

2 Catching the Slippery Fish – A Theorization of the Concept of Identity and Identity Conflicts

Managing identity conflicts requires the conceptualization of what identity is all about. The conceptualization of identity delivers insights into the nature of the conflict: how it is created, maintained and protracted, how conflicting actors formulate decisions and how structures determine behaviors. Relating power to violence uses identity as an analytical tool to understand social relations. This chapter briefly reviews some of the debate surrounding the elusive identity concept – the construction, nature and functionality of identity, how collective identity is determined by a group-building process and the point at which identity is translated into conflict cleavages. Such a conceptualization of identity conflict allows an analysis of the factors that trigger the outburst of violent confrontations. Violence is not *per se* a necessary implication of identity conflicts.

A major endeavor of this research project is to contribute to the current debate in the Philippines around identity and what constitutes the “Philippine nation”. The conceptualization of the “Bangsamoro identity” is inevitably a part of a larger discourse on Philippine nationhood. The dynamic construction and maintenance of Bangsamoro identity illustrates the identity-building process that is in part a reaction to the actions of the larger Filipino “society at large” in which a dominant group uses state authority mechanisms to pursue positively connoted principles such as republicanism, nationalism and centralism to maintain its dominance. These principles are translated into the subordination of deviating groups burdened with “distorted” and “inferior” identities. The construction of the identity of these deviating groups follows the maxim of establishing mechanisms of defense to a perceived threat. The Bangsamoro identity is however an identity that is emerging from an experience of violence and from its function to defend human well-being. It is an identity inextricably enmeshed in historical and contemporary struggle, and therefore it is to be explained and understood through its purpose (‘utility’).

Conflict researchers tend to distinguish communal (ethno-cultural) conflicts from class conflicts. Communal conflicts are about social cleavages in which parties define their conflict in cultural rather than economic terms (Hanf 1989). According to Hanf, one driver of communal conflicts is relative deprivation, where some groups see themselves as subordinated in the sense that they are prevented from having equal access to opportunities or rights, and from participating equally

in social life. Another driver of communal conflicts is ‘symbolic’ deprivation, where a dominant group follows policies that elevate its own symbols, culture and language above others. Symbolic deprivation also encompasses the resignation of the state to protect the symbols, culture and language of minorities.

In contrast, class conflicts are about social stratification. Class conflicts refer to structural imbalances where there is the “actual or perceived inequality of control of resources, ownership or resource distribution” (Anstey 2006, p.17). As increasing wealth accumulates in the hands of a small group, their control over political, educational, public and legal institutions is consolidated, leading to social tensions. As Anstey and Zartman (2012) note, this distinction has validity, but in many instances, as the case in Southern Philippines would illustrate, they are conflated. The identity conflict in the Philippines involves both social cleavages and social stratification (see chapters five and six).

For the purpose of simplification, class conflicts will not be the focus of this research project, because the Philippines experiences a separate conflict with seventeen communist/Maoist insurgent groups for more than forty years. The communist insurgency in the country emerged at the same time as the contemporary armed Muslim insurgency is said to have been formally born. Nevertheless, the socio-economic dimension of the communal conflict will still be included in the conflict analysis, as it will be described later. Communal conflicts, like class conflicts, reflect a mechanism of playing with “identity cards” in which in- and out-groups are defined and are given meanings for mobilization purposes. Identity serves a function in power struggles between and within groups. Both conflicts involve the struggle of a weaker group against the hegemony of the stronger group.

Group identity is a multi-faceted and diffuse phenomenon, usually founded in social constructs such as territory, kinship circles, race, class, religion and language (Wiberg & Carlton 1996). Nevertheless, group identity-building processes do not always follow objective criteria to identify members. Furthermore, individuals are not clearly classified as belonging to coherent social groups, as they usually experience cross-memberships.

Identity can be conceptualized through its *utility* (Penetrante 2012). For which purpose was identity constructed? If there were no “identity”, it would need to be invented. Identity is the “frame of reference” for the system that defines the motivations and actions of individuals within a collective group. In this sense, identity performs the organizational function of a guiding framework for the value system of a collective group through which sanctions and rewards for interactions are codified (“*what is right and what is wrong*”) (see Penetrante 2012). Aside from being a guiding framework for actions, identity can also be regarded as an entrepreneur (seller) of social norms that determines processes of inclusion and exclusion (“*who is in and who is out*”).

Another way of conceptualizing identity is by examining why it was established. Group identity can be constructed through primordial ties and kinship connections (Geertz 1963; Khalaf 1968) focusing on categories resulting from the givens of birth such as “blood.” This book project problematizes the “primordialist” definition of the givens of birth. Language, for instance, as the Philippine case shows, is socially ascribed, and is a product of socialization and of learning processes. Members of groups feel their connection with each other through commonalities in experience.

Huntington’s (1997) concept of identity: “you only know who you are when you know who you are against” refers to those identity attributes of groups that are incompatible with the attributes of the others. As Huntington (1997) asserts, people, groups and civilizations often define their identities in terms of “what they are not” or by their “points of difference in a social milieu” (Anstey 2006, p.15). Coming back to the utilities of identity, value systems and processes of inclusion and exclusion are in their own right exclusionary, however, communal (ethno-cultural) difference is itself not generally the main driver of violence. It is how difference is related to inter-group relations that rather explains violence. For example, for Paul Collier (1999), violent conflict is about poverty and a lack of justice. Ethno-cultural differences are seldom the reason for escalation and outburst of violence. This confirms the idea that context matters in identity conflicts.

2.1 Conflict Defined

The term ‘conflict’ is derived from the Latin word *confligere* which means ‘to strike together’. The term connotes a physical dimension in the sense that two or more bodies are moving against each other. Conflict is therefore explicable only in a social context. To “strike one together” can also mean “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals” (Coser 1956, p.8).

While Himes (1980, p.14) understands conflict in terms of action, or “*purposeful struggles between collective actors who use social power to defeat or remove opponents and to gain status, power, resources and other scarce values*”, Morton Deutsch (1973, p.10) refers to conflict as a situation which comes out whenever incompatible activities occur. Boulding (1962, p.5) suggests an additional definition that accommodates the psychological dimension of conflict. He states that conflict is a situation “in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions.” His definition implies that parties can perceive goal incompatibility, but do not necessarily engage in behavior which is mutually

incompatible. His suggestion that conflict refers to a cognitive rather than a behavioral state, which is supported by Stanger (1967) and Hammond (1965), enables the observation of differing attitudes in conflict situations.

Furthermore, Kriesberg (1973, p.17) argues that conflicts are rooted in the actors' belief that "they have incompatible goals". Building on this, Pruitt and Rubin (1986, p.14) define conflict as "*current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously*". Utilizing these contributions, the working definition of conflict in this project is as follows:

Conflict refers to the beliefs of actors about incompatibilities of goals (values, needs or interests) and behavior (actions to eliminate, defeat, neutralize the other as expression of how incompatibilities are intended to be handled) within a social context.

This definition assumes that conflict does not automatically necessitate the outburst of violence; as such, conflict can be managed.

2.2 A Conflict Analysis – the Systematic Approach

The conflict in the Southern Philippines is complex, multi-dimensional and multi-level. It is complex, because it involves a diffuse system of almost untraceable interdependencies, dynamics and cause-effect relations. Complexity hinders any generic solution derived from other cases of conflict. The conflict is multi-dimensional, because it involves issues spanning security-based, socio-economic and cultural incompatibilities. It also involves contesting narratives and historical understanding that are highly contextual. For example, a resolution of religious tensions alone will not end conflict without comprehensive reforms in governance. Nevertheless, reforms in governance will not always be conducive to the peace process, particularly when reforms tend to reproduce existing hierarchies and power asymmetries. Furthermore, the conflict is multi-level, because it involves gaps in diverse relations – center vs. periphery, national vs. local, societal vs. personal. In each level, as the following table (Table 2.1) illustrates, different stakeholders follow different interests, maintain diverging priorities and pursue different strategies which require different outcomes in the negotiation process.

Table 2.1: Range of Scales of the Mindanao Conflict

	Scale 1	Scale 2	Scale 3	Scale 4
Conflict Parties	Government of the Philippines vs. MNLF, MILF	Center vs. Periphery (urban Manila vs. rural Mindanao)	Ethnic, religious and social communities, clans, warlords and political dynasties vs. each other	Interpersonal relationships (Mario vs. Pedro / Anita vs. Gloria)
Claims / Expected Outcomes	National sovereignty ¹ vs. self-determination (independence or autonomy)	Centralization vs. Decentralization / Resource-sharing and empowerment of rural areas / Political Representation	Clan A vs. Clan B on local hegemony / empowerment of isolated communities Security	Individual Rights and Liberties (political, socio-economic) Empowerment Security
Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition of MILF / MNLF as negotiation partners; demobilization of MILF, MNLF; withdrawal of government troops in Mindanao (military) - banning the use of terrorism as a coercive strategy by the MILF (political) - national control of local resources in Mindanao or immediate economic aid to ARMM (economic) -autonomy in the educational system (culture) -adoption of sharia as law order (legal) - inclusion of ancestral domains now dominated by Christians to the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) (territorial/ ancestral domains) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - distribution of income from concessions from foreign mining companies - allocation of development funds and international aid - Solidarity funds - Investment on Infrastructures -new forms of governance structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - control of the local government units - the right of building mosques in Christian dominated communities -access to road and other infrastructures - access to water - Sharia courts in Christian dominated communities - Muslim holidays as public holidays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - access to health services - access to education - employment - personal security - enough food for the family - adequate income

¹ The government of the Philippines expects the adherence to the principles of national sovereignty in any outcome, whereas the Muslim minority groups strive for self-determination which is in itself a form of sovereignty. See Lingga (2008, p.61).

Procedural Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mediation and negotiation - armed struggle - diplomatic, political, financial and military intervention of foreign countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - public consultation - corporate partnerships - consultation with local and international investors, and other donor-givers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collective rights and liberties protected by the constitution (legislation) - plebiscite - enhancing good governance and rule of law - enhancing public awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communal conflict resolution methods such as mediation
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Mark Anstey (Anstey 2006, p.77) identifies risks in conducting conflict analysis. First, the size of human casualties makes an “objective” analysis seem somehow inappropriate. An analysis implies allocating (often monetary) values to the ramifications of conflicts, a process based on normative judgement. Secondly, such an analysis tends to frame actors in subjective terms (as “good guys and bad guys,”), and focuses on conjunctures rather than on processes. However, in various conflicts such as in the Philippines, the escalated spiral of violence cannot be clearly attributed to perpetrators and victims. Thirdly, there is the risk of isolating responsibility and accountability for violence within one ethnic group and offering absolution for certain violent actions. This legitimizes violent actions, which is detrimental to any peace process.

The complex, multi-dimensional and multi-level nature of the conflict in Southern Philippines calls for a more systematic and integrative analytical approach. The ‘scale of range’ method (see Table 2.1) commonly used by the hierarchical theorists (such as Ahl & Allen 1996) states the significance of considering different levels of analysis in filtering information when observing phenomena. Upon doing this, different sets of priorities can be observed which require different sets of strategies when confronting localized conditions.

Socio-economic differences, socio-economic marginalization and isolation, political patronage, ethnic rivalry, competition from concessions from foreign mining companies, four decades of militarization, and conflicting land claims define what is perceived by the Filipinos as conflict in the Southern Philippines (Bück 2007, p.101). The complexity of the conflict in the Philippines undermines concrete resolution measures, which may not only be mutually complementing but also mutually excluding, promoting the intractability of the conflict.

To demonstrate how the range of scales model can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict, a cross-cutting issue will be used as an example of how priorities pertaining to this specific issue change as it progresses through the different scales. For example, the way justice issues are handled in the mediation process affects the consolidation of peace in the long run.

As Albin (2001; 2009) describes, justice is a common cause of conflict, but is often neglected in research into durable peace agreements. One constraint to achieving justice in negotiations is finding a common understanding of what justice means. Each scale has its own justice issue that is prioritized. For example, in scale 4, the primary justice issue is fair access to welfare and resources for individual citizens regardless of their group membership. Muslims, for example, along with other peripheral ethno-linguistic minorities tend to have limited access to resources and are denied equal participation in social life.

However, granting the Muslim population privileged access to resources and opportunities is perceived as a deterioration of the socio-economic status of the Christian population in Mindanao. Such a measure is similarly seen as unfair and unjustified. Moreover, one of the main justice issues in scale 1 is “procedural justice.” The government and the rebel group should find a fair procedure to enable meaningful talks in order to achieve a peace agreement. This includes shouldering expenses of trips and meetings, finding an appropriate place for the talks, securing safety for both sides, and ensuring the negotiators immunity from persecution. To conclude, justice issues in the different scales require different policies and different institutional settings.

There are several evaluations of the conflict in Southern Philippines both in academic literature and public discourse.

2.2.1 Conflict and Scarcity – Reduced Human Capital

At first glance, the conflict in the Philippines may illustrate a classical intra-state conflict with disrupted relations between ethnic groups contesting for scarce resources (see Collier 1999). This structural condition of scarcity leads to intense competition which inevitable legitimizes the use of violence to pursue their goals, particularly when survival is at stake. With existing power asymmetries determining access to scarce resources, weaker groups seek to modify access mechanisms. This is resisted by stronger groups seeking to maintain privileged access. This conflict confirms the notion suggested by Mack and Snyder (1957), that a situation of resource or position scarcity is a condition that creates conflict. Aggravating this conflict is the condition of dependency. While weaker groups already have limited access to resources, they are furthermore dependent on the “goodwill” of stronger groups to provide them with basic needs.

Aside from providing security, one of the most important functions of the state is to provide education to its constituents. Knowledge and advanced skills are critical determinants of institutional capacity (governance), income, economic

growth and the public sector (civic society). Although the concept of human capital tends to reduce individuals to the status of “commodities,” as Becker (1994) attests, qualifications (such as diplomas) function as signals that provide assurance to employers that employees can manage technologies (Chong 2005). The concept of ‘human capital’ differentiates individuals based on their educational attainment. Muslims tend not to be able to compete in this selection process, because of their disadvantages in the educational system, aggravated by their constant exposure to violence.

The national average of the proportion of high-school graduates among adults in 2003 was 52.1 per cent. Provinces in Mindanao are far below the national average. The most probable cause for Moros not completing secondary education is the regular violation of ceasefires which leads to internal displacement of more than five months. The 2008 and 2009 conflict has led to the disruption of the education of an estimated 70,000 children, with a tendency towards yet more school drop-outs as the length of displacement increases (Bell 2011). In a recent survey conducted by the Philippine National Statistics Office (2003), it was concluded that 39 per cent of the Muslim respondents failed to complete secondary education due to lack of personal interest, while 13.9 per cent because of employment and 13.8 per cent attributed it to the high cost of education. However, it was not mentioned in the study that the lack of personal interest does not reflect any backwardness in their culture. Simply, the unfavorable environment for education impedes the establishment of a healthy learning culture.

Furthermore, schools are regularly used as evacuation centers. Classes are often disrupted for weeks, if not for months, to accommodate refugees. Furthermore, in most cases, after months of usage as refugee centers, school materials such as tables, chairs, and books are destroyed. Schools are then combined with bad memories and these memories help to foster a lack of personal interest. The ARMM has the lowest literacy rate with seven out of 10 persons (65.5 per cent) aged 10 to 64 years considered to be basically literate. The functional literacy rate of the population of 10 to 64 year olds in the ARMM in 2003 is 62.9 per cent, compared to the national average of 84.1 per cent and to the National Capital Region of 94.6 per cent (PNSO 2003).

Muslims tend to be less educated. The human capital theory states the correlation between education and access to the employment market. Persons with a high level of education tend to have better access to higher paid jobs (Becker 1994). Economists regard expenditures on education, training, medical care, and so on as investments in human capital. The relatively low investment in human capital through the Philippine state correlates with the relatively low income of Moro residents in ARMM. Of the estimated 82 million Pesos (approximately 1.5 million Euro) family expenditure for education (tuition fees, books, etc.), only 0.9

per cent is spent for education in Mindanao compared to 28.3 per cent in the National Capital Region (Metro Manila).

The low investment in education in the ARMM is reflected by the income and unemployment rate. The ARMM registered the lowest annual income among regions with 47 billion pesos compared to 734 billion pesos earned in Metro Manila in 2006. The average annual income of ARMM families is 89 thousand pesos at current prices, compared to the annual average income of NCR families valued at 253 thousand pesos (PNSO 2006). The Labor Force Participation Rate for the ARMM in 2008 is the lowest in the country (57.1 percent, compared to 61.6 per cent in the NCR and 63.4 per cent national average). Although the unemployment rate in the ARMM is the lowest in the whole Philippines (4 percent) compared to the national average of 7.4 per cent (PNSO 2007), this development can be attributed to the low percentage of Muslims employed as wage workers. This anti-Muslim bias may have led to 78 per cent of Muslims engaging in entrepreneurial activities, with the remainder focusing on agriculture.

Lastly, the ARMM tends on average to have an incidence of poverty that is higher by 32 percentage points (UNDP & NZAID 2005, p.24) than the national poverty rate. The 2000 incidence of poverty in the ARMM was also 68.6 per cent compared to 34.2 per cent of the national poverty rate. Wages of Muslims are driven down, because of the intense competition among each other for jobs. Because 80 per cent of Muslims are landless, they are obliged to sell their labor to survive. In addition, Christian employers are usually distrustful of employing Muslims, further contributing to the high unemployment of Muslim wage workers.

Another entrance point for analyzing the underlying causes of poverty and the disparities in income between different societal sectors is the availability of more opportunities and assistance to settlers from the North. McKenna (2008) states that the assistance obtained by Muslims is not only meager compared to the assistance given to Christian settlers, but it is also less than the assistance received under the US colonial regime.

This “primordialist” approach evolving within the civilizational fault line by Huntington can be interpreted to reflect the report of the Philippine Congress (Congress of the Philippines, House of Representatives, 1955 quoted in Glang 1969, p.35): *"In their ignorance and in their trend toward religious fanaticism, the Muslims are sadly wanting in the advantages of normal health and social factors and functions."* Such an assumption indicates the devaluation of Muslim culture in the sense that Muslims are not capable of participating in social life, because of inferior cultural attributes. This assumption then serves as vindication and relativization of the structural imbalances that marginalize Muslims.

2.2.2 Conflict and Colonization - the Distorted State-building

For Jamail Kamlian (2003), the conflict in the Southern Philippines refers to the incomplete integration of ethnic and religious minorities sustained by the lack of legitimacy of the Philippine state. The absence of any democratic consultation during the state-building process is regarded as a major problem that impedes integration. The United States bestowed political independence on the Philippines immediately after the Second World War in 1946. The incorporation of the two sultanates in Southern Philippines into the newly established Philippine Republic was decided without any democratic consultation as to whether the Muslim population wanted to join the new republic. The new Philippine republic inherited the Spanish and US American colonial administrative structures, implying that the conflict in the Philippines was an immediate implication of colonialism.

The US Congress ignored petitions from the Muslim elite to create a separate Muslim state entity in Mindanao. The perception that their incorporation into the new state was arbitrarily imposed upon them, and was a decision made without Muslim groups being given the privilege of deliberative choice, reflects the historical underpinnings of the conflict and undermines the legitimacy of the Philippine state. While Kamlian (2003) refers to the lack of integration due to a lack of legitimacy, Magdalena (Magdalena, 1977, p. 299) considers the social strain or tension to be “unfortunate circumstance of colonial history.”

The social tension in the post-colonial Southern Philippines is further aggravated by institutionalized deprivation, continuous Muslim displacement, decreasing size of the Muslim population (minoritization), and a highly uneducated population. This is a result of the continuation of the state-sponsored settlement of Christian Filipinos in Muslim areas, which was initiated by the United States. Smith (2002) suggests that colonization has contributed to intra-group violence, where Christianity is viewed by Muslims as synonymous with colonization.

Abhoud Syed Lingga and other authors state that the Moro rebel groups consider the incorporation of their homeland into the Republic of the Philippines to be illegal and immoral, since it was performed without their plebiscitary consent. Without their consent, the Moro movement is simply a continuation of the struggle for the decolonization of their homeland. They see the Philippine government as the successor-in-interest of the Spanish and American colonialists (see Aijiz 1982; Kreuzer & Werning 2007; Lingga 2008). The idea that the Philippine state is the continuation of Spanish and American colonization connotes prejudice, displacement and violence. The conflict in Southern Philippines may be therefore attributed to gaps in the state-building process in the post-colonial period.

During the almost 50 year-long American colonial rule in the Philippines, the US colonial government sponsored mass migration from the north and central

parts of the country to Mindanao in order to create more Christian enclaves in the south and to compensate the Christian Filipinos for the loss of their lands to Americans. Unlike its predecessor Spain - which failed to be successful when engaged in warfare with the Moros - the United States used violence to conquer the remaining Muslim sultanates (Rodil 1994). According to Kreuzer and Werning (Kreuzer & Werning 2007, p.x), at least 80 per cent of the Moros are now landless.

The application of the American land policy led to the loss of traditional land rights for the majority of the Muslims. The 1935 Philippine Commonwealth government which was the transitional government leading to the country's independence. This prioritized the economic development of Mindanao "for the benefit of the nation", by means of Christian migration into traditionally Muslim regions (McKenna 2008). This policy of minoritization continued and even intensified after the granting of independence, with internal migration reaching a high in the 1960s. For example, the number of Christian settlers in Central Mindanao soared from 0.7 million in 1948 to an estimated 2.3 million in 1970, representing a growth rate of 229 per cent (Burley 1973).

The influx of Christian settlers from the north created tension between the Christian and Muslim populations, further intensified by different conceptions of land ownership and leasehold arrangements (Gaspar et al. 2002, p.11). The landlessness of the Muslims is an implication of the introduction of land registration policies in Mindanao by the Americans. As McKenna (2008) states, due to unfamiliarity with the procedures, expensive processing fees, and the requirement to regularly pay taxes, many Muslims did not apply for land registration for the land they currently occupied (Thomas 1971). Christian settlers were regularly obtaining land ownership to lands occupied by Muslims since generations (McKenna 2008). Poor Muslims who have become "squatters" in their own lands were eventually forced to vacate their former homes. Violence was employed in the face of resistance, often with arms supplied by the Philippine Constabulary (McKenna 2008).

Mindanao's original Muslim inhabitants have been reduced from as much as 76 per cent of the population in 1903 to 18 per cent in 2000, creating discontent in Muslim minorities. The most contentious aspect of the peace negotiations between the Philippine government and the MILF is how to deal with the historical designation of Muslim homelands to Christian settlers, particularly the inclusion of areas now dominated by Christians under Muslim governance.

2.2.3 Conflict and the Civilizational Fault-lines

A more issue-related discourse on the conflict in the Southern Philippines refers to the role of religion in the politics of identity. Huntington (1997) identifies religion as a major factor in identity conflicts through “fault-line wars”. As Anstey (2006, p.117) states, “to accept that a different religion has validity is to deny the ‘exclusive’ truth of one’s own belief system.” The affiliation in the *ummah* (Muslim community) is issue related, because positions are formulated from within this affiliation and expressed to the outside through claims of politically and culturally sensitive categories such as the introduction of Sharia, the introduction of Muslim holidays, etc.

Magdalena (1977) argues that the conflict in Southern Philippines originates from the ethnic and cultural differences in which Muslims see themselves as defending their faith and *ummah* against *kafir* (non-believers) who threaten Islam. Nevertheless, it is worth asking how Islam is threatened. Threat pertains to a subjective perception of anticipated pain. Will the armed conflict disappear when Muslims are able to practice their faith? The context of the conflict in Southern Philippines moves beyond the mere concept of practicing faith.

Christians are historically perceived as colonizers due to centuries of resistance to Christian “colonialism”, and the current Philippine state is seen as the continuation of this colonialism. Nevertheless, analytically speaking, it is a logical error to attribute pain to religion when humans are the ones who actually inflict pain. To what extent it is logical to attribute ‘threat’ to Islam and Christianity when neither religion is actually competing with the other for space within a specific territory? Therefore, it can be concluded that although religion mobilizes people, the conflict in the Southern Philippines is not a religious conflict, because it does not involve contestation between Islam and Christianity.

2.2.4 Conflict and Misrecognition – Hegemonial Identity Politics and Social Relations

This chapter introduces another type of conflict that focuses on the dynamics influencing the social relations between societal actors. This concept of identity conflict may serve as a departure point in formulating policies. To apply the logic of Hannah Arendt (2009, p.55), “violence comes when power is lost”, and identity conflicts are understood through reference to group relations, with one dominant

group subordinating other groups under the banner of nation-building. Subordination is maintained by the organizational premises of the system-structure of the state.

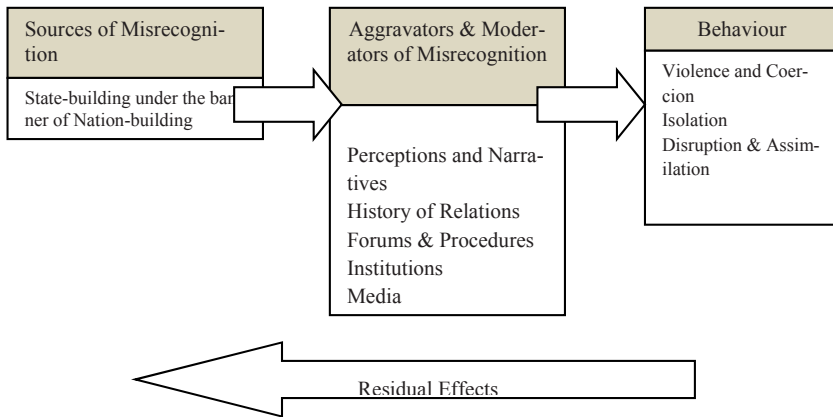
As Hannah Arendt (2009, pp.55–57) states, the real or potential *Machtverlust* (loss of power), understood in terms of legitimacy and authority, leads to the use of violence, which is understood as an instrument for the re-establishment of power. ‘Identity’ cannot be separated from ‘power’, either in the process of identity formation or in the rectification of misrecognition.

‘Misrecognition’ is the political situation in which a specific minority group is not able to effectively participate equally in social life (Fraser 2003) due to existing state architecture that defines “conditions of advantages and disadvantages” (*Begünstigungs- und Benachteiligungsverhältnisse*) through legal and political instruments such as the legal system, bureaucracy and the social system (Kreisky 1979, p.1). The perceived inferiority of the subgroup in relation to the dominant norms leads to the minority group becoming associated with denigrating images, and perceptions of the minority group becoming distorted (Hobson 2003). Equal participation is not envisaged, because the dominant group defines the minority as inferior or/and as a threat. Therefore, the minority group is not accepted as equal peers in societal life.

To understand misrecognition, the conflict framework by Thomas (1976) has been modified. The following model (Figure 2.1) follows the logic “conflict antecedents-conflict moderators-conflict behaviour” that Thomas (1976) suggested. It serves as the framework for an analysis of misrecognition, including the sources, the moderators and the behavior.

As the following model suggests, the main source of misrecognition is the state-building process through nationalist terms of reference. Nation-building legitimizes policies such as the use of violence to ensure internal coherence. In this regard, social coherence is understood as a variable ensuring stability, implying that a collectivity can only be stable when there are common denominators among actors which define social trust. The dominant group believes it is threatened by groups considered to be either inferior or culturally distorted. Misrecognition is therefore moderated and maintained by notions of centralism, republicanism and universalism, and these are reflected in narratives, institutions, the mechanisms for the distribution of resources and opportunities, and for the provisions of welfare. Misrecognition is therefore the legitimizing force behind various state policies.

Figure 2.1: Understanding Misrecognition



2.2.4.1 Deficient and Distorted Political Representation

Education does not only determine income, it also transforms individuals into citizens (Lipset 1981). Education provides individuals the resources to resist state repression, and to participate in deliberative processes of decision-making and bargaining at a political level. Education is nevertheless seen by the state as an instrument of ensuring social unity. However, when specific individuals are considered to be outside the community, the state tends not to feel obliged to provide education to these individuals. In this sense, the poor performance of the Philippine state in providing quality education to the Muslim population follows this logic of exclusion from the society at large, because the state feels neither responsible for them, nor obliged to provide individuals with education to prevent problems in the future.

The relative lack of education of the Muslim population is an indicator of misrecognition, as well as a factor that maintains misrecognition. Furthermore, education plays an important role in framing demands in various stages of the bargaining process. The work of Hannah Pitkin (1967) on the concept of representation refers to political representation as the activity of making citizen's voices, opinions, and perspectives present in the public policy-making process.

'Political representation' (Pitkin 1967; Pennock & Chapman 1968) refers to a bargaining relationship between formal representatives and their constituents.

Citizens define the rewards and sanctions of their representatives. Political representation is deficient when the constituents do not have the resources to formally sanction their representatives when they cease to represent the will of their constituents. In evaluating the quality of the representation of the Muslim population, the four different views of representation proposed by Pitkin (1967) offer an appropriate analytical framework: 1) formalistic representation, 2) descriptive representation, 3) symbolic representation, 4) substantive representation.

Formalistic Representation

‘Formalistic representation’ (Warren & Castiglione 2004; Grant & Keohane 2005) refers to the institutional arrangements that precede and initiate representation. The institutional position of a representative is the focus of this view. The application of this view in the context of the Philippines requires two distinctions of representation: *the representation of the Muslim constituents in the government of the ARMM, and the representation of the Muslim population in the overall national political framework of the Philippine state*. Importantly for constituents, formal sanctioning mechanisms must be available to serve as instruments for the authorization and accountability of representatives. In the first type of representation, Filipino Muslim constituents have rather poor sanctioning mechanisms, particularly because the leaders of the ARMM have yet to transform themselves into political bureaucrats. In addition, the lack of a robust political party system provides an environment conducive to armed clans and political warlords, where the interests of the constituents are subordinated by personal interests of armed groups.

The absence of a functioning parliamentary political party system in the ARMM, and the resistance of the MNLF to accept non-MNLF members in the autonomous government, limit the recruitment of new “political blood”. The main implication of this patriarchal landscape in the ARMM is the personalization of politics in which representatives are elected based on their names and clan membership, rather than their socio-political programs and qualified experience. Furthermore, the formalistic representation of the Muslim population in the state-wide political framework has improved very slowly in the last decades. Under President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, one cabinet member was usually drawn from Muslim Mindanao such as Datu Nasser C. Pangandaman to serve as secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform. However, none of the 23 members of the Philippine Senate is Muslim, as senators are directly elected by a national constituency wherein Muslim candidates are usually unable to garner enough electoral votes to win a seat in the senate. Muslims are formally represented in the Philippine House

of Representatives both by district representatives and by the party-list organization *Anak ng Mindanao* (Children of Mindanao), who are quite constrained in their influence on national politics in general.

While the formal criteria of representation are clearly provided, a critical observation of the situation suggests more space for improvement. It should be asked whether the acceptance and therefore the legitimization of the representatives from violent agents such as the MNLF, MILF or political warlords solely depend on their capacity to create violence. The basis for representation should move beyond the ‘entrepreneurship’ of violence and include welfare and socio-economic development. How can agents of violence such as the MILF, MNLF and prominent political clans (with their own private armies) be accepted as political representatives and respond to the preferences of their constituents, particularly when they are not genuinely held accountable to their constituents by formal measures such as impeachment?

Descriptive Representation

‘Descriptive representation’ (Pitkin 1967; Young 1986; Young 2000; Mansbridge 2003) refers to the extent a representative resembles those being represented. In Southern Philippines, the assessment of the descriptive representation of the Muslim population answers the question of how the interests and experiences of the Muslim political elite resemble the interests and experiences of the Muslim constituents. As there are huge gaps between the interests of the agents of violence and the interests of the Muslim population, a “bridging process” is necessary to facilitate the transition of armed groups to political parties. The absence of a political arm in the insurgency limits the initiation of the deliberative process necessary to enhance social capital. Furthermore, when alternatives to the rebel groups are themselves agents of violence (political warlords) instead of political parties such as the case in Southern Philippines, deliberation becomes impossible. Gaps are then filled by local NGOs. Local NGOs however are usually confronted by violence both from the Philippine military and Muslim rebel groups, and also lack the financial capacity to voice the interests of the Muslim population. Furthermore, some NGOs are merely used by agents of violence to pursue vested interests.

The limitation of the descriptive representation of the Bangsamoro in the Philippines is defined by insurgent groups and political warlords who do not always pursue the interests of the Bangsamoro. The motivations of these representatives are not always transparent, and they are not always held accountable for their actions, which promotes graft and corruption. In several cases, their positions are incompatible with the positions of the Bangsamoro. The culture of impunity

in the context of deficient accountability aggravates the lack of descriptive representation of the Bangsamoro.

Symbolic Representation

The 'symbolic representation' (Pitkin 1967) of the Bangsamoro pertains to the ways that a representative stands for the represented in front of other represented groups in an integrated political system. The degree of legitimacy that the representative enjoys depends on how this representative is able to project their interests to the other groups. In Muslim Mindanao, because representatives are considered to be agents of violence, the symbols projected to the others deter acceptance. Furthermore, it should be noted that within the Muslim population, internal coherence has been challenged by the fragmentation of the group into several ethno-linguistic and religious subgroups (e.g., secular, Islamist) , blurring the boundaries constituting Bangsamoro interest.

While the secular MNLF is mainly supported by the Sulu-based Tausug group, the secular MNLF-Reformed Bangsa Moro Liberation Organization is supported by the Maranaos, and the Islamist MILF has gained support from the Maguindanaos. As discussed above, the symbolic representation of the Muslims in the state-wide framework determines their degree of participation in the society at large. Furthermore, symbolic representation also refers to the use of symbols, pictures, images, signs and ceremonies to imply the 'belongingness' of the constituents to the state. However, when symbols are solely determined by armed groups, the represented group will most likely not enjoy acceptance from the society at large.

Only lately were symbolic actions introduced in the country, such as the signing of the Republic Act No. 9177 in 2002 that created the Eid ul-Fitr (Feast of Breaking the Fast), as public holiday which was enacted in deference to the Muslim community in the Philippines. Furthermore, discussion about the inclusion of the ninth ray of the sun of the Philippine flag (representing the ARMM), implies the recognition of the Muslim resistance to the Spanish colonial rule. The rays of the sun in the flag represent the 8 provinces that led to the uprising against Spain. The representation of the Muslim population in societal symbols such as these is a precondition for their integration. However, such symbolic representations of Muslims in the Philippines remain limited.

Substantive Representation

Finally, the ‘substantive representation’ (Pitkin 1967; Sabl 2002; Hardin 2004) refers to the policies advanced by the representatives that are allegedly in the best interests of the constituents. Substantive representation implies that representatives advocating for specific groups can reconcile their personal background with the interests of the represented. The landscape of the Moro elite is not conducive to substantive representation. Powerful warlord clans produce a political landscape for the Moro elite to create policies that bring huge revenues and state-of-the art weaponry through violence and electoral fraud (Torres 2007; Lara 2010). Political offices are often awarded to perpetrators of violent activity. Political offices are appealing to warlord because seats in the Philippine congress and senate, as well as in local offices, offer access to the so-called “pork barrel” (officially termed as the Priority Development Assistance Fund) which allocates millions of pesos to legislators. Through the recent “Napoles Pork Barrel Scam”, where various senators and congressmen were found diverting funds to 82 ghost NGOs between 2006 and 2011, totalling an amounting of 10 billion Pesos (approximately 172 million Euro), it becomes obvious how vulnerable political offices are to corruption (Ubac 2013; Carvajal 2013). Furthermore, substantive representation of Muslim Mindanao is undermined by the new type of civil war economy (*Bürgerkriegsökonomie*), where warlords hold power through their control of a vast, illegal and secretive economy.

As Lara (2010) concludes, political legitimacy in Muslim Mindanao is given to entrepreneurs of violence whose main interest is not to protect people’s rights or to provide basic welfare services. Generally, people in Mindanao, as well as in the whole of the Philippines, rarely depend on the government for welfare services such as health and education. Legitimacy is drawn from their capacity to provide protection and revenue to fellow clan members. In this political environment, potential political alternatives to these agents of violence are impeded in their assumption of political roles. Over the last decade, peaceful and moderate Muslims are leaving the ARMM. Some of them have established communities outside Muslim Mindanao or have left the country. It is estimated that over a million Muslims live outside Mindanao (Rasul-Bernardo 2006), inhibiting political transition in the area.

The political representation of the Muslim population, both within the ARMM and within the state-wide framework, is distorted by system-structural imbalances and conditions preventing political transformation. Identity conflicts have protracted violence and produced new agents of violence who demand and attain legitimacy, dislodging moderate elite Muslims from positions of political power. While the Bangsamoro insurgency aims to reach a new social contract, the

lack of a socio-political arm of the insurgency means that the Bangsamoro insurgency fails to achieve effective political representation.

2.2.4.2 Anti-Muslim Bias

Pulse Asia was commissioned in March 2005 by the Human Development Network (HDN) to conduct a survey on anti-Muslim bias in the Philippines. The organization published the Philippine Human Development Report analyzing the perception of adult Filipinos towards Muslims. Pulse Asia interviewed 1,200 Filipino adults asking 16 questions. Four dealt with “proximity”, that is, whether a respondent was willing to have a male Muslim for a boarder (tenant) in his or her home, hire a female Muslim domestic help, hire a male Muslim as a worker, or live near a Muslim community. Five questions focused on stereotypical images of Muslims. Specifically, the respondents were asked if they agreed with statements suggesting that Muslims are oppressive to women, prone to run amok, hate non-Muslims, are terrorists or extremists, or do not consider themselves as Filipinos. The 15th question was about the respondents’ sources of information on Muslims, and the last question asked the respondent to name a group that he or she associates with the word “terrorism”.

The findings of the survey suggest that testimonies of anti-Muslim bias are not imagined or isolated. Only 10 per cent of the respondents surveyed would employ or hire someone with a Muslim-sounding name (male border 3 per cent, female domestic helper 7 per cent, male worker 4 per cent). The majority of Filipinos think that Muslims are probably more prone to run amok (55 per cent). Around 47 per cent believe Muslims are probably terrorists or extremists and 44 per cent believe that Muslims secretly hate non-Muslims.

This negative image of Muslims is possibly due to the fact that less than 15 per cent of the respondents had direct dealings with Muslims. An identity cleavage functions as a separating line between public spheres. When asked about their sources of information about Muslims, only 14 per cent could cite their own personal experiences of Muslims. Television was the main source of information (78 per cent), followed by radio (44 per cent) and newspapers (29 per cent).

2.3 The Construction of the Bangsamoro Identity – The Collective Memory of Misrecognition

The Philippine case offers an interesting insight into how “identity markers” are used to mobilize people in a self-sustaining conflict cycle. Identity provides armed

groups the resources (e.g., legitimacy) to assume the role of “entrepreneur” selling inclusion (operationalized as security and protection) in exchange for loyalty and participation in the “occupying” Philippine state. Although categories such as religion and ethnicity are not the only sources of conflict, the political instrumentalization of differences leads to “*mutually incompatible behaviors*” (Boulding 1962, p.5).

The politicization of differences implies the logic of marginalization at a cultural level. The culture of “otherness” is perceived as an imminent threat to the integrity of one’s own collective culture (*Lebenskultur*), and the foundation of common weal on one’s own terms (Meyer 2002, pp.35–38). Differences are then perceived as threats leading to their securitization. Peaceful diversity depends very much on the behavior of the dominant group, and this group defines the threshold of tolerable differences. On one hand, identities are constructed through primordial ties and kinship connections in which members themselves are responsible for shaping group perceptions and actions. On the other, identities are also constructed through experiences of violence and marginalization manifested to a significant degree in reduced individual responsibility for determining the group’s perceptions and actions because these perceptions are already predetermined by those on the outside. Identity therefore is to a significant degree exogenous.

Interestingly, as Friedrich Hegel (1941, p.182) notes, it is not only the emerging nation that undergoes a process of self-consciousness. The dominant group also experiences the same process of self-consciousness. Hence, the process that establishes self-consciousness is self-enforcing. A perception is established where the identity of complete self-consciousness must be achieved through the negation of an equivalent identity in the other to justify its own cause. At its most extreme, this suggests that the only way to ensure self-preservation is the destruction of the other. This is the point where identity is securitized.

The securitization of identity leads to the promulgation of the Hegelian ‘master-slave’ dialectic in the power relations between the dominant group and the minority. This dialectic entails a relation of domination and subordination. It is within this master-slave dialectic that misrecognition is legitimized through the assumed inferiority of the “slave” within the predominant norms of identity as determined by the “master.” As the identity-building process of the emerging minority unfolds, the group eventually gains the understanding of itself as an independent subject, but is still subordinated by an oppressive power. The consciousness of being deprived of its autonomy leads to the claims of recognition either in form of independence or full participation.

The Theorization of the Bangsamoro Identity – Functionality and Narratives

Following the development of self-consciousness, the mobilization of the “*Bangsamoro*” led to its political organization. Since then, it is able to pose a legitimate and efficient defence mechanism to the violence posed by the Philippine state, and Philippine society at large. It is worth asking whether the construction of the Bangsamoro identity, which led to the mobilization of its members, was also the main factor preventing a full-scale genocide in the Philippines (Penetrante 2012). Genocide cases such as those in Rwanda and Armenia may have occurred due to the lack of armed opposition capable of resisting the coercive force of the perpetrators. Thus, the mobilization of the Bangsamoro may have effectively offered a defense from violence.

The hypothetical identity narratives of the Bangsamoro (Moslem people) in Southern Philippines can be summarized as the following:

I am a Bangsamoro², deprived of our rights in our own homelands by the occupying Philippine state.

The hypothetical identity narratives of the Muslim population in Southern Philippines are expressed in academic literature about their culture, including contemporary art, music and film (Kreuzer & Werning 2007; Bara 2013). This self-representation offers a personal (“I am”) narrative exploring the contemporary experience of marginalization as well as their demand for recognition (“deprived of our rights”). The narratives involve modalities of self-awareness (“own homelands”), implying the perceived disassociation from the “society at large”, and the historical event representing the cultural trauma (“occupying the Philippine state”). For instance, the MILF states that the Moro history is a history of struggle (Hashim 1998). Memory plays an important role in the way in which the relationship to the “soil” is conceptualized (“own homelands”) (Roudometof 2008, p.189).

The consciousness of group identity is in cognitive terms maintained by cultural trauma (Alexander 2004). Cultural trauma occurs when members of the collectivity feel that they have been “subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (Alexander

² The name “Bangsamoro” was actually first used by Muslim leaders to differentiate themselves from the Christian Filipinos and denote the citizens of the “new” nation in the course of the popular mobilization. However, though Bangsamoro is generally made up of Muslims, there are Christian Bangsamoro as well as Christian armed members of the MNLF or Muslim paramilitary forces affiliated with the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) (Bück 2007, p.101).

2004, p.1). Cultural trauma is the manifestation of a ‘tipping point’ that permanently shifts self-perception. Relations between groups are now incapable of returning to the conditions that existed previously.

The experience of trauma can be understood as a socio-psychological process that defines a painful injury to the collectivity, establishes a victim, attributes responsibility, and distributes the ideal and material consequences (Alexander 2004, p.24). Cultural trauma, therefore, is the basis on which a new understanding of how social groups interact is developed, to create new and binding understandings of social responsibility (Alexander 2004).

Cultural trauma presupposes a previously existing group with a stable sense of identity. This is not problematic in cases of identity groups established through primordial ties and kinship connections. The Bangsamoro as a group is a complicated entity. Prior to the violence of the 1960s, the term “Bangsamoro” was not existent in the sense that there was no united group with coherent attributes in the Muslim population. Loyalty was given rather to groups based on language lines and not to groups based on religion. Instead, language was the main motor of identity.

The event that triggered the group-building process was the so-called *Jabidah* massacre on the night of March 18, 1968. The Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos ordered soldiers to infiltrate Sabah in his quest to occupy the Malaysian territory claimed by the Philippines. When 28 Muslim soldiers refused, they were massacred. This event is regarded as the causal event behind the modern Moro insurgencies in the Southern Philippines.

The mass violence in the Southern Philippines does not accord with any state ideology or express intention to destroy Muslims as a group, but it was successful in marginalizing them, reducing them to a minority status in their own homelands and ignoring their claims to participation in the larger political system. There were no measures to preserve the homelands of the Muslims who did not have concepts of land titles, because they regarded land as “*God’s property*”.

Cultural trauma implies the importance of history, because it permits the justification of some forms of resistance (Honneth 1995) to the status quo. Muslim separatist movements in the Philippines seek to justify their armed struggle more by reference to the past than by religion. Muslims tend to refer to present and past injustices as legitimisation of their pursuit of independence rather than claiming that the struggle as a “religious duty”. Past and present injustices maintain nostalgia for an embryonic state, suggesting a ‘golden age’ attracts popular support (Gilquin 2005, p.63). The romanticism of the ancient sultanate of Sulu and Maguindanao reminds Muslims of a happier past which should be re-established.

From the perspective of broader society, such groups are minorities that need to be assimilated or integrated. Subgroups, however, see themselves as “emerging

nations” and demand equal political participation. The principle of national sovereignty and territorial integrity is paradoxically blocking the emergence of “new nations.” Historical memory has provided the production and reproduction of these newly formed identities (Lowenthal 1985), suggesting the political use of history. However, not all will eventually use violence as a means of gaining independence. An outburst of violence can be prevented, for example, when the society at large does not see bargaining as threat.

The demonization (Faure 1995) of the minority group impedes bargaining, because the minority group is then perceived as a threat by society at large. When the other party is assumed to be the problem, negotiation will not be integrative enough for a mutually acceptable decision to be reached. In the Philippines, other minority groups experiencing forms of marginalization and isolation were able to achieve some power-sharing mechanisms through autonomous regulation of their areas. For instance, more than twelve ethno-linguistic groups of indigenous people in the Cordillera region, comprised of the five landlocked provinces of Abra, Benguet, Mountain, Kalinga-Apayao, and Ifugao, successfully achieved self-determination as a form of recognition.

Violence was about to erupt in 1986 with the creation of the Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA), when the former dictator was removed through a popular revolt. The newly elected democratic government of President Corazon Aquino promised more “democratic space”, and pushed for the Cordillera autonomy through the creation of the Cordillera Autonomous Region (now Cordillera Administrative Region) (CAR) (Malanes 2007). The re-establishment of peaceful relations between the ruling national group and the ethno-linguistic groups from the Cordillera region promoted deescalation and management of the conflict. The goal (self-determination) was framed in “positive-sum” terms. The CPLA, unlike other armed groups, immediately joined the Cordillera Bodong Administration (CBA) and made peace with the government through the *Mt. Data Peace Accord* of 1986. Ultimately, the CPLA was able to effectively transform itself into a political entity in the region.

As implied by the definition of conflict by Boulding (1962), Stanger (1967), and Hammond (1965), goals may be “perceived” as being incompatible, but are not always mutually exclusive. Goals as perceptions that can be “manipulated” through a detailed understanding of the interests and needs behind such goals (Bartos & Wehr 2002). However, behavior such as violence is negative-sum, because one either experiences violence or not. For the other actor, the use of violence is the preferred instrument in the elimination of threats. Particularly when combined with securitization, violence becomes a moral imperative. Although threats are

also explicable in cognitive terms, the implications of such instruments have become *ends*, therefore, the main challenge for resolving violent identity conflicts is how to eliminate the sense of threat.

Subordination and recognition are at first glance incompatible. The incompatibility of identity politics is determined by the contestation of imagined and/or real narratives (histories), and the contestation of contemporary issues. The contemporary political, cultural, and diplomatic struggle for recognition in the form of power-sharing mechanisms and autonomy is a “struggle within the premises of particular national narratives” (Roudometof 2006, p.7).

The direct comparison between competing national narratives is inevitable, and may lead to violence when the dominant group sees its existence and privileges threatened. In Southern Philippines, Muslims mythologize their forceful incorporation into the Philippine state that occurred during the state-building process. Such a narrative legitimizes claims for independence on the basis of the principle of self-determination. The society at large, on the other hand, claims sees Muslims as responsible for bombings both in Manila and in the Southern Philippines, and mythologises their pronounced gun culture, their dishonesty in trade, and their aggressive way of life (Penetrante 2012). Interestingly, such narratives found acceptance during and after the outburst of violence in the 60s, as well as during the series of bombings in Manila between 2000 and 2004.

Lowenthal (1985) pinpoints the relationship between memory and history. He argues that a process of selection from the pool of past experiences occurs for specific reasons, including the legitimization of strategic measures such as claims for independence. Complementing the contestation of narratives is the contestation of contemporary issues. At a societal level, the “dysfunctional identity” of the minority groups as defined by the narratives of the dominant group, is reaffirmed by contemporary issues of dominance. The society at large does not acknowledge the marginalization of the members of the subgroup as such, but as necessities behind the notions of nationalism, universalism, centralism and republicanism (Sidanius & Pratto 1999).

Policies and institutional structures reflect the notion that deviation from uniformity and the accepted value system is a threat to national sovereignty and the integrity of the state. Broader society dissuades others from challenging established norms through real and symbolic sanctions. Sanctions become necessary to ensure “unity” by leveling differences. This practice is likely to be intensified if such minority groups are identified with rival neighboring states (e.g. Malaysia vs. Philippines, Georgia vs. Russia).

From the perspective of the subgroup, contemporary issues of marginalization are manifested by social comparison (Penetrante 2012). The subgroup per-

ceives the current society at large not as a source of protection, but rather of deprivation. While law is perceived by broader society as a vehicle for order and justice, for the emerging nation, it is merely an instrument of oppression and indifference (*Gleichgültigkeit*). As Anstey (2006) argues, perceptions of “relative deprivation” or “unfair discrimination” create fertile ground for mobilization. In light of the long history of oppression and marginalization, the emerging nation wants to address grievances, and considers this their moral right. The society at large sees this very same process as a threat to their own identity, and hence the state as a whole.

The struggle for recognition is accurately conceptualized by the social and political thought of Hegel, who stresses that recognition is defined as the circumstance where full participation is not only assumed, but actually implemented (Hegel 1977). As Hegel argues, the process of identity-formation always lacks the kind of equality and transparency that would facilitate guiding. Nancy Fraser (2003) asserts that in such a circumstance of misrecognition, certain subject groups will be devalued and prevented from becoming full members of the society.

2.4 Conclusion – Initiating a Theoretical Debate in the Philippines

The Philippines needs a more vibrant theoretical discourse around the conflict in the Southern Philippines. This claim does not mean that there is no academic community in the country addressing the issues surrounding Mindanao. This project however claims that regular communication between academic scholars should be institutionalized in order to establish an academic discourse around the conflict in Mindanao. Current research on the nature of the conflict is dominated by descriptive works that mainly refer to the particulars of the conflict but fails to address how and why the conflict developed. Moreover, these works do not really acknowledge each other and therefore discourse is not promoted.

The historical experience and academic tradition of the Philippines impedes such a discourse. For example, the independence of universities and other institutions of higher learning in the Philippines cannot always be guaranteed by the state. The majority of universities in the Philippines are run by the Catholic Church. Without claiming that church-run universities are incapable of participating in robust discourse, these universities tend to merely reproduce well-established knowledge and not really explore new dialogues. A provocative claim that the author of this project makes is that church-run universities and other institutions of higher learning in the country are not really interested in engaging in independent academic research. Furthermore, these universities exercise latent bias

against provocative theoretical claims which are perceived as being incompatible with the teachings of the Church.

In addition, academic scholars from non-religious universities are impeded from participating in academic discourse, because of a lack of an institutionalized communication platform. Furthermore, the focus of public universities in the Philippines tends to be on teaching rather than researching. This is indicated by the scarcity of local journals and academic/university publishers in the country, as well as the heavy teaching load of professors, preventing them from conducting research. Textbooks used in Philippine universities are usually imported from abroad. The Philippine state should furthermore refrain from intervening in discourse. Academic scholars representing provocative theoretical notions are quickly branded as “anarchists” or “communists.” They tend to become targets of extra-judicial killings and intimidation. The high level of politicization and securitization of academic discourse in the country impedes its development.

This chapter poses a challenge to the local academic community in the country: to initiate independent and tolerant academic discourse. This is necessary to identify underlying causes of the identity conflict in the Philippines and to find measures to resolve it.

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