to the outsiders' behaviors and actions is also considerably determined by their prevailing emotional and symbolic relations. As Crawford put it, individuals and groups routinely assign emotional [and symbolic] categories to their relationships with others, and these "influence their perceptions of the other, especially how ambiguous actions and situations are interpreted."<sup>41</sup> The ambiguity of these behaviors compels rival ethnoreligious factions to ascribe causes and motives to each other's conduct regularly and constantly evaluate the veracity of what the others claim as the true reasons for their actions.

But because those prior emotional and symbolic relationships substantially guide the ascription of intents and motives to the out-group's demeanor the insiders often negatively, if not erroneously, assess the outsiders' actions, including the more ambiguous ones.<sup>42</sup> As witnessed across Southeast Asia, the persistence of such relationships widened the cultural distances and psychological differences between the ethnoreligious groups within these pluralistic polities, thus preventing the in-group from perceiving the out-group, including their emotions and predispositions, as being benign and similar to their own. The more the individuals identify with their groups, the more likely they are to discriminate against the othered as misperceptions between them spiral.<sup>43</sup>

Second, aside from just being stimulated by prior emotional and symbolic connections, hostile perceptions also reinforce and partially constitute prevailing

<sup>41</sup> Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics," 134.

<sup>42</sup> Crawford, "The Passion of World Politics"; Mackie, Devos, and Smith, "Intergroup Emotions"; Mackie and Hamilton, "Cognitive and Affective Processes in Intergroup Perception"; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs"; Smith, "Social Identity and Social Emotions."

<sup>43</sup> Some experimental evidences demonstrating this point can be found in Gaertner et al., "Recategorization and the Reduction of Intergroup Bias"; Riek, Mania, and Gaertner, "Intergroup Threat and Outgroup Attitudes."

hostile emotions and predispositions. In other words, emotional and symbolic relationships also follow from the perceptions of rival ethnoreligious groups toward each other and their behaviors. Using Nico Frijda and Batja Mesquita's thesis, perceptions take the place of a "latent representation of some object as being relevant to one's concerns, and suggesting what action might be desirable in relation to them."<sup>44</sup> Anger and fear, for example, are both determined in part by the insiders' perception of the outsiders,<sup>45</sup> which helps explain why individuals with a strong sense of in-group solidarity are more likely to feel such hostile emotions and display chauvinistic attitudes toward the out-group as observed in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile, when referent groups perceive themselves as having diminished capacity or insufficient power to defend their members against the threatening others, the resulting fear and related prejudiced biases divide the population between victims (i.e., insiders) and aggressors (i.e., outsiders).<sup>47</sup> Once separated, the "dirty" and "evil" outsiders are banished into the zone of killing, while those who survived are denied entry to prevent the contamination of the "pure" and "holy" insiders as seen from the lived experiences of ethnoreligious members in Southeast Asia.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, when an in-group perceives the out-group as a perpetrator of violence and a source of discord, the resulting anger and associated ethnocentric beliefs, to quote Petersen, intensify the "desire for punishment against a specific actor, creates a downgrading of risk, and increases prejudice and blame, as well as selective memory."<sup>49</sup> As evidenced by the Southeast Asian cases, the relevant political and ethnoreligious elites often exploit the situation further by triggering disproportionately high levels of retaliation intended to bolster the image of the insiders as victims versus the role of the outsiders as perpetrators.

And when the predominant ethnoreligious communities perceive themselves as being politically dominated by underserving groups that used to be at the bottom, the resulting resentment and accompanying chauvinistic prejudices coerce the subordinated population to revise the status hierarchy by remaking the old order where they once reigned supreme.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, any group that has held power

<sup>44</sup> Frijda and Mesquita, "Beliefs through Emotions," 55.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Halperin and Gross, "Intergroup Anger in Intractable Conflict"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*; Spanovic et al., "Fear and Anger as Predictors of Motivation for Intergroup Aggression."

<sup>46</sup> Mackie, Devos, and Smith, "Intergroup Emotions"; Smith, "Social Identity and Social Emotions."

<sup>47</sup> Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*; see also Halperin et al., "Fear and Hope in Conflict"; Öhman, "Fear and Anxiety as Emotional Phenomena."

<sup>48</sup> See the works of Ahmed, *Strange Encounters*; Butler, *Frames of War*; and Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism" for a nuanced exposition of this point.

<sup>49</sup> Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*, 36.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Bonikowski, "Ethno-Nationalist Populism and the Mobilization of Collective Resentment"; Hirsch, "The Agonistics of Respect, Resentment, and Responsibility in Post-Conflict Society"; Zembylas, "Reflections on the Politics of Resentment and the Politics of Empathy in Post-Conflict Societies."

and authority for an extended period could easily forget that their dominant status is neither a birthright nor part of the natural order. Hence, when episodes of status reversal occur (whether real or perceived) like the ones detected in Indonesia, Myanmar, and the Philippines, the desire of the offended parties to quickly put their unworthy rivals back in their “proper places” amplifies,<sup>51</sup> thereby justifying the habitual employment of violence as a means for “teaching them a lesson.”<sup>52</sup>

And third, although these existential threats and their associated meanings are cognitively processed and socially constructed, ethnoreligious group members are also considerably predisposed toward threat perception and defensive behaviors even in non-threatening contexts. From an evolutionary sociobiological standpoint, human individuals are believed to be hardwired to identify dangers to enhance their chances of defeating and surviving those threats.<sup>53</sup> Compared to the cognitive and social processing of potential risk, threat perception strikes faster, signaling the body to prepare to gather more information about the threatening stimulus and respond to it immediately.<sup>54</sup> Aborting “falsely initialized defense responses,” as Arne Öhman put it, is a lot less costly and risky than completely failing to launch one when the threat is real. The implication is that the perceptual system among actors is “biased in the direction of a low threshold for discovering threat” as can be surmised from the experiences of the different ethnoreligious groups observed in Southeast Asia.<sup>55</sup>

Nevertheless, like hostile emotions and predispositions, these hostile perceptions are not permanent but are malleable. This means that the prior and resulting chauvinistic emotional and symbolic relationships (which in part are both the causes and effects of such perceptions) can be altered, along with the aggressive behaviors normatively expected from ethnoreligious group members.<sup>56</sup> All in all, these emotive, symbolic, and perceptual causal mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering satisfy the basic human collective necessity of creating a meaningful worldview that provides a coherent and organized picture of identity, homeland, and territorial nation-state. Unfortunately, they do so by compelling rival ethnoreligious groups to adopt what Eran Halperin referred as “functional [socio]psychological

<sup>51</sup> Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*, 41.

<sup>52</sup> See Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* and “Ethnic Power Sharing.”

<sup>53</sup> Öhman, “Fear and Anxiety as Emotional Phenomena.”

<sup>54</sup> For supplementary readings on threat perception, see Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics”; Edwards and von Hippel, “The Priority of Affective versus Cognitive Factors in Person Perception”; Damasio and Carvalho, “The Nature of Feelings”; Mackie and Hamilton, “Cognitive and Affective Processes in Intergroup Perception”; Ortony, Clore, and Collins, *The Cognitive Structure of Emotion*.

<sup>55</sup> Öhman, “Fear and Anxiety as Emotional Phenomena,” 520–21.

<sup>56</sup> Bar-Tal, *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Kaufman, “Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap”; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*; and Reykowski and Cislak, “Socio-Psychological Approaches to Conflict Resolution” identify a few methods for revising these relationships and their impacts on inter-ethnic/religious arrangements.

infrastructure composed of biased, one-sided, and oversimplified collective memories ... accompanied by a tailored ethos ... and long-term emotional [symbolic, and perceptual] sentiments targeted at the out-group.”<sup>57</sup>

### **Ethnoreligious Reconciliation and the Regulation of Emotive, Symbolic, and Perceptual Mechanisms**

The preceding discussions illuminate why post-conflict peacebuilding measures that do not recognize the presence and relevance of these underlying emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms usually fail. Although much of the available theories on internal and intrastate conflicts are essentially rooted in assumptions about emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions, these fundamental elements of human and societal responses are often intentionally ignored. This results in what Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink described as “politics without passion,” which can never be far and different from the contexts in which we exist.<sup>58</sup>

Because intractable conflicts go well beyond the immediate costs of sacrificing human lives, they are some of the most challenging and thorny problems confronting modern states and societies. Within such unique contexts—saturated by physical and ontological violence and insecurity—the emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms of individual and social psychology play a more dominant role than in other domains in life. Accordingly, these unseen, albeit existing, ethnoreligious othering mechanisms significantly guide and influence both the perpetuation and resolution of internal and intrastate conflicts either by reproducing and reinforcing hostile and negative emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions or by reconciling and regulating them to induce more benign and inclusive ones. When different peacebuilding actors play with and manipulate these elements and mechanisms without exerting serious efforts to understand them, violent conflicts will ultimately re-erupt and remain entrenched.

Indeed, on some occasions, conflicts are crucial for overhauling highly unjust and discriminatory arrangements. Nevertheless, as most conflict and peace scholars would argue, it is not unreasonable to expect that the majority would rather live peacefully and do everything to avoid the scourge of enduring violence if given a choice. Unfortunately, the lingering mutual distrust and suspicion surrounding those who have been or are still involved in conflicts deter them from making the required concessions (i.e., emotional, symbolic, and perceptual) to facilitate lasting peace negotiations and settlements. This problem is aggravated further by the belief that such compromises would do little in actually putting an end to these

<sup>57</sup> Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Finnemore and Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” 916.



clashes, given that their enemies are perceived to be beyond moral redemption.<sup>59</sup> The expectation that violence will ultimately resolve these conflicting demands arouses intense insecurities while attempting to rethink and revise the existing order, leading to Harold Lasswell's scenario where "the flight into danger becomes an insecurity to end insecurity."<sup>60</sup> Consequently, even when there is recognition on the part of the leaders regarding the type of concessions that can promote peace effectively and readiness on the part of members to make those concessions for the sake of peace, internal and intrastate conflicts in pluralistic polities such as those observed in Southeast Asia still erupt and tend to protract.

Despite the enormous presence and destructive impact of these emotive, symbolic, and perceptual barriers among rival ethnoreligious communities, most conflict resolution strategies and peacebuilding mechanisms often fail to take them into account. Many question the relevance and effectiveness of analyzing and addressing these issues based on the fallacy that such efforts intentionally disregard the "genuine interests" and "tangible objects" of the conflicts. Yet, by ignoring these escalating and self-perpetuating ethnoreligious othering mechanisms, positive information about the others is rejected, calls for collaborative dialogues and mutual compromises are opposed, individual consent and group support for aggression and brutality increase, and in-group allegiance and sensitivity to out-group threats grow.<sup>61</sup> In short, they are trapped in a vicious cycle of mass hostility, security dilemma, and chauvinist political mobilization that characterizes intractable conflicts. Against this backdrop, reconciliation initiatives and regulatory measures that directly confront and address these emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms are pivotal to resolving these conflicts and fostering durable peace.

### On ethnoreligious reconciliation

Daniel Bar-Tal and Gemma Bennink described the process of reconciliation as being characterized by "mutual recognition and acceptance, invested interests and goals in developing peaceful relations, as well as fully normalized, cooperative political, economic and cultural relations."<sup>62</sup> However, to effectively achieve these goals, significant initiatives and measures to encourage reciprocal recognition of

<sup>59</sup> Such sentiments among conflicting rival group members are highlighted in Fattah and Fierke, "A Clash of Emotions"; Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*; Sternberg, "A Duplex Theory of Hate"; Mercer, "Emotional Beliefs"; Robins and Post, *The Psychopolitics of Hatred*; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence*; Suny, "Why We Hate You."

<sup>60</sup> Lasswell, *World Politics and Personal Insecurity*, 57.

<sup>61</sup> This insight is drawn from Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*, 5; see also Bar-Tal and Halperin, "Socio-Psychological Barriers to Conflict Resolution"; Kaufman, "Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap"; Long and Brecke, *Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution*.

<sup>62</sup> Bar-Tal and Bennink, "The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process," 15.

and strengthen the commitment to peaceful coexistence would be required. These include fully acknowledging all parties' past wrongdoings, facilitating inter-group problem-solving workshops, organizing inter-communal cultural events, and institutionalizing educational and media reforms on ethnoreligious diversity, among others.<sup>63</sup> Such programs are closely related to the "forgiveness framework" introduced by William Long and Peter Brecke, which has four main components, namely: openness to admit guilt and to "tell the truth" about the damages, pains, and sufferings brought by rival factions to each other; willingness to forgive each other by redefining and re-evaluating their respective identities and roles in those traumatic events; readiness to settle for "partial justice" instead of pursuing complete justice or retribution; and commitment to creating positive experiences and constructive relationships.<sup>64</sup>

The nature of these recommendations underscores the argument that largely the unreconciled and unregulated hostile emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms continue to fuel and drive the phenomena of ethnoreligious othering and internal and intrastate conflicts. But while they provide an innovative and insightful understanding of conflict resolution and peace promotion, several issues undermine the effectiveness and appeal of some of the approaches that target these elements and mechanisms. One of the major problems is the unwillingness and reluctance of various state and non-state agents to implement and advance such initiatives. On the one hand, political officials and ethnoreligious leaders who routinely access and utilize these mechanisms to maintain their power and rationalize their extremist policies could face massive backlash if they recant their rhetoric and reverse their actions.<sup>65</sup> On the other, peace practitioners and conflict mediators fear that endorsing reconciliation would drastically jeopardize their current negotiations and relations with the parties involved.<sup>66</sup> Allowing state and non-state elites to continuously exploit these emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms for personal power and group dominance impede their members from overcoming their chauvinistic thinking and accepting compromises, thereby ensnaring them further into conflicts.

Another critical problem is the capacity of some hardliners or spoiler groups to demolish peacebuilding efforts and strategies by violently obstructing the

<sup>63</sup> Cohen-Chen, Crisp, and Halperin, "Perceptions of a Changing World Induce Hope and Promote Peace in Intractable Conflicts"; Kaufman, "Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap"; Shnabel and Nadler, "Needs-Based Model of Reconciliation"; Staub, "Reconciliation after Genocide, Mass Killing, or Intractable Conflict."

<sup>64</sup> Long and Brecke, *Reason and Emotion in Conflict Resolution*, 28–31; see also Kaufman, "Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap," 206–207.

<sup>65</sup> See, for example, Bosco, *Securing the Sacred*; Duffy and Lindstrom, "Conflicting Identities"; Karyotis and Patrikios, "Religion, Securitization and Anti-Immigration Attitudes"; Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic*.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Bar-Tal and Bennink, "The Nature of Reconciliation as an Outcome and as a Process"; Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict* and "Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution"; Kaufman, "Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap"; Petersen, *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

road toward non-violent reconciliation.<sup>67</sup> Tolerating and perpetuating the hostile mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering pushes ordinary individuals to prefer and rely on conflict and violence rather than peace and compromise, thus strengthening the support for these entities' ethnocentric narratives and aggressive behaviors. Conflict mediators and peace practitioners sometimes adopt strategies which they expect to contain these spoilers but only end up serving their cause. Issuing a threat of withdrawal, for instance, leaves the door open for predation by dominant spoilers, whereas offering inducements might be interpreted as a sign of weakness that can motivate spoilers to ask for more compensation and hijack the whole strategy if these demands are not met.<sup>68</sup>

The situation becomes even more challenging when the officials and leaders themselves have direct hands in the deaths of innocent people during the conflicts. In these scenarios, the pursuit of complete justice can derail prospects for reconciliation as the guilty parties try to save themselves by rejecting peace strategies that entail such a requirement.<sup>69</sup> Yet, without explicit and proper acknowledgment of these deeds and the deliverance of at least partial justice, the wounds of all the aggrieved parties would never fully heal. These issues exacerbate the lingering hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions confronting rival ethnoreligious groups and the resulting security dilemma, allowing spoilers to frame compromise and concession as treachery and betrayal.

All this means is that the emotional, symbolic, and perceptual foundations of all social relationships and political activities need to be thoroughly rethought and renovated. Doing so requires dramatic effort and unwavering commitment on the part of all state and non-state actors (both the elites and ordinary members) within pluralistic polities to: (1) re-cultivate ethnoreligious nationalism in a manner that produces more positive emotive effects; (2) de-securitize the ethnoreligious others through the use and propagation of more benign symbolic predispositions; and (3) de-sacralize chauvinistic perceptions of ethnoreligious purity, indivisibility, and homogeneity in favor of more non-threatening perceptions of diverse identity, shared homeland, and inclusive territorial nation-state. Reimagining and reconstructing these divisive and contentious internal (between ethnoreligious communities) and intrastate (between states and ethnoreligious groups) affairs into more harmonious and peaceful relationships via these reconciliation

<sup>67</sup> For more in-depth analyses of the spoiler problem, see Newman and Richmond, *Managing Spoilers during Conflict Resolution*; Pearlman, "Spoiling Inside and Out"; Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes."

<sup>68</sup> Shedd, "When Peace Agreements Create Spoilers"; Steadman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes"

<sup>69</sup> Branscombe and Doosje, *Collective Guilt*; Jeffery, "The Forgiveness Dilemma"; Kerr and Mobek, *Peace and Justice*; Mallinder, *Bridging the Peace and Justice Divide*; Wohl and Branscombe, "Forgiveness and Collective Guilt Assignment to Historical Perpetrator Groups Depend on Level of Social Category Inclusiveness," all provide extensive discussions on the role of acknowledging guilt in conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

initiatives would not be easy and conflict-free. Basing it on the experiences of the three Southeast Asian countries studied, such tasks would take decades to produce results if they are ever undertaken.

The wars waged and genocides suffered by competing ethnoreligious communities generated new emotional, symbolic, and perceptual externalities that were harnessed to vilify and dehumanize the othered even more, rationalizing the further battles that undermined the logic of reconciliatory concessions and compromises. Indeed, the act of reconciliation is a tremendously complicated goal that cannot be fully and genuinely realized just by signing peace treaties. Amid the profound presence of hostile and chauvinistic emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions interwoven into the consciousness, lived experiences, and memories of individuals and communities, conflict and peace experts must persistently strive for stable and lasting solutions. Undoing the invisible strings of ethnoreligious othering to once again humanize and embrace the stranger and the enemy takes enormous time and extraordinary resolve, but it is the necessary first step in breaking the cycle of violently passionate conflicts.

### On emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms regulation

Amid the difficulties preventing most conflict mediators and peace practitioners from taking this necessary first step, I advance the idea of regulating the hostile emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering.<sup>70</sup> Drawing on the pioneering works of scholars and practitioners who have extensively studied the utility and effectiveness of “emotion regulation” as a conflict resolution strategy, I briefly explore how such approaches can enhance individual and group support for reconciliation and peace. Given the mutually constitutive and reinforcing relations between these elements, these strategies need to be systematically integrated into the discussion of conflict resolution and peacebuilding to effectively devise and implement frameworks and programs that will stimulate, propagate, and normalize more positive feelings, non-threatening ideas, and benign images vis-à-vis the othered.

Expanding James Gross’ definition of emotion regulation, regulating these hostile mechanisms means influencing the emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions that we have, when we have them, and how we experience them.<sup>71</sup> As explained in the preceding section, the underlying argument here is that these

<sup>70</sup> This section is based on a synthesis of (1) Halperin’s discussions of emotion regulation in *Emotions in Conflict*, “Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution” and “Group-Based Emotion Regulation” (with Porat and Tamir); and (2) Bar-Tal’s experiments on intergroup conflict resolution in *Intractable Conflicts: Socio-Psychological Foundations and Dynamics*, *Intergroup Conflicts and their Resolution* (ed.) and “Socio-Psychological Barriers to Conflict Resolution” (with Halperin).

<sup>71</sup> Gross, “The Emerging Field of Emotion Regulation”; see also Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*, 14.

elements are malleable and adaptable no matter how powerful and stable they may seem. Accordingly, their regulation can be instrumental for expanding and limiting the depth (intensity) and length (duration) of either negative or positive emotions, predispositions, and perceptions.<sup>72</sup> Given the three-way linkage between these elements, the assumption that our preferred emotional states (i.e., our regulatory goals) determine our emotional experiences suggests that our desired symbolic and perceptual states also define our symbolic and perceptual experiences. Put differently, what people want to feel, believe, and perceive are not purely hedonistic but are also instrumental.<sup>73</sup> This helps explain the reluctance and unwillingness of certain agents to fully resolve their groups' hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions since they expect these tools to help them secure their own interests.

Emotion regulation theorists and experts have already identified and tested a few methods for influencing emotions at the individual level deemed to be either productive (i.e., helpful) or counterproductive (i.e., not helpful). One of the most relevant and promising strategies that can be adopted and applied to regulate the hostile emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering is cognitive change, specifically through "cognitive reappraisal." This involves (re)thinking about scenarios and contexts in ways that alter their meanings and emotional responses.

Within a pluralistic polity, for example, the reappraisal method can initiate changes in how an in-group interprets and understands a particular situation by allowing it to take the out-group's view of that same situation and evaluate it with greater distance. This can potentially reduce the hostile and chauvinistic feelings, biases, and views of the insiders before entering an uncharted territory by helping them realize that "all outgroup members really want is to feel secure and unthreatened, and therefore there is no reason to feel threatened by the situation."<sup>74</sup>

Results from a correlational study that examined the link between reappraisal and reconciliatory attitudes, for example, showed that in-group members (i.e., Israelis) who regularly employed reappraisal when dealing with negative emotional experiences were more supportive of providing humanitarian aid to out-group members (i.e., Palestinians), and noted that the association was not conditioned by

<sup>72</sup> This assertion is informed by the arguments forwarded by Gross, "Emotion Regulation: Conceptual Foundations"; and Halperin, "Emotion, Emotion Regulation, and Conflict Resolution."

<sup>73</sup> See Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; Tamir, "What Do People Want to Feel and Why?"; Tamir et al., "An Expectancy-Value Model of Emotion Regulation."

<sup>74</sup> Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*, 161; see also Gross, "The Emerging Field of Emotion Regulation" and "Emotion Regulation: Conceptual Foundations"; Lee, Sohn, and Fowler, "Emotion Regulation as the Foundation of Political Attitudes"; Sheppes et al., "Emotion-Regulation Choice"; Webb, Miles, and Sheeran, "A Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Strategies Derived from the Process Model of Emotion Regulation"; Zaki and Williams, "Interpersonal Emotion Regulation."

the former's political ideologies but by the effective use of cognitive reappraisal.<sup>75</sup> In another related research, the impact of cognitive reappraisal on the in-group members' (i.e., Jewish Israelis) political intolerance against the minorities in a pluralistic polity (i.e., Israel) revealed that the participants in the reappraisal condition demonstrated lower levels of political intolerance and negative emotions.<sup>76</sup>

That said, when emotions are highly volatile, like in violent conflicts, the effectiveness of the reappraisal method might be questioned since it demands extensive and sustained engagement with various stimuli in order to work. It is improbable that people from rival factions would willingly transform their hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions toward each other within such scenarios. Indeed, these "direct" and "explicit" forms of intervention vary in terms of the level of cognitive efforts required, appropriateness vis-à-vis the contexts, and motivations linked to them,<sup>77</sup> which means that their spontaneous and continuous deployment demand a significant amount of time, personal training, and individual initiative.<sup>78</sup>

To resolve some of these issues, scholars and experts like Sabina Čehajić-Clancy, Smadar Cohen-Chen, Amit Goldenberg, Gross, and Halperin have promoted "indirect" strategies which can also be adopted when regulating the hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions produced by and driving ethnoreligious othering. These are based on focused messages intended to transform discrete emotions and proceed in four key stages: (1) identifying desired, conflict-related "target action" or TAC; (2) connecting the TAC to a selected emotion; (3) determining the core appraisal theme of the selected emotion which constitutes the basis for its motivational and behavioral implications; and (4) developing an indirect intervention to address negative appraisal.<sup>79</sup>

A series of experiments on hatred mitigation between rival groups, alongside its associated destructive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, illustrated how this whole process works. In one of these studies, the researchers began by determining the core appraisal of hatred: the perception of stable negative characteristics in the othered group and the belief in the inability of this othered group to undergo positive change.<sup>80</sup> According to their hypothesis, this appraisal is anchored on a more fundamental belief that groups generally possess some stable, innate

<sup>75</sup> Halperin and Gross, "Intergroup Anger in Intractable Conflict."

<sup>76</sup> Pliskin et al., "Are Leftists More Emotion-Driven Than Rightists?"; see also Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*.

<sup>77</sup> Halperin and Plishkin, "Studying Emotional Processes within a Unique Context"; Sheppes et al., "Emotion-Regulation Choice."

<sup>78</sup> Porat et al., "Group-Based Emotional Preferences and Conflict Resolution"; Tamir, "What Do People Want to Feel and Why?"; Tamir et al., "An Expectancy-Value Model of Emotion Regulation."

<sup>79</sup> Čehajić-Clancy, Goldenberg, Gross, and Halperin, "Social-Psychological Interventions for Intergroup Reconciliation"; Halperin, Cohen-Chen, and Goldenberg, "Indirect Emotion Regulation in Intractable Conflicts"; Quoidbach, Mikolajczak, and Gross, "Positive Interventions: An Emotion Regulation Perspective."

<sup>80</sup> Halperin et al., "Anger, Hatred, and the Quest for Peace."

traits that cannot be transformed in a meaningful manner, directly contradicting the view that group nature is malleable.<sup>81</sup> They then tested whether an intervention strategy designed to stimulate and advance an incremental understanding of group malleability could minimize hatred and increase support for compromises. In this particular case, the participants from various communities residing in protracted conflict (i.e., Jewish Israelis, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and West Bank Palestinians) read an informative text suggesting that research shows groups in general can (vs. cannot) change over time.

Their findings showed that by educating people that group nature is not fixed but malleable, hatred-related appraisals toward the outsiders could be lessened and, in turn, could also encourage support for the provision of concessions necessary for conflict resolution and peace settlement.<sup>82</sup> This basic process of indirect emotion regulation was also found consistent in cases that examined how collective hope and empathy might be propagated while containing collective angst and anger in times of conflict, or how amplifying guilt might increase the perpetrators' support for compensation for their transgressions toward the victims using self-affirmation techniques.<sup>83</sup> Throughout the procedures, the subjects studied were unaware that they were absorbing messages or undergoing procedures intended to regulate their emotions which meant that concrete motivations or incentives were not required for initiating these regulatory methods.<sup>84</sup>

As explained earlier, emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions are not only "personalized" but are also highly socialized. The ability of individuals to categorize themselves as group members allows them to experience, access, and utilize these elements on behalf of the other members of the same group.<sup>85</sup> Accordingly, similar to its impact on emotion regulation at the individual level, the cognitive appraisal method can also be highly effective in influencing these group-based mechanisms in the context of protracted conflicts either through altering the meaning of the situation or through adjusting one's categorization

<sup>81</sup> Halperin et al., "Anger, Hatred, and the Quest for Peace"; see also Gaertner et al., "Recategorization and the Reduction of Intergroup Bias"; Rydell et al., "Implicit Theories about Groups and Stereotyping"; Smith, "Social Identity and Social Emotions."

<sup>82</sup> For supplemental analyses and interpretations of such findings, see Bar-Tal and Rosen, "Peace Education in Societies Involved in Intractable Conflicts"; Kaufman, "Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap"; Kneeland, "Beliefs about Emotion's Malleability Influence State Emotion Regulation."

<sup>83</sup> On hope, see Cohen-Chen, Crisp, and Halperin, "Malleability Beliefs, Hope, and the Willingness to Compromise for Peace." On empathy, see Gubler, Halperin, and Hirschberger, "Humanizing the Outgroup in Contexts of Protracted Intergroup Conflict." On anger, Halperin, Porat, and Wohl, "Collective Angst Predicts Willingness to Compromise in Intractable Intergroup Conflicts." On guilt and shame, see Allpress et al., "Group-Based Shame and Guilt Motivate Support for Reparation"; Branscombe and Doosje, *Collective Guilt*; Cehajić-Clancy et al., "Affirmation, Acknowledgment of In-Group Responsibility, Group-Based Guilt, and Support for Reparative Measures."

<sup>84</sup> As also explained in Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*.

<sup>85</sup> Ellemers, "The Influence of Socio-Structural Variables on Identity Enhancement Strategies" and "The Group Self"; Turner et al., "Self and Collective."

level.<sup>86</sup> The recategorization strategy offers a novel approach for regulating hostile emotions, symbolic predispositions, and perceptions by shifting the emphasis on the individual's self-categorization to broader and more inclusive levels either horizontally (e.g., among different groups within a polity) or vertically across time (e.g., among different generational groups) and space (e.g., among different group sizes).<sup>87</sup> The underlying assumption here is that human beings are members of numerous groupings and, as such, are capable of recategorizing and relabeling themselves in relation to specific situations. Some experts, for example, found that by redefining one's categorization from a national ("parochial") level to a more universal ("cosmopolitan") level, the in-group's willingness and preparedness to forgive the out-group's past injustices against them could be improved.<sup>88</sup>

Other scholars also investigated how certain state actors interested in shifting public opinion used cognitive change strategies such as reframing public events in transforming people's emotional reactions to these events, which can also be applied to the regulation of hostile emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms.<sup>89</sup> Conflict mediators and peace practitioners, for instance, can devise tools and techniques that will prevent an in-group from ascribing "evil" intentions to an out-group's ambiguous behaviors or reduce the tendency of rival groups from framing each other's flawed actions as being "genetic" just to rationalize and consolidate support for violent counter-attacks. When designing such regulation strategies, a useful advice among experts is to avoid mentioning specific target groups since direct efforts to alter these individual and group-based elements and mechanisms while confronting them with evidence, facts, and information regarding their "enemies" can quickly go wrong and fail, especially in times of conflict.<sup>90</sup>

Overall, adopting an indirect approach to regulating the hostile emotive, symbolic, and perceptual mechanisms of ethnoreligious othering by creatively and innovatively utilizing modern knowledge on affective and political science can significantly complement and advance the development and implementation of reconciliation initiatives discussed earlier. Indeed, understanding how supposedly

<sup>86</sup> For a more thorough discussion of this approach, see Cohen-Chen et al., "Malleability Beliefs, Hope, and the Willingness to Compromise for Peace"; Cohen-Chen, Crisp, and Halperin, "Perceptions of a Changing World Induce Hope and Promote Peace in Intractable Conflicts"; Gaertner et al., "Recategorization and the Reduction of Intergroup Bias"; Halperin et al., "Can Emotion Regulation Change Political Attitudes in Intractable Conflict?"

<sup>87</sup> Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*; see also Shnabel, Halabi, and Noor, "Overcoming Competitive Victimhood and Facilitating Forgiveness through Re-Categorization into a Common Victim or Perpetrator Identity"; Wohl and Branscombe, "Forgiveness and Collective Guilt Assignment to Historical Perpetrator Groups Depend on Level of Social Category Inclusiveness."

<sup>88</sup> See Gaertner et al., "Recategorization and the Reduction of Intergroup Bias"; Gaertner and Dovidio, "From Aversive Racism to the Common Ingroup Identity Model"; Turner et al., "Self and Collective"; Wohl and Branscombe, "Forgiveness and Collective Guilt Assignment to Historical Perpetrator Groups Depend on Level of Social Category Inclusiveness."

<sup>89</sup> See Moyal, Henik, and Anholt, "Cognitive Strategies to Regulate Emotion"; Niven et al., "Emotion Regulation of Others and Self (EROS)"; Zaki and Williams, "Interpersonal Emotion Regulation."

<sup>90</sup> Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*.



rational actors think and act the way they do requires turning to the largely ignored “non-material” and “non-rational” elements of emotion, symbolic predisposition, and perception simultaneously generated by and fueling these mechanisms. On the one hand, conflict resolution and peacebuilding analysts must overcome their debilitating biases against these approaches and need to be more open-minded about their genuine impact on de-escalation and peace promotion amid intractable conflicts. And on the other, emotion experts and behavioral/cognitive scientists need to be more proactive in conducting their research outside their laboratories and must be willing to re-evaluate and adjust their preferred frameworks and methodologies vis-à-vis different real-life scenarios such as violent protracted conflicts.

Attempting to bridge and fill in these cracks require crucial preliminary works on the part of both camps to increase individual and public trust and support for such conflict resolution and peacebuilding approaches. These include: (1) developing interdisciplinary concepts, models, and theories that more accurately and comprehensively capture the emotional, symbolic, and perceptual externalities of violent protracted conflicts; (2) formulating and testing more nuanced and realistic reconciliation and regulation methods by integrating the unique lived experiences of individuals and communities involved in actual conflicts; and (3) promoting multi-platform and inter-agency deliberative peace education programs—with schools, media, government institutions, and civil society organizations—to widen people’s understanding of inclusive and sustainable peace and security.<sup>91</sup> While their effectiveness is still largely unknown, reconciliation initiatives and regulation strategies that overtly tackle and incorporate these hidden elements and mechanisms are the only tools that can take on the mammoth task of stopping the wheels of ethnoreligious othering and intractable passionate conflict.

### **The Enduring Security Utility and Essence of Religion and Nationalism**

To their fiercest critics, nothing can ever absolve religion and nationalism from their “original sin,” that is, their natural propensity to divide and subdivide humanity and territory. Those who remain antagonistic toward religion and nationalism insist that the ultimate outcome of their continued presence and proliferation is *division*: the root cause of othering and strangeness, of fear and paranoia, and of

<sup>91</sup> See Halperin, *Emotions in Conflict*, 182. Other scholars and experts have also identified a number of crucial recommendations for bridging the interdisciplinary gaps in conflict resolution scholarship and practice, such as Bar-Tal, “Breaking the Cycles of Intractable Conflicts”; Bar-Tal and Rosen, “Peace Education in Societies Involved in Intractable Conflicts”; Kaufman, “Escaping the Symbolic Politics Trap” and “War as Symbolic Politics”; Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence* and *The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict*.

misunderstanding and conflict. Skeptics maintain that for as long as humanity is divided and territories are partitioned based on religious identities and nationalist ideals, there can be no genuine peace and security given their inherently divisive nature and violent side-effects. On the contrary, the persistence of religious and nationalist cleavages will only continue to generate flashpoints for conflicts, especially if one accepts the notion that both phenomena provide humans with a “bios,” that is, a “life with dignity, endowed with meaning, in contrast with the bare life.”<sup>92</sup> Not surprisingly, scholars and experts have mounted resistance against religion and nationalism from a whole gamut of intellectual disciplines across different generations.

In one corner are the so-called neoatheists who question the very logic of religions and insist on keeping them out. They presented narratives of world history that compared the “intrinsic” connection between faith and violence to the “natural” relationship between reason and tolerance. To them, it is wishful thinking to expect religions to use their “significant social-cultural power ... to move toward a more peaceful world”<sup>93</sup> given the lack of genuine desire of their institutions and leaders to bridge the existing divisions among them. Richard Dawkins, for instance, called religion a “pernicious delusion” with no redeeming feature, especially because of how it teaches us to be satisfied with not understanding the world.<sup>94</sup> Daniel Dennett, on the other hand, took a more cordial approach in expressing his plea to “break the spell,” that is, the “taboo against a forthright, scientific, no-holds-barred investigation of religion as one natural phenomenon.”<sup>95</sup> The religious, in particular, according to Dennett, “often bristle at the impertinence, the lack of respect, the sacrilege, implied by anybody who wants to investigate their views.”<sup>96</sup>

Meanwhile, Sam Harris provided a harrowing glimpse of the willingness of the people to suspend reason in favor of their religious beliefs, even when these beliefs trigger the worst of human atrocities.<sup>97</sup> In justifying his call for “speaking plainly about the absurdity of most of our religious beliefs,” Harris cited verses from influential religious texts to underline his central argument that “moderation” in religion posed considerable dangers of its own.<sup>98</sup> And then there was Christopher Hitchens, who made controversial assertions as to why “God is not great” and how “religion poisons everything.”<sup>99</sup> To him, the violence, irrationality, and intolerance stemming from organized religion’s alliance with racism and tribalism,

<sup>92</sup> Shani, *Religion, Identity and Human Security*, 2; see also Agamben, *Sovereign Power and Bare Life*; and Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population* for a more extensive discursive analysis of this point.

<sup>93</sup> Otis, “Religion and War in the Twenty-First Century,” 21.

<sup>94</sup> Dawkins, *The God Delusion*.

<sup>95</sup> Dennett, *Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, 17.

<sup>96</sup> Dennett *Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, 16–17.

<sup>97</sup> Harris, *The End of Faith*.

<sup>98</sup> Harris, *The End of Faith*, 129.

<sup>99</sup> Hitchens, *God Is Not Great*.

as well as its hostility toward scientific inquiry and free-thinking, should be more than enough reasons to stop providing justifications for “God’s existence.”<sup>100</sup>

In the other corner are those who opposed nationalism, ranging from socialist figures to advocates of human freedom and self-determination. Conventional Marxian scholarship, for instance, usually begins with the analysis of Karl Marx’s views of nationalism. In an 1848 pamphlet that he and Friedrich Engels published, the two made several bold assertions: that the underdeveloped nations were being forcefully subjugated to the rules designed by the advanced countries controlling the world market, that national differences were steadily disappearing, that a single world literature was forming, and that the workers have no country.

Inspired by these thoughts, Vladimir Lenin explained that nationalism was simply an instrument used by the national bourgeoisie to exploit the global proletariat and turn it against itself by convincing the workers to destroy their fellow laborers in the name of national interest. To emancipate and unite the workers of all nations, Lenin encouraged socialists to “resolutely oppose nationalism in all its forms.”<sup>101</sup> However, this much-anticipated albeit short-lived worldwide proletarian revolution failed to deliver the socialist dream, and Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of “cultural hegemony” revealed nationalism’s role in this failure. According to him, the bourgeois government manufactured the consent of their proletariat by constructing and imposing ideologies like nationalism to create a false impression that all citizens were legally equal despite the real and pervasive economic inequalities that divided them.<sup>102</sup> Hence, rather than revolting, the working-class members helped preserve the status quo by identifying their goals and interests with those of the bourgeoisie.

With the success of great capitalist powers and the Western modality of nationalism that grew and expanded along with them, philosophers and political theorists like Hannah Arendt became concerned with how particularist assumptions were undermining the universalist tendencies of Western nationalism. The particularisms associated with the concept of the nation, Arendt argued, could permanently damage this form of universalism and ultimately result in “tribal nationalism” where “the very institution of a state, whose supreme task was to protect and guarantee man and his rights as man, as a citizen, and as a national, lost its legal, rational appearance.”<sup>103</sup> These gripes toward nationalism extended beyond the West and into the Islamic world. For instance, Muhammad Iqbal claimed that “the imperialistic designs of Europe were in great need of this effective weapon—the propagation of the European conception of nationalism in Muslim countries—to

<sup>100</sup> Hitchens, *God Is Not Great*, 21.

<sup>101</sup> Lenin, *Marxism and Nationalism*, 6; see also Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

<sup>102</sup> This point regarding Gramsci’s cultural hegemony thesis is discussed in detail in Adamson, *A Study of Antonio Gramsci’s Political and Cultural Theory*; and Lears, “The Concept of Cultural Hegemony.”

<sup>103</sup> Arendt, “Imperialism, Nationalism, Chauvinism,” 297.

shatter the religious unity of Islam to pieces.”<sup>104</sup> Disillusioned by what he witnessed in Western civilizations, he argued that nationalism destroyed the prospects of universal brotherhood, built artificial barriers between humans and between nations, and planted the seeds of international conflict and discord.<sup>105</sup>

Yet, amid all these criticisms leveled against religion and nationalism, the campaign to re-evaluate their respective roles vis-à-vis contemporary politics and modern governance has steadily grown. With regard to religion, for example, political scientists like Toft, Philpott, and Shah argued that despite its tendency to be violent and repressive, the last forty or fifty years showed “religion also to be a destroyer of dictatorships, an architect of democracy, a facilitator of peace negotiations and reconciliation initiatives, a promoter of economic development and entrepreneurship, a partisan in the cause of women, and warrior against disease and a defender of human rights.”<sup>106</sup> Similarly, sociologists such as Philip Gorski and Gülay Türkmen-Dervişoğlu defended religions against claims that they were inherently destructive, by asserting that the notion of “religious violence” was “something of a self-fulfilling prophecy when states try to force religion into the supposedly safe boxes built by secularism.”<sup>107</sup> Accordingly, as security scholars like Robert Seiple and Hoover noted, religion “should not be analyzed solely in terms of its potential negative effects but must also be studied with regard to its assets,” such as its role as powerbroker of human relationship, as a means of communication and language, the resources of religious leaders and institutions, and the expertise of the religious actors.<sup>108</sup>

As for nationalism, classic works of philosophers like Johann Gottlieb Fichte and writers like George Orwell continue to inspire modern analyses of its significance vis-à-vis nation- and state-building amid increasing global interconnectedness. Specifically, while Fichte reminded us of the value of *kultur* as the “exercise of all our forces for the purpose of total liberty, of total independence from everything which is not ourselves, which is not our pure ego,” Orwell warned us against our tendency to confuse patriotism’s aggressive and power-hungry qualities as a means of celebrating a nationalistic way of life.<sup>109</sup> For instance, John O’Sullivan questioned the perception that nationalism was an obstacle to human rights, international harmony, and economic rationality by asserting that it is “reasonable as well as right that a people who lack their own state should strive to acquire one or that a people who have their own state should seek to protect its sovereignty against legal erosion or military attacks.”<sup>110</sup> Likewise, Michael Lind justified the salience

<sup>104</sup> Iqbal, *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, 224.

<sup>105</sup> Iqbal in Ansari, “Iqbal and Nationalism.”

<sup>106</sup> Toft, Philpott, and Shahm, *Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*, 8.

<sup>107</sup> Gorski and Türkmen-Dervişoğlu, “Religion, Nationalism, and International Security,” 8.

<sup>108</sup> Seiple and Hoover, *Religion and Security*, 20–22.

<sup>109</sup> Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism*.

<sup>110</sup> O’Sullivan, “In Defense of Nationalism,” 33–34.

of liberal nationalism by underlining its requirement for a “liberal-constitutional organization of the state” as opposed to the authoritarian-populist constitution.<sup>111</sup>

Despite the seemingly irreconcilable normative divide and philosophical disagreements between those who recognize the importance of bringing religion and nationalism back in and those who insist on keeping them out, one thing is clear from the preceding discussions: religion and nationalism have persisted and prevailed. Yet, due to our modernist and secularist habits, we have failed to fully appreciate the essential (in)security utility and implications of these phenomena, which we have long dismissed as immaterial and irrational. Nevertheless, as my examination and analysis of ethnoreligious otherings and passionate conflicts across Southeast Asia illuminate, religion and nationalism continue to matter because they are, and have always been about the emotional, symbolic, and perceptual security and survival of identities, homelands, and territorial nation-states. So much so that the act of securing these “sacred” referents has always entailed “divine” tragedies among the individuals and communities involved. These passionate phenomena demand nothing less than “passionate”—emotional, symbolic, and perceptual—explanations.

<sup>111</sup> Lind, “In Defense of Liberal Nationalism,” 4.

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# Index

- Ahmed, Sara 40  
Alston, William 26  
Ambon (Indonesia) 1, 2, 55, 63, 70–71, 72  
Anderson, Benedict 63  
anger 145  
    Burmese othering 78, 99  
    Filipino othering 104, 105, 128  
    Indonesian othering 49, 51, 55, 72  
Arakanese people 80, 100  
Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) 3  
Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) 127  
Aung San Suu Kyi 16, 78, 83  
    criticism of 86, 99  
    defense speech 3–4, 84  
Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) 125, 126
- Bangsa Moro Army (BMA) 118  
Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) 125, 126, 127  
Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) 127  
Bangsamoro Muslims 5, 16, 105, 112, 115–118, 126, 128  
Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) 125, 126  
Bangsamoro Republic 117–118  
Bar-Tal, Daniel 148  
Beach, Derek 11  
belief 43, 51, 54, 58, 65, 69  
    changing, and group malleability 143, 153  
    definition of religion 26  
    emotional 38, 72, 100, 111, 135–136, 138, 140, 145  
    formation 6, 32–33, 138  
Benford, Robert 40  
Bengali people 4, 77, 80, 84, 88–89, 90, 94–95, 97, 100  
Bennink, Gemma 148  
Bieber, Florian 28  
“Bloody Soso!” 2  
Bohol earthquake 123  
Burma Council of Young Monks 82  
Butler, Judith 40  
Buzan, Barry 36
- citizenship (Burmese)  
    denied 4, 82–83, 90, 98  
    granted 80, 84, 87–89  
    and hostile emotions 80, 94  
citizenship (Filipino)  
    discrimination of Moro Muslims 116–117, 124  
cognition  
    altering emotions 138  
    appraisal, and emotion regulation 152–156  
    distortions, and rage 33  
    and group dynamics 109  
    and memories 55, 137  
    and threat perception 125  
    triggering hostile emotions 31–34, 49, 105, 135–136, 142  
colonialism 15, 43  
    American, and Filipino  
        transmigration 113–114  
    and Burmese nationalism 77, 79–83, 92  
    and Filipino nationalism 105–106, 110, 119  
    and Indonesian nationalism 48, 49–50, 52  
    and Indonesian securitization 56–59  
Communist Party of Burma 83  
Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) 125, 126  
conflict resolution *see* reconciliation, peace, conflict resolution  
Crawford, Neta 34, 144
- Dawkins, Richard 157  
Decentralization Laws (1999, Indonesia) 65  
Dennett, Daniel 157  
Descartes, René 24  
*din wa dawlah* 120  
discrimination  
    Burmese othering 91–92, 95, 98, 102  
    Filipino othering 108–109, 114, 115, 116–117, 122, 124  
    Indonesian othering 57, 59, 69  
domestic politics 7, 25  
    and group dynamics 40  
    and nationalism 27, 28  
    and reconciliation 149  
    and religion 26

sacralization of hostile perceptions 44, 65–68, 75, 94, 102, 130, 143  
 and securitization 28, 36–37, 57–60, 71, 124–126  
 triggering hostile emotions 39, 145

Duterte, Rodrigo 125, 127

East Timor 47, 63

education

Burmese, and Buddhism 98

Filipino, and Moro people 107, 114, 124, 126

elites, state and non-state 16, 17, 30

Burmese 78, 79, 85, 94, 102

Filipino 105, 111, 113–114, 117, 120, 121, 129, 130

and hostile emotions 31, 34–35, 45, 57, 85, 111, 132, 135

Indonesian 50, 53, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 66, 69, 71, 74–75

and IR studies 8–9

keeping memories and traditions 5, 15, 55

and sacralized hostile perceptions 41, 43–44, 46, 71, 75, 94, 102, 129, 130, 132, 143, 145

and symbolic predispositions 36, 37, 45, 50, 57, 74, 102, 120, 121, 130, 132, 139

emotions, hostile 6, 7, 9, 10, 17, 22, 45, 133–138, 160

causal mechanisms 30, 31–36, 48, 131–132

and group dynamics 31–35, 39–40, 49, 138–140

link to sacralized hostile perceptions 41, 45, 69, 72–73, 75, 95, 97, 99–100, 103, 122, 129, 130, 144–145

link to symbolic predispositions 38–39, 56–58, 61, 63, 64, 67, 69, 74, 86, 87, 89, 90, 92, 102, 111–113, 115–116, 117, 119, 125, 130, 139–142

malleability 138, 154

and memories 55, 83, 129, 137–138

and nationalism 4–5, 30, 31–36, 38, 48–56, 74, 77–85, 101–102, 104–111, 129, 133–134, 150

and reconciliation 147–151

regulation 151–156

triggering, rationalist drive 6

fear 8, 29, 35, 137, 142, 145, 156

Burmese othering 78, 80, 84, 87, 92, 98, 99

and cognitive processes 32, 33

Filipino othering 16, 103, 104, 107, 108, 125, 128, 129

Indonesian othering 49, 52, 56, 70, 71, 72

shared 35

Fichte, Johann Gottlieb 159

Fierke, Karin 137

Finnemore, Martha 147

Franks, David 32

Frijda, Nico 32, 145

Gecas, Victor 32

Geiss, Imanuel 27

Gross, James 151

group dynamics 132–133

and emotional dispositions 31–35, 39–40, 49, 139–140

emotion regulation 151, 152–155

and group malleability 143, 146

and hostile sacralized perceptions 41–45, 144–146

and symbolic predispositions 38–39, 40

theorization 7–10

Gutmann, Amy 27

Habibie, B.J. 65

Halperin, Eran 146–147

Harris, Sam 157

hatred 8, 32–33, 35

Burmese othering 78, 80, 86, 87

Filipino othering 91, 103, 104, 105, 107, 113, 122, 129

Indonesian othering 49, 55, 56, 63

mitigation 143, 153–154

Hitchens, Christopher 157

homeland, and sacralized hostile perceptions 9, 10, 31, 36

Bangsamoro (Filipino) 16, 105, 112, 116, 120–129, 130

Burmese 77, 78, 85, 86, 94–101, 102

Indonesian 48, 49, 56, 65–7

theorization 41–45

Hoover, Dennis 159

Hutchinson, John 27

identity 8, 31, 35, 131–135

Burmese ethnoreligious 78, 79, 82–83, 85, 87–88, 91

Filipino ethnoreligious 104, 105, 106, 108, 109–110, 111, 112, 114, 116, 120–129

Indonesian ethnoreligious 48, 50, 56–57, 66–68, 71, 73, 75

and religion 27

and sacralized hostile perceptions 41–45, 65–74, 94–101, 120, 129

Indonesia 1–2

nationalism and hostile emotions 48–56

sacralization of hostile perceptions 65–74

symbolic predispositions 56–65

terrorism and belief 47–48



- Indonesian Constitution 53–54  
 International Relations (IR) studies  
   comparative studies 16–19  
   elite roles 8–9  
   non-rationalist approach 7–8  
   process tracing method 10–15, 19  
   rationalist approach 5–6, 7  
 Iqbal, Muhammad 158–159
- Jabidah Massacre 4–5  
 Jakarta 47, 70–71  
*Jemaah Islamiyah* 47, 49, 71, 73  
*jihād* 1, 5, 62, 70–71, 72, 105, 106, 116  
 Joseph, Jonathan 25  
 Juergensmeyer, Mark 43
- Kao people 2  
 Kaufman, Stuart 7, 25, 38–39, 140  
 Kinnall, Catarina 40  
 Kuyper, Abraham 52  
 Kyaw Moe Tun 3
- language  
   emotional 34, 35, 50, 85, 135  
   and religion 159  
   and securitization 37  
*Laskar Jihād* 62, 70, 71  
 Lasswell, Harold 148  
 Lenin, Vladimir 158  
 Lind, Michael 159–160  
 Liow, Joseph 27
- Ma Ba Tha 97, 99  
 Makian people 2  
 Malifut  
 Maluku province 1, 56, 58, 65  
   conflict in 2, 62–63, 69–72  
 Maranao people 106, 108, 114–115, 122  
 Marawi 108, 127  
 Martial Law (Philippines) 117, 123, 127  
 Marx, Karl 158  
 McDonald, Matt 37  
 Memorandum of Understanding on the  
   Ancestral Domain (MOU-AD) 118  
 memories 5  
   and hostile emotions 55, 83, 129, 137–138  
   and hostile perceptions 145, 147  
   and symbolic predispositions 58, 87, 113, 140  
 Mercer, Jonathan 38, 140  
 Mesquita, Batja 145  
 Minangkabau 50, 68  
 Mindanao 4, 5, 16, 105, 106, 107–108, 111, 113,  
   114, 116, 118, 119, 121, 123–124, 125, 126,  
   127
- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA, Indonesia) 60  
 Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA,  
   Indonesia) 60–61  
 Misuari, Nur 5, 118  
 Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) 5, 112,  
   118, 125, 126, 127, 128  
 Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) 5,  
   117–118  
 Moro people  
   and the Filipinization program 113–114  
   and hostile perceptions 120–130  
   and hostile symbolic predispositions 112–119  
   nationalism and hostile emotions 4–5, 16,  
   104  
 Myanmar 2–4, 16, 76–77  
   nationalism and hostile emotions 77–85,  
   101–102  
   sacralization of hostile perceptions 94–101,  
   103  
   symbolic predispositions 85–93, 103
- nationalism 16–17, 22, 23, 24–25, 44, 45–46  
   Burman Buddhist vs. Islamic 77–85, 87, 92,  
   94, 96, 97, 101–102  
   conceptualization 27–28  
   Filipino Catholic vs. Moro Islamic 4–5,  
   104–111, 123, 124, 129, 130  
   and hostile emotions 4–5, 30, 31–36, 38,  
   48–56, 74, 77–85, 101–102, 104–111, 129,  
   133–134, 150  
   Indonesian Islamic vs. Christian 48–56, 57,  
   58–59, 63, 68, 74  
   role of the elites 8–  
   scholarly criticism 157–160  
   and symbolic predispositions 57, 58–59, 87,  
   130  
 National League for Democracy (NLD) 16, 99  
 Ne Win, General 84  
*Nida'ul Islam* 128  
 Norman, Ludvig 11, 12–13  
 Nur Misuari 5, 118
- Operation Merdeka 4  
 Oren, Ido 37  
 Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) 3  
 Ortony, Andrew 32  
 Orwell, George 159
- Padri War* 50  
*Pancasila* 54, 57, 68  
 Papuan Christians 5  
 peacebuilding *see* reconciliation, peace, conflict  
   resolution  
*pela-gandong* 1, 62

- perceptions, hostile, sacralization of 30, 132, 143–144
- Burmese 94–101, 103
  - Filipino 120–129, 130
  - group dynamics 41–45, 144–146
  - and identity 41–45, 65–74, 94–101, 120, 129
  - Indonesian 65–74
  - link to hostile emotions and symbols 144–145
  - malleability 146–147
  - and memories 145, 147
  - and reconciliation 147–151
- Petersen, Roger 6, 32, 138, 145
- Pew Research Center 25
- Philippine National Police (PNP) 127
- Philippines
- hostile emotions and nationalism 4–5, 16, 103–111, 129–130
  - sacralization of hostile perceptions 120–129, 130
  - symbolic predispositions 111–120, 130
- Post, Jerrold 40–41
- Qanun* 67–68
- rage 35, 138, 140, 142
- Burmese othering 78, 87, 101
  - and cognitive distortions 33
  - Filipino othering 104, 107, 129
  - Indonesian othering 49, 51, 52, 56
- Rakhine state 3, 77, 78, 84, 86, 88, 91–92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 100
- reconciliation, peace, conflict resolution 6–7, 19, 22, 118, 126, 127, 133, 138, 141–143
- challenges and problems 94–95, 147–150
  - defining 148
  - and emotion regulation 151–156
  - and forgiveness 149
  - role of religion 60, 73, 80, 91, 157, 159
- religion 48, 51, 54, 62–63
- conceptualization 26–27
  - and division 156–157
  - and nationalism 24–25, 114
  - and reconciliation 60, 73, 80, 91, 157, 159
  - sacralization of 66–67, 94–95, 97, 120
  - scholarly criticism 156–160
- Republic of South Maluku (RMS) 58–59, 69–70
- resentment 16, 32, 33, 35, 72, 138, 142, 145
- Burmese othering 78, 100
  - Filipino othering 104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 116, 128
  - Indonesian othering 49, 53, 56, 59
- ridicule 69, 121
- Rieffer, Barbara-Ann 28
- Robins, Robert 40–41
- Rohingya people 91, 92
- Buddhist hostile perceptions towards 77, 83, 86, 88, 93, 95–96, 99, 100, 102
  - citizenship rights 4, 82, 90
  - violence against 2–3, 16
- Salamat, Hashim 118, 128
- Sardomov, Ivelin 34
- security threat, securitization 150, 156
- Christians vs. Indonesian Muslims 56–74
  - conceptualization 28–30
  - and hostile emotions 31, 48–56, 64, 74, 78, 101–102, 104–110, 129, 132, 134–135, 136, 137, 142–143
  - and language 37
  - manufacturing of ethnoreligious othering as 7–10, 16, 131
- Muslims vs. Burman Buddhists 85–93
- Muslims vs. Filipino Catholics 111–120
- relevance of religion and nationalism 23–24, 36, 159–160
- and sacralized hostile perceptions 41–45, 65–74, 75, 94, 98, 99, 101, 102, 120–129, 130, 132–133, 143–144
- as a speech act 36–37
- and symbolic predispositions 30, 38–40, 64–65, 74–75, 85–93, 102, 117–120, 130, 132, 139, 142–143
- Seiple, Chris 26
- Seiple, Robert 159
- self-sacrifice 25, 34, 42–43, 72
- Shari'a* 50, 54, 67–68, 71, 115, 125
- Sikkink, Kathryn 147
- Smith, Anthony 27, 28
- Snow, David 40
- Solomon, Ty 37
- Strategic Plan for West Java 68
- Suharto regime (New Order) 16, 48, 59–62, 70
- Suny, Ronald 22
- symbolic predispositions 6, 9, 15, 17, 18, 30, 45, 138–141
- Burmese 85–93, 102
  - and ethnoreligious nationalism 35–36, 57, 58–59, 87, 130
  - Filipino 111–120, 130
  - and group dynamics 38–39, 40, 138–141
  - and hostile emotions 38–39, 132, 140–142
  - and hostile perceptions 40, 69, 73
  - Indonesian 56–65
  - malleability 142–143
  - and memories 58, 87, 113, 140
  - and reconciliation 147–151
  - regulation mechanisms 151–156

- Tatmadaw* 2, 3, 16, 84, 86, 100
- territories 7, 10, 15, 30, 41–42, 45
- Burmese 77, 84, 86, 94–101, 102
  - and the cultivation of hostile emotions 31, 131, 135
  - Filipino 16, 112, 113, 118, 120–129, 130, 131–133
  - Indonesian 48, 57, 59, 64, 65–74
  - and the sacralization of hostile perceptions 41–45, 65–74, 94–101, 120–129, 132, 143, 146, 150
- terrorism
- in Indonesia 48, 72, 73
  - in Myanmar 3, 78, 93, 95, 96, 100–101
  - in the Philippines 106, 116, 119, 121, 123
- Theravada Buddhism 82, 97
- Toft, Monica 1, 41–42, 43
- transmigration, Filipino 113–114
- United Nations (UN) 2, 3, 69
- United States, Filipino colonialism 111, 113–114
- universalism 158–159
- victimization 53, 81, 109, 137, 145
- Muslim 5, 51, 64, 106, 108, 119
- Waever, Ole 36
- Wahid, Abdurrahman 70
- Westen, Drew 39
- Wight, Colin 25
- Wirathu, Ashin 97
- World Values Survey 25
- Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) 81













