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Master Thesis

Conflict in the Mollucans: merely religious?

A comprehensive study on identity dynamics in violent
conflict

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¹ Traditional Moluccan emblem, for explanation see preface.

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Summary

This master thesis aims to understand identity dynamics in the Mollucan conflict. Since this conflict is not the most known conflict, chapter 1 attempts to provide some insides in the historical background of this conflict by briefly introducing some parts of Indonesia's national history. This background is necessary since this conflict can not be understood without understanding this specific context. In short the Mollucan conflict took place between 1999 and 2002 when a peace agreement, Malino II, came into effect. In reality however this did not effectively end the conflict as violence continued until 2004 with recurring periods of violence until 2011. The process of reconciliation has been going on ever since the peace agreement and steady progress has become visible since then. It is important to note that this case covers a non-Western topic and that is relevant to understand this research project.

The Indonesian national political situation since independence has seen two presidents that had quite the autocratic nature, until democratic reforms that started in 1998, when the Suharto regime collapsed. This period in Indonesian history is crucial for understanding why this conflict took place as it along with the Asian economic crisis of 1997 are the most important structural factors. The third important structural factor that is important is globalisation. Globalisation is a development that has set several smaller developments in motion, such as the democratization and the resurgence of religion.

The introduction also provides the research question, which aims to understand the identity issues in the Moluccan conflict. In doing so this research is based on the assumption that in every conflict there are three distinctive phases on identity, a pre-conflict identity discourse, a conflict identity discourse and a post-conflict identity discourse. This research project attempts to understand the transition between the three phases, but also the three discourses itself with their different identity aspects.

In the Theoretical chapter several different debates from the literature will be portrayed. This chapter has two distinctive parts. The first part talks about academic debates, featuring several of the more prominent ideas on identity in conflict situations. The second part of this chapter talks about the literature that covers the Moluccan conflict to see what factors are important according to them and to see which identity aspects will be mentioned. At the end of this chapter the conceptual model will be presented.

In the methodological chapter it will be explained that this research project takes a phenomenological research design and uses it together with a grounded theory approach. This qualitative research method aims to better understand the previously talked about identity dynamics. This chapter talks about how the 18 interviews where conducted, with whom and how they will be analysed. In figure 2, a table is provided that portrays all the respondents, when the interview was conducted and what their specific background is. Most interviews have been conducted in *Bahasa Indonesia*, The Indonesian language, with some exceptions that have been conducted in English.

The contextual chapter is crucial to understand some distinctive dynamics at play in the Mollucan geographical area. This chapter is divided in two parts, with the first covering the geographical build-up of the Moluccans more in depth, important since this master thesis covers a geography topic. In the second part of this the 'Adat' system will be explained at length since it is central in the reconciliation phase or the transition between the conflict identity discourse and the post-conflict identity discourse. To state that this traditional, legislative, governing and cultural system is complex is an understatement. This system focusses on the heart of the Moluccan identity and in some ways differs from the Western development model that was once seen as the only development model of modern

societies. The tension between Western developments that had their influence on this conflict and a different unorthodox solution definitely has a subtle presence in this master thesis.

The empirical chapter covers the data that came from the different interviews. This chapter consists of four parts. The first part briefly covers the outbreak of the conflict and how identity played a role there. The second part focussing on the emergence of a conflict identity discourse and the creation of two separate identity groups based on religious affiliation, the Christian and the Muslim groups. This part explains how different aspects of identity became part of either of the groups. These different aspects will be covered thematically to keep it understandable for the reader. This part also talks about how and through which elements these two identities were reinforced. After that part 3 will talk about facilitation of group identities through government and media. Part 4 focusses on the next transition, from a conflict identity discourse into a post-identity discourse. Which elements were used in this part to move on from conflict and focus on a common identity.

The analytical chapter will explain how the different factors and elements that originated in data should be understood. This chapter is divided into two parts and sets the goal to provide an analytical perspective on the two shifts in identity discourse, from pre-conflict to conflict and from conflict to post-conflict. This chapter has been set up this way to fall in line with the two separate developments that took place around this violent conflict and to provide perspective on the separate contrasting developments that came from the data. In the end an adapted conceptual model is provided that takes into account the results from this research project.

The conclusion will then reintroduce the research question and answer the main question through the sub-questions. This research project has some clear answers on identity dynamics in this particular violent conflict. Through the frames that have been built it comes up with an understandable view on identity dynamics. The conceptual model that is used for this master thesis is both unique and simplistic and very applicable on this case study.

The reflection has two purposes. First it talks about possible bias of the researcher and explains possible shortcomings of this research project. Second it comes up with suggestions on further research both in the context of this violent conflict as well as a broader approach to conflict in general.

Preface

The following master thesis is a result of the master program of Human Geography, Conflicts, Territories and Identities. To compile this thesis I have spent over six months in Indonesia in several places to conduct interviews and gather data for my thesis. The thesis will be about identity dynamics surrounding the Moluccan conflict that took place from January 1999 to February 2002, and officially ended with the Malino II peace agreement. However recurring periods of violence would take place until 2011. The title of this thesis, 'Conflict in the Moluccans, merely religious?' is about the fact that this highly complicated conflict is often reduced to a religious conflict. In this thesis it will be explained that there is much more to this story. The two red symbols on the front page are local symbols that refer to the rays of the sun. These symbols have a powerful meaning in the local culture which plays a central role in this particular conflict. This thesis has been put together as a student from the Radboud University in cooperation with Unika Soegijapranata in Semarang and the Heka Leka foundation in Ambon. Since I spent much time in Indonesia before the research I was able to implement interviews conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, and therefore use local literature as well. The following thesis is a result of a long stay in Indonesia where I managed to obtain an understanding of the specific dynamics at play in Kota Ambon.

Before I start with my master thesis I would like to thank those involved. I would like to thank my thesis supervisor that helped me with ideas and feedback. I would like to thank the Heka Leka Foundation for helping with arranging the interviews, being present to translate, providing a workspace and giving feedback on my ideas. I want to thank the persons I interviewed for their participation and their openness. I would like to thank Ms. Hesti from the University Unika Soegijapranata for her help and feedback.

Introduction – A comprehensive overview of a complicated conflict

Identity is a very complicated subject that affects all humans in one way or another. Identity is a very strong concept or idea that everybody consciously and unconsciously carries with them. Identity is a concept that binds people together or can divide them indefinitely. In the Moluccan conflict identity played a major role during the outbreak of the conflict. How can a society that was the example of interreligious harmony burst into conflict? Conflict can be a consequence of structural factors that cannot be grasped or seen, the major dynamics that take place regionally, nationally or even globally. However identity and the factors on the ground will be used to explain or justify violent conflict and is therefore a key factor in modern conflict. In the case of this research project the subject will be a non-Western case study. It aims to explain which shifts in identity took place that resulted in violent conflict and made it possible to move on towards peace. To make this conflict more understandable some introduction is necessary to better understand the context of the conflict that is covered in this research project.

On the 19th of January in the year 1999 in the aftermath of the Eid al-Fitr celebration violence broke out in Kota Ambon, the capital of the province 'Maluku' in Indonesia. It is widely believed that an argument between an Ambonese bus driver and a Bugis passenger ignited the conflict. The Ambonese bus driver had a Christian background while the Bugis passenger was Muslim. Violence spread to multiple areas of the city, resulting in dozens of casualties and several houses being burnt. After a few days of fighting between different groups the violence spread quickly to other islands in the Moluccan archipelago. After several years of violent turmoil, the conflict was officially resolved in 2002 with the Malino II accords but practically saw recurring violence until 2004. Even later in 2011 new riots took place after a motorbike accident where a Muslim driver died in a Christian neighbourhood. New riots with several fatalities led to the fear that widespread conflict would break out again. This incident shows that in several instances the religious background of a person involved in an accident or crime can trigger new incidents. The conflict is often framed as a religious conflict, especially by other ethnicities and areas in Indonesia. Around 10.000 people did not survive the conflict, with many still missing and about 350.000 people being internally displaced (IDP's.) After the conflict a strict segregation between Muslim and Christian communities came into effect, lasting until this day. This segregation is the reason many IDP's could not return to their homes, having to build a new life somewhere else. The Moluccan society right now sees many examples of peacebuilding and in many ways have moved on from the past. However, the segregation is still very visible in Kota Ambon, mostly by the presence of large houses of worship, like the big mosque near the harbour and big churches on the other side of the city. The conflict resulted in a situation where the Moluccans are still less developed in the departments of education and economic growth compared to the rest of Indonesia.

The year of 2019, the year when this research project was carried out, is 20 years since the outbreak of the conflict in the Moluccans. Many aspects of life in Indonesia have changed since then, new technologies, political developments and economic progress have changed the situation. Indonesia has transitioned into one of the largest democracies in the world and faces new challenges. It is the right time to come to this area and see in what way the current dynamics are at play in the Ambonese society. This includes the current process of reconciliation as well. This master thesis will mostly focus on the identity aspects of the Ambonese conflict and aims to understand which identity shift took place to take the pre-conflict situation to violent conflict and which identity shift happened to move on to

the reconciliation phase. Identity is a very complicated concept, which covers essentially all parts of individual humans as well as groups and communities. During the thesis most relevant aspects of identity will be covered in order to explain the function of identity in violent conflicts.

To understand the Moluccans better it is necessary to provide a quick overview of the historical developments in the area. This overview can provide context to the conflict that will be covered in this research project. During the Dutch colonial era many Moluccan people served in the Dutch Royal Indies Army (KNIL). This set them apart during independence times. Most of the voices for independence came from Sumatra and Java during that time. Many parts of the east of Indonesia on the contrary were mostly Christian and not so outspoken for independence. The independence time saw many Moluccan people supporting the Dutch government. This resulted in many former members of the KNIL being expelled from Indonesia when the country gained independence in December 1949. After the independence of Indonesia, the Moluccans wanted to separate and become their own independent country, as promised by the Dutch. This always created tension between the Moluccans and the central government in Jakarta. The first two Indonesian presidents, Soekarno and Suharto were quite authoritarian. After President Suharto's rule came to an end in 1998 after massive protests, a democratic transformation was set into motion. During these two presidents the ideas of Pancasila were followed, which consist of several aspects but the major ones being religious tolerance and acceptance of the plurality of ethnicity and culture within Indonesia. After the fall of President Suharto the ideology of Pancasila was loosened, some say abandoned. The ideology of Pancasila was part of the Indonesian society since independence and basically incorporated the idea of 'unity in diversity'. After this time, the rise of more conservative Muslim groups that aim for Indonesia to be a Muslim country with Islam as its national identity became visible. This development continues until now in Indonesian politics and creates tension between the east of Indonesia which is mostly Christian and the west of Indonesia with a majority Muslim population.

While the first 40 years of Indonesian independence only saw two presidents, the next five years would see three presidents. This period of instability where the government lost its authoritarian character meant that many conflicts that were suppressed during those years now ignited. Many ethnic and religious minorities throughout the archipelago were targeted. Several areas in the east were striving towards independence since they felt ethnically or culturally different from the rest of Indonesia. One of these areas was East-Timor, which successfully seceded. In this context the military which was a strong stabilizing factor before 1999 desperately tried to maintain their position of power. Since power was less centralized many military units were not entirely impartial but, in several cases, either stood by or joined the conflicts at the time. After 2004 with President Yudhoyono a new time of stability started. He would be president from 2004 until 2014. After 2014 President Joko Widodo took over who again won the elections in 2019 for a second term as president of Indonesia. He is known as the more moderate president, but in his second term he moves more towards the conservative Islamic rhetoric. Recently several changes of the law have been suggested including to forbid sex outside of marriage and criticizing the president to give an example. These bills were met with massive protests by mostly students, which resulted in those bills not passing parliament with a very slight margin. This brief historical build up is necessary to understand the current situation in Ambon, national developments in Indonesia are heavily linked to the Moluccans. Any publication covering the Moluccan conflict is not complete without understanding or mentioning the national situation. The developments on the national level are heavily linked to developments on a more regional scale.

A short overview of the geographical build-up of the Moluccans will be included in the contextual chapter to make clear where the area is located within Indonesia. It is crucial to understand the geographical relations between the Moluccans and the political and economic centre of Indonesia in

the national capital Jakarta on the island of Java. In 1999 the Moluccans were divided into two separate provinces, namely 'Maluku Utara' (North Maluku) and 'Maluku'. This research project will be focussed mostly on the capital city of Kota Ambon together with the surrounding communities located in the province of Maluku. The city of Kota Ambon is located on the island of Ambon, arguably in the geographical centre of the province called 'Maluku'. In further chapters the name 'the Moluccans' is used when referring to the area that includes both the provinces of 'Maluku' and 'Maluku Utara'. When talking about the cultural aspects Moluccan culture in general as a term will be mentioned. The Moluccan culture is diverse but contains several aspects that are valid for all the Moluccan islands. In what way these cultural aspects are important will be explained in a later chapter. Limiting the research project to Kota Ambon and surroundings has two main reasons. The first reason is that identity dynamics between different populations groups with their own ethnic and religious backgrounds should be very visible in this area since it is the capital. Most areas located outside the city people still live in very traditional communities that are either Christian or Muslim which means that identity issues are less visible in those areas. Kota Ambon attracts many people from outside the area that migrate there to attend education, look for job opportunities or to meet with family members. Kota Ambon also acts as an economic hub in the area where a large influx of immigrants from other parts of Indonesia changed the social dynamics in the city. The second reason to limit this research project to Kota Ambon is mostly practical. Including many other communities (on other islands) would be interesting, but communities are far away from each other. Logistical challenges through transport would therefore compromise the research project. Other areas will be mentioned sporadically mostly to put them into contrast with the main urban area. The next paragraphs will provide an overview of the goals of this research project, which aspects of the described conflict it will cover and which questions it aims to answer.

Identity shifts: determining the aim and purpose of this research project

The aim of this research project is to understand the shifts in identity discourse throughout the conflict. When analysing a violent conflict three main stages can be identified. These stages are pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict. To each of these stages an identity discourse can be connected. These identity discourses highly influence identity perception and group identity in a given situation and determine how actors involved in the conflict think and behave. These three distinguishable identity discourses are influenced by both structural causes as well as active human involvement. A balance between structure and agency therefore influences the mindset of a society in conflict. This research project focusses on a Non-Western topic specifically, the question is whether this will give new insights on the development of identity throughout the three stages of conflict.

Much of the current research is based on a limited number of cases studies such as the Yugoslavian civil wars, the Rwandan genocide and the Israeli-Palestine conflict. In these case studies identity takes a centre stage in the conflict. After the end of the Cold War a new phase of history emerged where identity conflicts within states led to hectic violent conflict between communities. To better understand why this happens and how to prevent it, or how to steer away from conflict when it has happened are still crucial question marks in our current scientific and societal understanding of these events. A limited use of case studies can lead to identifying dynamics that might not be universal. To broaden the current understanding of these identity dynamics it is crucial to incorporate more diverse conflicts, to see in what way the identity dynamics play a role in a different case study.

This research project will open the scientific debate by bringing a new case study to the table that has its own unique background. The cultural and geographical background of the Moluccan conflict is vastly different from some of the afore mentioned case studies. This particular case study is in identity

dynamics comparable to other case studies where several groups based on ethnicity or religious identity clashed, however in Ambon different dynamics are a factor as well.

The goal of this research project is to add to the current scientific debate surrounding the shifts of identity discourses during violent conflict, like in the cases of Yugoslavia and Rwanda. To better understand these dynamics this research project is to understand the dynamics around identity to add an analytical perspective on this topic. Identity issues around this conflict had a major impact and it is important to understand them in order to provide more perspective on this conflict. A different case study can add fresh blood to a debate that is too reliant on other case studies. For the scientific debate it is therefore necessary to get access to data from a new case study to have more to build on when talking about general identity dynamics surrounding the conflict. Therefore, the aim of this specific research project is to shine more light on the shift in identity discourses that made this conflict possible and that helped in the process of reconciliation. The main research question will therefore be about understanding the dynamics while the sub questions will focus on the different aspects of this identity shift. The main research question is the following:

Recognizing the importance of identity discourses in violent conflicts: in which way did identity dynamics through identity discourses contribute to the outbreak of the violent conflict in Kota Ambon in 1999 and in which way did these dynamics contribute in the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding after the violent conflict?

To better structure this research project this question can be divided into several smaller sub-questions that focus on one of the aspects posed in the main research question.

Which aspects of identity played a role in the initial identity shift from a pre-conflict identity discourse to a conflict identity discourse and therefore contributed to the outbreak of the conflict?

Which aspects of identity played a role in the second identity shift from a conflict identity discourse to a post-conflict identity discourse and therefore contributed to the process of reconciliation?

In what way did actors such as the media and local organisations have a role in actively shape these discourses?

To answer the questions posed in the previous paragraphs there are five chapters that will follow up on the current one. The first chapter will give an overview of the current academic debate, both the broader debate on identity in violent conflict as well as the literature overview containing research on the Moluccan conflict. This chapter provides a conceptual model based on the literature as well. The second chapter will elaborate on the methodology, explaining in what way this research project gathered empirical data. The third chapter will give some context on the Moluccan geography and cultural system. The fourth chapter contains the findings gathered from the empirical data. The last chapter analyses the data and draws conclusions from the findings. Based on these conclusions an adapted conceptual model is included at the end of this chapter.

Scientific Relevance

This research project follows up on the idea of Antony Oberschall, who came up with the concept of two frames in identity, the normal frame and the crisis frame.² His research is mostly based on the Balkan conflict and aims to explain why several ethnic groups that lived peacefully before the conflict suddenly were involved in a massive violent clash. However, his model does only explain the outbreak of conflict and does not focus on the conflict resolution part, therefore his model could be seen as insufficient. This research project aims to nuance his ideas and come up with a model that focusses on the three frames of identity around conflict. The model that will be explained in the third part of next chapter uses the term discourse when referring to the different frames. Using the case study of the Moluccan conflict this model will be applied to fully understand the changes in identity in three stages, a pre-conflict discourse, a conflict discourse and a post-conflict discourse.

In the academic debate there has long existed a contrast between universalism and cultural relativism. Fukuyama has mainly focussed on the universality of the Western liberal democratic system³, while Huntington believed in a divided world with clashing between different cultural units.⁴ This longstanding academic debate is applicable on conflict studies as well. In the Moluccan case both Western developments as well as unique local cultural values play a role. This means that this research project tries to find middle ground in this scientific debate.

When focussing specifically on the Moluccan conflict cases study there is a large collection of literature that tries to explain why this conflict happened. These academics focus either on the structural causes of the conflict which make for comprehensive overviews of the developments at the time or mostly focus on the process of reconciliation. The publications of Jon Goss⁵ and Brigit Bräuchler⁶ respectively, are good examples of these two types of publications. However, a comprehensive overview on identity issues that were at play during the Moluccan conflict is still missing. This research project will therefore hit two birds with one stone, coming up with a comprehensive overview of identity aspects in the Moluccan conflict while also using a new model of looking at identity in conflict situations in the first place.

Now that the this research project has been properly introduced, the aims and goals of this research project have been established and an overview of the chapters has been presented, the next chapter will focus on providing an overview of the academic debate and the current ideas on identity in violent conflict. The relevant scientific debates and ideas will be covered and through overview of the scientific debate the current ideas on identity and the ideas that are most relevant to this Non-Western case study will be discussed extensively.

² Anthony Oberschall, 'the manipulation of ethnicity: from ethnic cooperation to violence and war in Yugoslavia', *ethnic and racial studies*, 23:6 (2000).

³ Francis Fukuyama, *The end of history and the last man* (London 1992).

⁴ Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York 1996).

⁵ Jon Goss, *Understanding the "Maluku Wars": Overview of Sources of Communal Conflict and Prospects for Peace*, (Honolulu 2008) 7-39.

⁶ Brigit Bräuchler, *The Cultural Dimension of Peace: Decentralization and Reconciliation in Indonesia*, (2015).

Theoretical chapter – the development of academic identity perspectives in violent conflict

Identity development and the interpretation of identity in Western context

The way identity is connected to conflict has changed over time. Since the Second World War interstate violent conflict is becoming a rare phenomenon. In modern times conflicts are mainly intrastate between several different (armed) groups with different interests.⁷ In the 1990's another trend becomes visible, being the fact that most violent conflicts take place in the Non-Western context. Non-Western in the context of this research project will include all countries that do not have a long history of democracy such as most Western-European and North American countries. These 'modern' conflicts took place after the supposed 'end of history', a Western idea by Francis Fukuyama who thought that after the cold war ended in 1990 the Western way of democracy was the final step in human evolution that would eventually spread to all countries and societies.⁸ This very Western, Hegelian way of thinking may have been too short-sighted and does not take into account the possibility that Non-Western societies may develop in a different way. The 1990's did see many violent conflicts in Non-Western countries where transition towards the Western democratic system did not lead to stability but had a very opposite effect. Identity played a very central role in these conflicts.

There are several identity issues connected to democracy when implemented in the Non-Western context. These can lead to the outbreak of (extreme) intergroup violence in these societies. Several case studies on such conflicts in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda are good examples of violent clashing of two or more conflicting identities. This led to violent confrontations between groups of people resulting in bloody internal conflicts. In both case studies a relatively peaceful situation preceded the conflict until a certain shift in identity discourse when the conflict broke out. Obviously, there were other factors at play as well, such as a weak national government and a democratic transition. The Moluccan case study is another specific cultural area in a non-Western context, however the dynamics of this conflict can broaden the understanding of identity shifts in conflicts. This case study can further improve our understanding in the shifts of discourse in relation to identity within non-Western conflict situations. Looking back to the afore mentioned cases of Yugoslavia and Rwanda where it's clear that in both cases identity issues played a major role. These case studies will be used as a comparison in this research project on identity issues within the Moluccan conflict.

One of the major debates that is not limited to the scientific debate is whether democracy is a long-term stable system that is inherently peaceful. Several downsides of the system can possibly lead to violent conflicts. One of these problems is the fact that new democracies can use identity to get a majority in elections, this strengthening of identity can have a serious impact on these societies. Within other communities in mainly the Global South we have seen several major incidents connected to clashing identities and their respective narratives. In this thesis the development of the debate around identity will be discussed and will include parts on identity politics as well, identity politics is a term coined by Francis Fukuyama and talks about a more and more polarising Western society where (political) identity is becoming a major problem for the survival of democracy in the long run as well.⁹

⁷ Mary Kaldor, 'Chapter 1, 'Introduction', in: M. Kaldor, *New & old wars; organized violence in a global era* (Cambridge 2001) 1-14.

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The end of history and the last man* (London 1992).

⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *Identity, Contemporary Identity politics and the Struggle for Recognition* (London 2018).

The question is whether the development surrounding identity politics and the issues that arise because of this phenomenon are a universal or mostly Western phenomenon.

The first paragraphs of this chapter came up with two concrete issues connected to democracy in both the short and the long run. The problem in the short run is that the development towards a stable democracy is an inherently violent transition. The second major issue that is emerging in stable democracies is that identity politics lead to more and more polarising societies. A separate factor connected to many of the developments in the world currently is globalization. Globalization is heavily linked to democracy, cultural and economic change. Identity and ideas connected to identity whether some are a Western invention or not have had their impacts globally. The world is now in an age where developments move rapidly, globalisation means that wherever on earth we are increasingly more connected. This development of globalization however meets resistance as well. The fear is that globalization will lead to the world having one dominant culture. Is it possible that globalization and transformation of political systems in the non-Western context can lead to violence? In recent history there are several examples of seemingly peaceful societies that suddenly erupt in violence. For this to happen there must be a shift in identity discourse, how does a shift like that take place?

Since there are several examples of societies in development that ignite into conflict we should better understand those processes and how identities change to fit into a conflict frame so we can recognize it and prevent it in the future. The Case study of the Moluccans is not the most known example throughout the world with case studies like former Yugoslavia and Rwanda that take the front stage. These conflicts were in fact in a very similar time period making them very comparable to this case. The Moluccans are a group of islands in the periphery of the largest archipelago in the world, Indonesia. This however does not mean that since they are relatively isolated that they are not involved in global and national developments. Some academics are convinced that global developments are most noticeable in the outskirts instead of the centre. The crisis that took place in the Moluccans still has many implications today. This research project will therefore focus on understanding the shifts in identity that took place that made it possible for the conflict to erupt. This is especially important since this violent conflict took place in an area that was perceived as being the personification of harmony and coexistence and the peacefully living together of several religious traditions.

A second problem that will be addressed is the long-standing question whether democracy is an inherent peaceful system or whether it is in fact a system that can lead to violence. This debate will be covered extensively in the next chapter, however the basics will be mentioned in this paragraph. In the case of the Moluccan conflict this thesis will offer a different perspective on this debate. The idea is that in the west violence and conflict is channelled through a parliamentary democracy but whether this is true in every system is the question. Another tradition of academics beliefs that democracy is a very risky system to implement since it can also have the consequence that different parts of a population organize themselves thoroughly, which can lead to conflict. It is argued however that this can be problematic in a democratic transition period and is not an issue in the long run. In the West however, there is a different development surrounding identity within democracy. This development is mostly described by Fukuyama, and he questions whether the idea that democracy is the most stable in the long run is correct. He describes problems like segregation, polarisation and the clashes of identity. In his vision democracy does not exclude conflict but can lead to conflict through parallel societies emerging in the West. In what way is this applicable to a non-Western case study. The Moluccan conflict took place in a national political transition towards democracy, therefore it is logical to take this question along with this research project.

Identity and violent conflict – exploring the connection between identity issues and violence

This research project therefore aims to better understand identity shifts that take place in conflicts where people start organizing themselves around certain national, ethnic or religious identities. Strong group identities can be both a cause and a consequence of (violent) conflict. When groups organize themselves, they need a solid group identity that is strengthened at the time. Several other identity aspects will overtime be added to the identity and clear boundaries will be set up to determine the 'us' and the 'them'. When these group identities take shape, it is therefore very clear whether someone is part of the group identity or not, in this case these people will be 'othered'. The phenomenon where these group identities become strong has been under review in the scientific community, however mainly with other case studies. An overview of the ideas on identity and identity shifts surrounding modern conflict will be provided in the following paragraphs.

There are several scientific debates that relate to the problem under investigation. In the following paragraphs the different debates will be mentioned shortly before they will be covered more in-dept in this chapter. The most important scientific debate is the one surrounding identity before the start of conflict. Is identity fixed, is it shaped or is it used by the context of events? In this research project a new case study will be used to give new impulse to the debate that has been going on since the 1990's on how to view identity. In the debate a lot of times the same case studies will be used over and over again, and a new case study of a lesser known conflict can give the debate convincing input and should lead to patterns emerging. A second debate that will be covered in this master thesis is whether a transformation from an autocratic political system towards a more democratic system can lead to violence, adding to the debate about the peacefulness of the democratic system. A third scientific debate is the greed versus grievance debate, where the question is whether actual historical grievances are the cause for violence or whether economic gain or need is the source for violence. A fourth debate is surrounding security issues. Some academics argue that identity is not leading in the outbreak of conflict but merely security issues, that lead to groups in society getting mobilized and aggressive towards the other. Identity in this case is just the connecting factor.

These four debates that are very applicable to the Moluccan case study will be covered extensively in this chapter by means of reviewing the relevant literature on these topics. This case study research will ultimately add on these debates and provide fresh impulses in order for the debate to use a more varied number of case studies. This will be answered for this case study in the analytic chapter. This chapter will consider the Indonesian literary sources as well as the empirical results of this research project. In the next section the four afore mentioned debates will be covered extensively to give a better insight in the current positions within the academic debate. Besides the four debates the ideas of Fukuyama on identity politics will be discussed in the next paragraph to focus first on Western developments to have a contrasting view on the development of democracies in the long run that are thought to be stable, but have their own issues.

In the academic world liberal democracy is often criticised for its lack of ability to tackle identity issues. Society in the west seems more and more divided instead of united. This development has been accelerated by the election of populist parties in several Western countries. Francis Fukuyama is worried about this trend of renewed Identity politics in what he views is a threat to liberal democracy.¹⁰ A lot of research has been conducted towards understanding why certain people belong to certain group identities. According to Mary Bernstein one of the reasons for group identity is gaining

¹⁰ Fukuyama, 'Identity'

recognition collectively as a group identity.¹¹ The consensus in the academic debate states that groups form identities as a struggle for recognition, however these struggles for recognition can be mutually exclusive which in turn leads to conflict.

A first overview of identity politics in Western context as it has been described in the literature. From the 1960's to the 1970's the third wave of democratization occurred which saw the countries with a liberal democracy rise from 35 to over 100.¹² This development led to Fukuyama's earlier ideas on 'the end of history', democracy was rapidly becoming the world's dominant system. With these new waves of democratization identity politics gained a huge influence in the political system. The civil rights movement in the United States wanted more racial equality, feminist movements appeared in the West that wanted more equality between the sexes.¹³ According to Fukuyama 'thymos' is a central human aspect that is crucial to understanding these developments. Thymos is a universal human aspect that thrives towards recognition and improvement of their being. 'Thymos' is for him the essence that leads to conflict over identity, as he views it as a developing factor within humans that strive towards this recognition. This struggle for recognition is what drives many equality movements in the Western worlds, since they basically want to be heard and understood. The question to take away from Fukuyama's ideas is whether 'thymos' is an exclusively Western or more universal human trait. Is striving towards recognition, an element that is undeniably present in modern Western society, applicable on all kinds of societies? On the completely other side of the debate Samuel P. Huntington had a very cultural relativist concept in his *clash of civilizations*.¹⁴ Huntington argued that instead of the Western democracy slowly becoming the main political system in the world, religious and cultural identity would become the major focal point of conflicts after the Cold War. He identified several civilizations that would get into conflict on the borders between them.

How to understand identity in violent conflict situations?

When using a less systematic approach on identity there are three main perceptions on the way identity 'behaves' when conflict emerges. These perceptions should explain and understand the way identity plays a role during the outbreak of conflict. These three perceptions are fundamentally different and determine an almost humanistic perspective that can go back to basic debate of nature versus nurture and other very fundamental principles. The three main positions are the primordial view on identity, the constructionist view on identity and the instrumentalist view on identity. In several practical cases there seem to be elements of two or even all three positions that are applicable to a certain case study.

In the primordial view, identity is understood as culturally given. It is perceived as something we are born with. According to this view identities are historically and culturally shaped over a long time and are therefore seen as a static concept. The idea that identities are fixed and thus historically continuative has been largely denied by the academic community. A clear argument that may be oversimplistic is the idea that if certain identities are at odds with each other why would they not be in (violent) conflict all the time. However, primordialists would argue that conflict is about the right conditions, in order for it to break out. They would further argue that certain dynamics are preventing the conflict from breaking out at all times. A good example of a primordial perspective is the report of

¹¹ Mary Bernstein, 'Identity politics' *Annual Review of Sociology*, 31 (2005) 47-74.

¹² Fukuyama, 'Identity'.

¹³ Fukuyama, 'Identity', 105.

¹⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York 1996).

Robert Kaplan on the Yugoslavian conflict. The note that must be made here is that he is not merely an academic, as he was more of a reporter on site at the time. He focusses on historical myths and grievances that shape ethnic identities in the Balkan area.¹⁵ According to him the outbreak of violence in the 1990's is because of historical grievances. These grievances shaped identities over time and are reignited in a conflict situation. He perceives the conflict more in a primordial way, historical fixed identities that were shaped over time. For him identity issues were therefore leading in the outbreak of conflict with the historical grievances between the several national or ethnic groups being the fuel that ignited the conflict.

An approach that is quite different from the primordial view on conflict is the constructionist approach. This approach believes that ethnic and social identities are formed in a way to distinguish groups from others. This view is composed by the idea that it is very natural to form group identities to pursue the interest of the own group in a sense because it is in human nature. As a result of these groups emerging through time people that are not part of the group identity are often seen as 'the other'. This process can in turn lead to (violent) conflict when there is a conflict of interests, (economic) gain or a security dilemma. A good example of a constructionist approach is the paper by Fearon and Laitin where they examine different accounts on identity in violent conflict and determined that often these identities that were constructed over time where the discourse on these identities becomes leading for the way individuals act. The discourse that has been created on cultural or ethnic identity is key in explaining why intergroup violence occurs.¹⁶ They further dismiss the primordial view and believe most theories are constructionist up to a point. They identify a strong contrast between culturalists and rationalists, where the first group focusses a lot on the development of these 'cultural' identities and the latter thinks in terms of using existing identities in conflict situations. Fearon and Laitin identify the same constructionist approach to both groups, whether they believe in a strong cultural approach or a strong rational approach to conflict. They strongly deny the primordial view however they acknowledge that even though identities are constructed by social processes they feel very essential and real to everyday individuals that do not realize this. A key term that they introduced is 'everyday primordialism', a concept that believes that ethnic and social identities are a construct, however most people believe it is a very real unchangeable given identity.

In a third view, the instrumentalist view, identities are actively composed by state and individual actors to pursue their own interests, mostly in times of conflict. This approach acknowledges the presence of identities in peaceful times, however, see that they increase in importance when conflict emerges. Boundaries between groups suddenly become very strict and individuals that do not belong to the same group identity are being 'othered'. There are many violent conflicts where different religious or ethnic groups lived in a mixed society before violent conflict. In conflicts like these, group identity was used in times of crisis to further group interest, leading often to strict segregation after the conflict. A good example of an academic that believes in the instrumentalist approach on identity is Anthony Oberschall. He believes that identity perception in times of crisis is changed in a way where extremist minorities can win-over the silent majority for violent conflict.¹⁷ Oberschall distinguishes two different frames in ethnic identity, a normal frame and a crisis frame. In his view when groups feel that they are under threat, due to changing political or economic circumstances the crisis frame applies. This can lead to violent conflict. Several good examples of conflicts where the instrumentalist approach can be used are the Cyprus case, the Rwandan case and the Yugoslavian case.

¹⁵ Robert Kaplan, *Balkan ghosts: a journey through history* (1993), 29-48.

¹⁶ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, 'Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity' *international organization*, 54:4 (2000).

¹⁷ Anthony Oberschall, 'the manipulation of ethnicity'.

Numerous academics are in the middle of these three approaches. To take a non-Western author as an example, Amartya Sen believes that there is middle ground between given identity and an individual approach. He sees cultural identity as an important factor in the identity discourse since that is what people were raised in. This is an almost primordial view on cultural identity when looking collectively, as a holistic approach on cultural identity. However, on a more atomic view he believes that individuals can discard their cultural identity to an extent as well.¹⁸ This means that he has a very individualistic approach combined with a structured approach as well. He also emphasises that people always belong to multiple social categories making clashes on identity more complex than just the group identities. A good example is the consideration of different generations within conflict, that cope differently with the situation, reducing the idea that a certain ethnic or religious group is entirely homogenous.

When looking at these three different approaches on conflict it should come as no surprise that for certain case studies elements of all three can be applied. Especially in an area as culturally proud as the Moluccans an everyday primordialist approach makes sense. This element combined with a very holistic approach when it comes to the construction of several community identities is very applicable to the Moluccan case. Several elements from the instrumentalist view on religious and ethnic identity are not far-fetched either. The idea that the Moluccan society turned from peaceful coexistence between groups to a very violent society out of the blue can be explained using elements of the instrumentalist approach as well.

Conflict and identity in democratic transition

The idea that societies have a social contract together that results in less freedom for the individual but a state that has the monopoly of violence was an idea of John Locke.¹⁹ He also argued that without the state, anarchy would arise. In some ways the transformation of this contract from an autocratic state into a democratic state can go hand in hand with a violent transformation. The new contract or system is not very strong yet, institutions do not have power yet and the role of civil society needs to develop over time. This can result in violence between groups since there is no power in place preventing it. The idea is then that in an autocratic system violence is often suppressed by a powerful state actor. A democracy, it is argued, is more stable in the long run. The transition of an autocratic system into a democratic system however is a very violent process.

The idea that a regime change towards a more democratic regime can lead to violence is nowadays accepted by academics. Jack Snyder was among the first in 2000 to describe how the development of a more democratic society can lead to violence in the short term.²⁰ In practice many regimes that change from an autocratic system to a liberal democracy face a period of violence. He states that after this period of violence a democracy is often more stable. In the transition period however, there are no respected and functioning institutions yet that can prevent violence between different groups with conflicting interests. Often the army which is a powerful party within an autocratic state loses power in the new situation and tries to hold on to the former situation. The army can be considered as a stabilizing factor in a more autocratic state.

There is a difference between Western countries that have gradually developed into democracies and some 'new democracies' that have emerged rather quickly in the last century. The issue might be that

¹⁸ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The illusion of destiny* (2006).

¹⁹ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1689).

²⁰ Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence* (London 2000).

this rapid transformation leads to violent conflict. Charles Tilly compares the European process of state formation in the past centuries with development and state formation in third world countries in present times.²¹ He summarizes his view on European statebuilding which he sees as a natural and logical process. But he emphasises that it is a violent process that takes a long time, because institutions need legitimacy and they grow in an organic way in small steps. His ideas are interesting since the case study this thesis covers is a non-Western one that had to do with the situation of a transition into democracy. From his point of view, it is very logical that in a transforming state violence occurs between groups.

The inverted U-curve that appears when comparing the stability of autocratic and democratic regimes has been a well-established theory in the scientific community.²² This hypothesis suggests that very autocratic regimes have a high level of control and are therefore not likely to experience domestic violence. Long established democracies on the other hand have proper working institutions that prevent the outbreak of domestic violence through a proper dialogue. The transition between an autocratic system and a democracy is therefore the period in time when a regime is fragile. This old hypothesis was revisited by Slinko et al, who used a quantitative research model to put this hypothesis to the test.²³ Through comparing conflicts with the society in which it took place a clear pattern emerged. They confirmed that 'Full Democracies' and 'Full Autocracies' are the most stable systems with partial democracies being the most unstable system. They nuance the inverted U-curve hypothesis however by adding the time period dimension. They found that the historical period matters significantly in establishing the stability of each system.

An important question to ask in the context of globalisation and state building is whether it contributes to stability and peace or can in fact lead to conflict. Globalisation itself is a system with many different aspects. Some of its consequences are migration and urbanisation. These developments however can make way for the loss of tradition and old cultural customs. As a reaction to globalisation there is often a movement that out of nostalgia attempts to revive identity. There is definitely tension between these two developments.²⁴

An economic perspective on conflict

In 1997 the Asian economic crisis had a big impact in many economies in mainly East and South-East Asia. Indonesia was one of the countries affected the most by this economic crisis. Besides the ongoing economic crisis there existed a situation of strong economic segregation between different ethnic and religious groups in the Moluccans. This segregation is a possible risk factor in times of economic crisis. The Moluccans are located far from Jakarta and are therefore not the area with the most relevance to the sometimes Java centric government. Whether economic consequences might be factor in this conflict is important to consider. In the next section several ideas on economic inequality and the start of conflict will be examined. Several key points will be taken away into the research project. An important note is that often economy as a structural reason for violent conflict is underestimated. It

²¹ Charles Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime', in Evans, P. D. Rueschemeyer and T. Skocpol (eds.), 'Bringing the State Back', *Cambridge University Press* (1985) 169-185.

²² Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 'Democratization and the danger of war', *International security*, 20:1 (1995) 5-38.

²³ Elene Slinko et al, 'Regime Type and Political Destabilization in Cross-National Perspective: A Re-Analysis' *Cross-cultural Research*, 51:1 (2017) 26-50.

²⁴ Kaldor, *New & old Wars*.

must be said though, that economic reasons alone are often insufficient on its own to start violent conflict.

Are conflicts driven by political agenda's or by economic greed of certain individuals? Paul Collier introduced the greed versus grievance debate.²⁵ His theory is that the framing of conflicts often displays old grievances and ethnic hatred as the cause for conflict, the main cause of conflict is greed by (local) actors who benefit from conflict that starts and sustains violent conflict. Collier has an individualist perspective since he states that the greed of small groups or individual actors can create and sustain a conflict because they have economic interests. Even though they will use (old) grievances to mobilize people. According to the ideas of Collier the interviewees should therefore not mention the economic situation as the key factor of the conflict even though in the background this may be a strong factor as to why people start organizing their group. The ideas of Collier will be expanded upon to not only take economic gain as a reason for conflict but also the threat of economic loss.

To broaden the economic arguments for the emergence of conflict Langer and Stewart introduce horizontal inequality.²⁶ Horizontal inequality is the difference between multiple ethnic groups in a society across economic, social, political and cultural status. They distinguish their idea from vertical inequality: differences in status among groups. However, they believe these ethnic groups are constructed and, in a sense, these factual inequalities are constructed as well. Perceived inequalities between groups, can therefore be a major factor in conflict. The ideas of Langer and Stewart are interesting since prior to the conflict there was a strong economic segregation between different ethnic groups in Ambon. This fact may have contributed to perceived inequality or actual inequality as a consequence of the 1997 Asian economic crisis.

Cramer believes that with a certain amount of (economic) inequality conflict is more likely, however he states that these conditions alone are not sufficient.²⁷ Cramer further emphasizes the importance of economic incentives, but, he also believes that it is over simplistic to conclude that the economic incentives are the main cause of conflict. He undermines the "greed or grievance" debate suggested by Collier by saying that a lot of his statements are assumptions and a very simplistic view on reality. He argues that focussing on structural causes is more important than the incentives of individuals. Cramer's argument that just an economic crisis is not sufficient for conflict seems reasonable. However, his point on how it would be just the incentives of individuals to start conflict seem like a narrow approach. Especially in a very community-based society like (perceived) economic inequality along with political and cultural tensions. In a later paper Cramer tries to incorporate economic reasons along with structural reasons for conflict.²⁸ He therefore expands on his own ideas to make them broader applicable. He has practical objectives to the measuring of inequality since it is empirically hard to collect data. Cramer concludes that economic inequality is very important for explaining civil

²⁵ Paul Collier, 'Doing well out of war: an economic perspective', in: M. Berdal and D. M. Malone (eds) *Greed and Grievance; Economic agenda's in civil wars*, (2000) 91-111.

²⁶ Arnim Langer, Frances Stewart, 'Horizontal inequalities and violent conflict: Conceptual and empirical linkages', in: E. Newman and K. DeRouen Jr. (eds) *Routledge Handbook of Civil Wars* (London, New York 2014) 104-118.

²⁷ Christopher Cramer, 'Homo economicus goes to war: methodological individualism, rational choice and the political economy of war', *World Development*, 30:11 (2002) 1845-1864.

²⁸ Christopher Cramer, 'Does Inequality Cause Conflict?', *Journal of International Development*, 15 (2003) 397-412.

war but it is also inseparable from the social, political, cultural, and historical. Economic issues can thus be a key role in the emergence of conflict.

Mobilization and violent conflict

Even though identity undeniably is part of modern (violent) conflict, the question is whether identity is the leading factor towards a common goal, or whether it is the means to get to that goal. In many cases identity can be used when the perceived group is under threat. The idea is that people start organizing their group around the common identity because they feel they are under pressure. When under threat some academics argue the step towards violence is a small step. The idea that certain ethnic or religious groups will be violent because they feel their very existence is at stake is best illustrated by Oberschall. This concept falls within the instrumentalist approach since a minority can use their group identity to mobilize the majority.

The theory suggest that the mobilization is the most important step towards violent conflict, not the identity struggles that are used as a tool to unite around. The mobilization is a consequence of an unstable situation and the fear for the future. This fear often coincides with the absence of a forceful state authority that could prevent conflict. When groups have been mobilized the step towards violent conflict is a minor one.

Nicholas Sambanis makes a distinction between two types of civil wars, the ethnic and religious conflicts and other civil wars.²⁹ He states that economic greed is less of a causality in these types of conflicts and in fact focusses on grievances as the main factor. The security dilemma that he describes has an element of group identity. He removes individual choice and focuses on groups with an ascriptive identity. He believes it is better to separate the groups and give them their own political system rather than setting up a system of power sharing. However, he does not take into account that group identities are often misused. According to Barry Posen very homogenous or very heterogenous societies are less likely to have an ethnic conflict through the security dilemma fears.³⁰

What to take away from the different academic debates?

When reviewing the different debates in the literature it becomes clear which approaches are most relevant when looking at identity during the Moluccan conflict. When looking at the debate surrounding the idea whether Western democracy is the one dominant system from Fukuyama's idea there are question marks. The idea that civilizations only clash at the outer edges where they meet is questionable too. It might be true that the Moluccans or some factions within them strive towards recognition of their culture, their group identity. The 'thymos' of the Moluccan identity may play a role in the conflict, this research project will look for answers in that regard.

Which approach is most useful when looking at identity during (the outbreak of) the conflict? Several ideas from the literature will be examined in this case study. The idea of everyday primordialism from Fearon and Laitin will be tested, since the group identities seem to be very strong in this case study. However, the most practical assumption is to take a combination of the constructionist approach with the instrumentalist approach. The groups that live in the archipelago have been socially constructed under influence of different historical periods with an outside force that has been politically and culturally dominant. However, it seems that identity has been used to justify and mobilize the people

²⁹ Nicolas Sambanis, 'Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?: A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry (Part 1)', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 45:3, 259–282.

³⁰ Barry R. Posen, 'The security dilemma and ethnic conflict', *Survival*, 35:1 (1993) 27-47.

during the conflict. The actual actor behind this instrumentalist approach is unclear, however it seems very likely that identity has been used to further the interests of certain groups against each other.

Another idea that will be considered in this research project from the literature is the idea that has been described quite well by Tully and others. This is the idea that when a state is absent the social contract between people is diminished and anarchy or chaos can follow. When transitioning a certain society from a more autocratic rule towards democracy usually there is a period of unrest and possibly violence since there is no strong state actor anymore and the institutions of the new democracy are either not working properly or do not have the legitimacy yet that they need to function properly.

The debate that Paul Collier started with his greed versus grievance is however of definite interest to this research project. Collier's main idea that greed or economic gain is often the motivation covered up by grievance is applicable to this case. The Asian economic crisis led to a situation where economic loss was very likely for many. With a heavily segregated economy between several ethnic and religious groups this might have had an impact on the conflict.

The security dilemma as sketched before could be a moment where identity is used to defend the groups interests. In many cases groups become violent when they perceive that their way of life is under threat. In other cases, it was likely one of the reasons that conflict erupted into violence.

From the literature it becomes apparent that there are many dynamics at play surrounding group identity and group behaviour in conflict. However, many of these dynamics are coming from a very narrow variation of conflicts. To broaden perspective on the way several variables had an influence on the shift in identity between pre-conflict to conflict and from conflict to post-conflict it would be interesting to look at a case study that is rather unknown. To shed some light on the dynamics at play in the Moluccan conflict could improve the scientific understanding of intrastate religious and ethnic conflicts. There are several earlier mentioned case studies that could be considered similar to the Moluccan conflict. But when looking at dynamics on the ground are there similarities or are there differences? The issue is that the scientific community keeps going back to the same case studies that have been researched quite well. Perhaps on the surface the circumstances look quite similar but deep down some very different dynamics have been at play. This research project aims to understand the dynamics that were at play in this so-called identity shift. Identity shifts focus on new perceptions of identity that emerge in conflict situations that are fundamentally different to identities that existed in pre-conflict situations.

The conflicts that could be considered comparable still have devastating conflicts on to this day. For example, Cyprus where after the interference of the British, and later independence, a violent clash occurred between the Greek and Turkic Cypriots. Nowadays they are still separated into two countries that are very homogenous on both sides of the border. Another example is Rwanda where the Hutu's and the Tutsi's clashed in a genocidal war. The example closest to home is the Yugoslavian war in the 1990's where Serbs, Bosnians, Croats clashed in a bloody civil war.

In the mentioned conflicts there are several patterns visible. All these case studies were in political instability, mainly in transition from an autocratic system to a more liberal democracy. All these conflicts were framed around an identity topic, being either ethnicity or religion. The fact that there was never a long history of conflict between the different identity groups on a similar scale is another one. In the modern times these conflicts take place between these groups and the effect on direct victims and IDP's is great on both the short and the long term.

It is obvious that there are many factors involved in creating an identity discourse and even more when an identity discourse changes rapidly in a conflict situation. The goal of this research project is not to measure objectively the amount certain structural dynamics influenced the identity, but instead to understand the process it happens in. Which specific factors of this identity were changed from one discourse to another and why? A better understanding of this process can improve the scientific understanding of identity dynamics and can shed a new light on this part of the debate.

The first part of this chapter focussed mostly on conceptual literature, it being very abstract. The second part of this chapter will be more concrete on the Moluccan conflict. First it is important to come up with a short synopsis on the previous paragraphs. The ontological nature of these paragraphs revealed several assumptions based on the literature. These are that universalism may not be a one size fits all solution where one teleologically defined development is applicable on all case studies. Whether an end of history concept or a completely cultural relativist perspective should be applied to this case study is the question. This research projects opts to find middle ground between those, both following patterns from research on democracy for example as well as leaving room for non-Western different choices on development or cultural identity.

Some debates that have been covered more concretely are the following. The effect of globalisation on the emergence of conflicts is strong in modern times, where identity is a central factor. This will be a returning factor in this case study. The slow development of democracy that goes hand in hand with violence when a country is still in the transition period. The economic structural causes that precedes many conflicts, through the greed versus grievance debate. The idea that identity is both actively shaped in an instrumental way as well as historically influenced by structural factors. Possible security dilemma's that can lead to conflict through mobilisation.

Structural factors for the Moluccan conflict – causes and factors of the conflict

The second part of this chapter revolves around more case specific literature. The next paragraphs should therefore give a comprehensive overview of relevant literature on (identity) issues in the Moluccan conflict. The current debate surrounding identity issues in the Moluccans during and after the conflict will be discussed. The way the literature views identity will coincide with the earlier sketched debates on identity. The literature is partly from English and Western sources and partly from Indonesian sources. The fact that some of the writers may be involved in the conflict themselves and thus have a personal point of view has been taken into account writing this overview. Several parts of the literature mention the national political transition as an important factor in the conflict. The democratic transition had many consequences. Samuel Waileruny is one of the authors that blames the Indonesian central government for the conflict. According to him there was a specific plan behind the Moluccan conflict.³¹ He states that the Indonesian government has a dubious role in the conflict, with reports of Indonesian soldiers taking part in the conflict themselves.

According to the Human Rights Watch of 1999, which also reports on issues surrounding the outbreak of Chinese Indonesians and violence in East-Timor, gang-violence and the shift in power dynamics between them is also a main cause for the outbreak of the 'Maluku-war'. Gang violence turned into religious violence later on. Violent incidents between different religious groups occurred in other islands as well, with reports on violence between different communities in Sulawesi and Lombok. The Maluku war cannot be seen without the context of the elite in Jakarta, with some even calling it a

³¹ Samuel Waileruny, 'Membongkar Konspirasi di Balik Konflik Maluku' (Jakarta 2011) 1-249.

'proxy war' between the Jakarta elites.³² This means that many of these conflicts are connected to the political transformation of Indonesia at the time.

Several Western academics mention the political transition as a big factor in the conflict as well. Among them is Jacques Bertrand who states that the Suharto regime change posed new questions on national identity, which in turn fuelled conflict between different religious groups.³³ These questions on national identity included 'the definition of natural boundaries, the role of Islam in national politics, the relative importance of regional and central governments and mode of representation of ethnic groups.' Braithwaite et al criticise Western Liberal peacebuilding but also state that we over romanticize traditional ways of reconciling and peacebuilding. They suggest the systems in place are not always effective. They believe conflicts in Indonesia in the period 1998 to 2002 are mainly due to the political transitioning and the perceived threats by minorities that felt insecure in the new system and wanted to fight for their cultural values.³⁴

Lisa Taschler, who writes a chapter about several cases of violence throughout Indonesia in that time, with violent clashes happening in Kalimantan, Sumatra, East Nusa Tenggara and Papua.³⁵ Even in Java there were violent clashes between Muslims and religious minorities that would also identify as Muslim. She concludes structural factors such as the weakness of state institutions that in some cases led to discriminatory legislations and impunity for human rights violators. The growth of extremist and non-democratic movements led therefore to increased tensions between different ethno-religious communities. According to her the state institutions did not protect religious minorities. She further points out that extremist Islamic groups with international support tried to discredit the secular and democratic state by starting violent movements against minorities. She fears that without the strengthening of institutions and the rise of civil society Indonesia might become a failed democracy. Another reason for this violence is the call to be heard, gain power and forward their agenda that includes a strong non-democratic state.

Several other authors mention the regime change in 1998 and the following political crisis, among them is Patricia Spyer. She claims several other underlying causes to an outbreak of the violence. She states the connection between local gangs and members of the national elite with a strategic interest in provoking violence is a key factor to the conflict. These elites and the gangs both identify by religious affiliation.³⁶ Spyer also claims that the political and economic resources were distributed unequally. A final reason that she brings up is the increased feeling of insecurity through the national regime change from authoritarian to democratic and the economic crisis of 1997. A political consequence of a crisis with economic origin is therefore a viable connection that seems logical considering the timeline.

According to the book *Dinamika Konflik dan Kekerasan di Indonesia (The dynamics of conflict and violence in Indonesia)*, the freedom of religion that is in the constitution is restrained since the government only recognizes 6 religions, including Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism,

³² Jon Goss, *Understanding the "Maluku Wars"*, 13.

³³ Jacques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia* (New York 2004).

³⁴ John Braithwaite et al, 'Healing a fractured transition to democracy', *Anomie and Violence* (2010).

³⁵ Lisa Taschler, 'Examining The Role of State and Civil Society Organisations in Ethno-religious Conflict : Ethno-religious Conflict : The Case of Ahmadiyya in Indonesia The Case of Ahmadiyya in Indonesia' in: *Dinamika Konflik dan Kekerasan di Indonesia*, Institut Perdamaian, (Jakarta 2011).

³⁶ Patricia Spyer, 'Fire Without Smoke and Other Phantoms of Ambon's Violence: Media Effects, Agency, and the Work of Imagination,' *Indonesia* 74, (2002) 1-16.

Buddhism and Confucianism.³⁷ This constrains religious freedom in a way. The fall of the oppressive Suharto government in 1998 is seen as an important factor in the rise of ethno-religious conflicts in Indonesia. The new democratic state was not powerful yet and resulted in the rise of extremist groups. The government in this time was in transformation and was not able to respond adequately to new crises that happened all over the country. Even in places that are famous for peaceful coexistence there were conflicts that seemed to come out of nowhere. The national motto of Indonesia unity in diversity (Bhinneka Tunggal Ika) was tested during these times. In case of the Maluku conflict the government was either not willing or not able to tackle the problems that arose during the conflict that started in 1999. The government was even accused of 'partisanship' in terms of taking sides in the conflict. A second reason the violence could break out is the fact that civil society was not yet established in Indonesia in a way where it had sufficient popular support. That led to the fact that they were not able to form a counterweight to extremist groups.

Jon Goss, another Western scholar distinguishes four main causes of the 'Maluku wars': organized provocation by strategic players at the national level, increase of sectarian politics during the collapse of the New Order regime, the economic crisis of 1997 and the deepening of religiosity due to globalization.³⁸ The government failed to respond adequately to an outbreak of violence, police and military forces were often accused of being biased and even taken part in the conflict.³⁹ Communal leaders were able to mediate and create an unstable peace until religious hardliner groups joined the conflict, which further escalated the conflict. On June 26, 2000, a state of emergency was declared and a new army general, a Hindu, stepped in. Because of his religious background, there was an increased confidence in the neutrality of the forces. In February 2002, a peace deal was brokered, which saw mostly an end to the violence. After the agreement attempts were made to start rehabilitation and the return of IDP's. some sporadic outbreaks of violence continued to happen until 2005. Communities still live heavily segregated though with neutral zones between Christian and Muslim sectors, especially in Ambon.

The conflict is often labelled as a religious conflict, even though the origins are more likely economic. The framing of the conflict led to 'jihad' groups from Sulawesi and Java joining the conflict resulting in many casualties and IDP's. In 2003 leaders of both Islamic and Christian groups came together to talk about a peace agreement. Even though in the years afterwards there were some minor violent uprisings, the peace agreement still stands. The narratives that were produced since the conflict however created a parallel society that results in both groups living totally segregated. There are still different Christian and Muslim zones in Kota Ambon for example. According to Waileruny, even though there existed lots of variety within Moluccan cultures in general, this was never perceived as a threat, since their different subgroups were still relatively similar.⁴⁰ As the time flies, life in Maluku was affected by external and internal factors. The external factors in this case are the ideology and the politics, the economy, the psychology of religion. These external factors added to the primordialism based on 'SARA', a local term that includes ethnicity, religion, tribal background. This contributed to a weaker Maluku society, this is the peak of the conflict. According to Waileruny the Moluccan conflict is about the intersections between Moluccans and involves their traditional customs and values. According to him there are three sides in the conflict, the original Maluku customs, the government role and the peace between different groups. Where these elements intersect is the core of the Maluku

³⁷ Institut Titian Perdamaian, 'Dinamika Konflik dan Kekerasan di Indonesia' (Jakarta 2011) 1-221.

³⁸ Jon Goss, *Understanding the "Maluku Wars"*, 8.

³⁹ Jon Goss, *Understanding the "Maluku Wars"*. 9.

⁴⁰ Samuel Waileruny, *Konspirasi*, 245.

conflict. A lot of people have their own conclusions on why the conflict started. These different perspectives were a major factor in the conflict. The way the conflict is perceived is still different for the different groups and individuals. A lot of studies blame the original Moluccan people, however Waileruny states that the conflict was not about religion or independence, not about other ethnic groups moving in or about the political elite (mentioned as PDIP). He further states it is not about the youth crime, also not about conflict in the work environment. He is convinced the whole conflict is a conspiracy conducted by the government through the military and the police, elements of the government that were heavily biased. The goal of the conflict according to Waileruny was a planned genocide against the Maluku people because of the national sentiment. Moluccans say that the head of the government only represents the majority of the Indonesian population, while the Moluccans themselves are only a minority group in Indonesia.

Several Indonesian academics published their ideas on the Moluccan conflict in *Keluar dari kemelut Maluku (move on from violence in the Moluccans)*. They describe two phases of the conflict in Ambon. The first phase was from January – April 2000. And the second phase is from May 2000. According to Lambang Trijono et al, the causes of the conflict are complex.⁴¹ The estimated casualties are more than 3000 people by this point and many houses are burnt down. About 440.000 people are refugees or internally displaced. The communities in Ambon were divided in two different parts, the villages and the bigger communities in the Maluku province. There are several Ambonese people that contributed to a peaceful approach to the conflict, but most of these attempts failed, because most talks were about how the conflict was evolving instead of talking about ending the conflict all together. Several reconciliation attempts were made by the government in cooperation with the local people, including the religious communities, community leaders and traditional leaders. Also, many grassroots peacebuilding efforts were attempted. They further claim that the involvement of the military was very systematic, people arranged their attacks in the real conflict situation. The number of weapons and ammunition that was found with an army background was huge, this raises questions about military involvement in the conflict. According to them the Maluku conflict is a reminder that war already becomes part of the reality of Moluccan life, that it cannot be forgotten if they want to move on to a better future. He thinks keeping the old wounds can lead to chronic diseases in the future. The events that happened in the past are painful and should not be forgotten or put away but should be discussed. It should be remembered to maintain it in order to let it become a lesson, so it will not be repeated in the future. To remember and to change is a part of reconciliation. They often came to both sides of the conflict in order to get multiple perspectives. The first time in July of 1999 to conduct a field studies and to help in practical work that helped the reconciliation process in Ambon. In October 1999, the second visit, he came with staff from WHO and UNDP to create steps to conduct the assessment of potential reconciliation between the groups. The communication steps in this process of reconciliation had to be created. After this time, he came back several times to Ambon to become a field coordinator to conduct the practical work of reconciliation and conflict resolution in both communities. He conducted consultation to help many groups in Ambon, including the governor the police chief and youth leaders and religious leaders. In 2001 he came back with the WHO to start health programs with free surgery for people from both sides. He links the start of the conflict back to historical divisions made by the colonial regime in the past. These divisions were still active during the conflict. The Dutch divided Ambonese communities, between the Muslims and the Christians.

How to move on to a better future in Ambon? The government attempted a number of interventions of the government using a powerful approach. This actually caused rejection from the people because

⁴¹ Lambang Trijono, *Keluar Dari Kemelut Maluku* (Jogjakarta 2001) 1-213.

the people believe that reconciliation is an intense process, it made them scared to join the programs. Trijono also mentions about how the political side used this conflict to get collective attention and mobilisation using their identity and religion to become part of their political mission. It became a way to mobilise people. Because the groups say that the power sharing is not a fair solution for everyone since the Christians were in power before this situation. He further mentions the government occupied strategic economic resources in traditional 'Adat' areas which were occupied to build facilities without compensating the local people, creating tension between local communities and the government. The local laws were used in the bureaucratic way, with heavy government involvement. The collective identity conflict comes from the suspicious way they view the government, lack of communication, misjudgement between the communities. The colonial separation was in a way continued later on and is one of the factors that contributed to the conflict. All of these factors combined made the conflict erupt in 1999, were resulted in religious, ethnical, and tribal conflict. Another issue that is mentioned is that communities from Makassar, Button and Bugis that moved to Ambon about 100 years before the conflict through trade wanted to expand Islam in Ambon. The expansion of other groups in Ambon scared the original inhabitants. The government that fell into crisis during the times was linked to religion in Ambon. The trading people wanted to have more influence in the government. Power sharing was one of the issues leading up to the conflict. People in Ambon were easily susceptible to violent conflict since conflict in one area quickly spreads to other areas because of the traditional networks that exist in Ambon. Because of the relative balance of population groups neither one of them could have a quick victory. In the name of religion people were easily mobilized and that resulted in a high number of militants. The conflict resulted in strict segregation in the two areas. He gives an overview of the different social, political, economic and religious factors that play a role in the Ambonese situation. There were three political parties in Ambon, the main Christian party at the time had a crushing victory in the elections of 2000. Another factor that was mentioned is 'RMS', which stands for 'Republik Maluku Selatan' (The Republic of the Southern Moluccans), an independence movement that wants to break away from Indonesia to start its own republic. This factor was mentioned mostly by the Muslim side as a reason to spark the conflict. Further it is stated that the old regime in Jakarta was falling but the new democratic government was still weak, so they were not able to act on regional crises.

Several authors point out the presence of historical grievances. These were for example the fact that Christians were getting preferential treatment by the Dutch colonial regime and collaboration of the Muslims with the Japanese.⁴² More developments that lead to the start of the violent conflict are the fact that the first Muslim governor in 1992 started replacing Christians in government administration with Muslims. This led to Christian groups feeling marginalized.

From the literature several aspects and dynamics are being mentioned. These different aspects and dynamics are both internal as well as external factors. The broadest development that had a role in the conflict is globalization. Globalization in this case is connected with the Asian economic crisis of 1997, the migration of several different ethnic groups into the Mollucan archipelago and the resurgence of religion that was an upcoming trend since the end of the Cold War era. Globalization in a sense is thus a key factor that changes discourses (on identity) worldwide, often subconsciously. External factors mentioned in the literature on a national level are the national political transition towards democracy with many consequences and the Asian economic crisis that especially had a big impact on Indonesia. The internal factors, partly as a consequence of earlier dynamics, are the migration of people from other areas of Indonesia and a renewed interest in the traditional legal and

⁴² Jon Goss, *Understanding the "Maluku Wars"*, 15

cultural system, the Adat. Other factors that are mentioned are the results of gang conflicts in Jakarta spilling over towards Ambon and the presence of historical grievances.

To sum up, there are several different factors that play a role in the conflict according to the literature. The first factor is political, in 1998 the Suharto regime was falling and as a result a new era emerged along with a democratic transformation. This democratic transformation resulted in less control from the central government. This period of instability gave rise to many regional conflicts throughout Indonesia. The second factor is the economic crisis of the year 1997. The third factor is the interest of national elites to fuel the conflict in combination with local gangs. A fourth factor is globalization which resulted in the migration of other Indonesian people groups to Ambon and led to a deepened and renewed feeling of religiosity. Identity politics is in a way the fuel that makes the conflict ignite.

It is also possible to put the authors into two different groups, the ones that see a more constructionist approach on identity and the ones that use a more instrumentalist approach to identity. For example, Waileruny has a more instrumentalist approach since he believes that elites in Jakarta on purpose created this conflict to further their own interests. Jacques Bertrand has a more constructionist approach since he believes that the identities were formed as a result of political developments. Jon Goss mentions some historical grievances, but those usually only become important when there is already a conflict situation going on. The importance of everyday primordialism in the (aftermath) of the conflict should not be underestimated, since many people see these historical grievances as good reasons not to reconcile with the opposing party.

Birgit Bräuchler discusses whether the cultural dimension in the conflict can be a part of the process of reconciliation and whether this can be a different strategy from failing Western implementations of peacebuilding. She is positive towards using culture for reconciliation but also warns about using the traditional Adat law as well. She fears that the revival of tradition is also the basis for the development of divided memories and can therefore legitimize the violence.⁴³ She explains the usage of the traditional Adat system that was reintroduced as a way of grassroots peacebuilding was made possible by Indonesian decentralization laws in 1999 and 2004 respectively.⁴⁴ According to her the revival of Adat law is ambiguous, it has a multifaced character. In a way it is progressive system in a traditional form. The Adat way of thinking is in many ways about harmony and is therefore a very idealistic system. The hopes in the Mollucans are high that this will lead to sustainable peace.⁴⁵ The revival of the traditional Adat systems and referring to traditional customs and symbols in creating one Mollucan identity can be successful but the system should be focussing on inclusivity instead of exclusivity. She also states that in this process Mollucan people often point towards the outside forces as the agent provocateurs while some of the (identity) issues are from within as well.⁴⁶

According to Bräuchler the framing of the conflict through regional, national and international media had a huge impact on the conflict.⁴⁷ She mentions the segregation between Christians and Muslims in the government jobs, which was slowly shifting as well. The national transmigration policies and Islamification in the 1980's were seen as a threat by Christian groups. The shortly proclaimed Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS) in 1950, which had the support of mainly Christians, but Muslims as well was not successful and was crushed by the Indonesian military. The economic segregation played a role during the economic crisis which saw the Christian communities become increasingly envious towards

⁴³ Birgit Bräuchler, *Reconciling Indonesia: Grassroots Agency for Peace* (2009) 97.

⁴⁴ Ibidem 98.

⁴⁵ Ibidem. 100.

⁴⁶ Ibidem 111.

⁴⁷ Bräuchler, *The Cultural Dimension of Peace* 73.

the Buton, Bugis and Makassar groups that migrated to Ambon in the decades before. Through efforts by the Indonesian government the local Adat system was disempowered, trying to detach the local customs and values from politics which created a tension. The commonalities that both Christian and Muslim Ambonese people shared through family, historical narratives and common values was more and more put under pressure. These developments slowly changed the identity perspective towards a stronger feeling of religiosity as the most important factor of identity. Through the reconciliation process Bräuchler claims that the Adat was a major factor in resolving the conflict. Rediscovering the traditional values and reinstating traditional leaders and focussing on common values.⁴⁸ This system would challenge traditional Western ideas on reconciliation as it focussed on recreating a traditional system that lost much of its meaning in the previous decades. So far this approach, executed often by grassroot peacebuilding initiatives seems quite successful.

To sum up there are multiple causes of the conflict that reflect on the identity discourses as well. There are several issues in the dimension of politics. There is an area of tension between centralization efforts by the national government and separatist tensions within the Moluccan archipelago since the Indonesian independence. The political transformation process in the late 1990's resulted in new impulses in this sensitive area. Questions on the direction of the national identity led to tensions between religious hardliners and ethnic and religious minority groups in geographically more remote areas of Indonesia. The democratisation process linked to the political transformation led as well to a lack of the will or ability to intervene as well. The economic crisis had more impact on the Moluccan society because of the strict economic segregation between different ethnic communities in Kota Ambon. Globalisation efforts through immigration and the resurgence of religion at the end of the Cold War period led to other tensions in the area as well. Dubious portrayals in the media and the presence of provocateurs facilitated the outbreak of conflict. The third part of this chapter is mainly about the conceptual model which visually represents all the different factors previously talked about in the literature.

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 102.

Conceptual Model: A visual interpretation of the research project.

The following scheme is a summary of the conceptual model used in this research project.

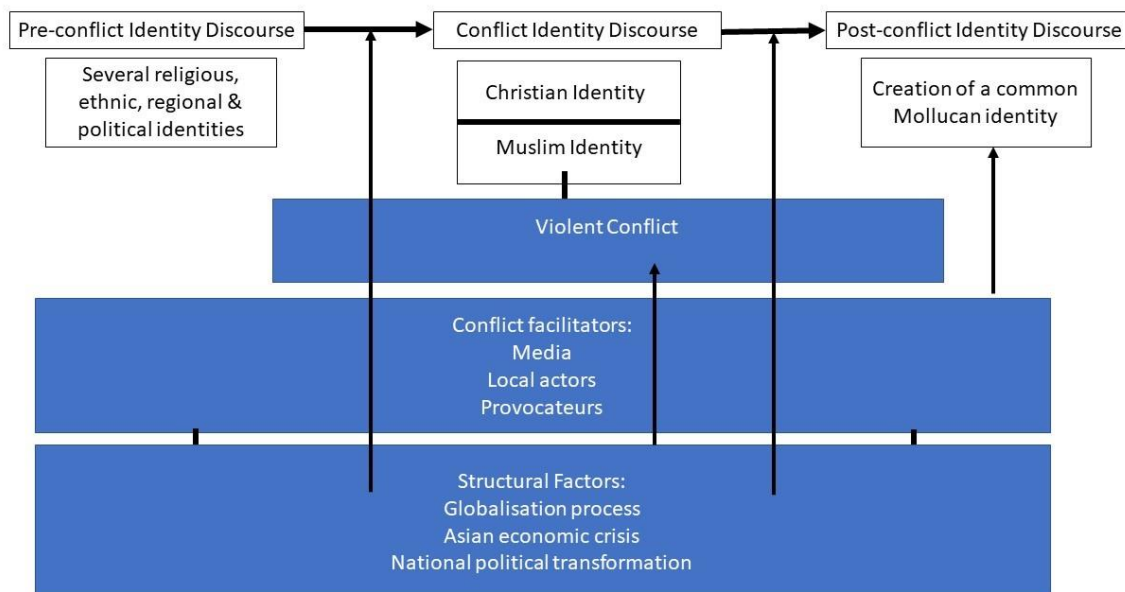


Figure 1 Conceptual model

In the presented conceptual model, there are several factors that need an explanation. The main part of the conceptual model indicates a linear development model of the identity discourses surrounding the conflict. This development of the discourses will be called the shifts in identity discourses or identity shifts in this research project. It is logical to identify three main identity discourses of the conflict, namely a Pre-conflict Identity discourse, a conflict identity discourse and a post-conflict Identity discourse. Obviously, this model is a simplified version of the different identity discourses connected to the conflict situation. Each of these boxes represents the main identity discourse at the time. The pre-conflict identity discourse represents the different factors of identity that existed at the time. The situation changes when the conflict erupts, the perceptions of identity mostly resolving around religious boundaries, the Christian and Muslim identity. In the aftermath of the conflict a post-conflict identity discourse is emerging. This discourse focusses on the common values of the Moluccan culture and is actively created by the local communities.

In the model an arrow represents a consequence of a certain factor. According to the literature there are three main crucial structural factors, Globalisation, the Asian economic crisis and the national political transition. These structural factors influence identity perceptions but are a direct cause to the conflict as well. The regular stripe points out a reciprocal relationship. There are three identifiable stripes in the model and they point out that the conflict influences identity perceptions and vice versa. The 'conflict facilitators' have a similar relationship to the structural factors. These facilitators influence the perception on the structural factors and can either strengthen a certain change in identity both negatively and positively. The negative influence of these facilitators is mostly in the beginning of the (violent) conflict while the positive influence was mostly at the end and focusses on the creation of a new common identity.

It is important to note that this research project does not look at the contribution of a specific structural cause on the outbreak of the conflict. It rather recognizes its impact and looks at the effects these structural factors had on the shifts in identity. The identity shifts that are central in this thesis are about the process itself as well as the different components that are part of these identity

discourses. To understand in what way the shifts in identity discourse took place from pre-conflict to conflict and in an extent from conflict to post-conflict as well.

The structural reasons are often not separate influences, they influence each other. For example, globalisation has an influence on the political transformation and the economic issues at the time. But the economic issues have a role to play in the political transformation and vice versa. To indicate this a stripe was used to indicate a reciprocal relation between the factors. The goal is not to show how big the impact was of certain factors but to merely show it had an influence on the process of the identity shifts which will be the focus of the research.

The main factors that are portrayed need some explanation to justify their presence. The biggest dynamic and perhaps the most complicated one is globalisation. Globalisation is a dynamic that is tied to chronology and progress up to a point. Globalisation is an ever more rapid process that is tied to both technical improvements to facilitate the process as the non-material consequences it holds. Throughout modern history globalisation has changed the way the world functions in greatly and continues to do so ever more rapidly. What this concretely means is that both economy and politics are heavily influenced by this ungraspable process. It further complicates the situation on the ground in modern conflicts since many parties and external factors are involved than ever. The claim that in modern times conflicts happen more internally is only valid up to a point it seems.

The political transformation in Indonesia had many consequences on the area of identity. The democratic transition that took place resulted in identity being a topic that became much more relevant. Democracy in the early stages results arguably in identity playing the centre stage in decision making. This can lead to identities colliding with each other with violent consequences in some cases. The political transformation made room for a development of a national identity. However, a national identity that fits in a pluralistic country like Indonesia is challenging. The religious foundations of the country were confirmed since the beginning, however reducing them to a single religious affiliation would cause trouble with regards to minorities mostly in the geographical outskirts of the country. The political transformation is heavily tied to the Asian economic crisis, as the Asian economic crisis could be seen as a catalyst for political change at the time. However, the economic crisis is a standalone factor as well, that is why it is included as a major factor in the conceptual model as well. A stagnating economy is often a reason for conflict even though it is not the reason people use. Identity becomes much more of an issue in times of crisis than it is in times of fortune. Many conflicts in history have been linked back to failed harvests and this trend is continuing in the modern era. The segregated economy that existed presumably had an impact on this situation, aggravating the situation. The different structural factors are in most cases not sufficient to start a conflict on its own, however together the dynamics mentioned created a crisis where several identities had to rapidly change to adapt to the new situation. Many other identity issues and low-key conflicts then spark and can create a very violent situation. The focus will be on how the factors changed the perception on identity and the focus will not be on the quantities of the different factors.

The conflict facilitators that are included in the model consist of three factors. These three factors are the media, local actors and provocateurs. These categories are quite broad and can overlap at stages. The media often play a very important role in conflict, both in the outbreak as in the phase of reconciliation. Local actors can be local organisations or (religious) community leaders. The last category of provocateurs can be actors nationally or internationally that have an interest in fuelling the conflict. In the model each of these three factors have an influence on the conflict often through portraying the structural reasons in their own way.

Two more conflict dynamics need to be mentioned as well. The first one is a perceived security threat of minority groups. In times of crisis this can lead to mobilisation of minority groups which often rally around strengthened identities at the time. The perceived security threat at the time for minorities was very real. This dynamic was tied to the political transformation process by a great extent. The dynamic itself falls into a separate category as it is a different scientific debate as well covered in the previous sections of this theoretical chapter. The second factor is the role of narratives that build discourses, this effect should not be underestimated. These discourses are very powerful and heavily determine the way people think and act. After a violent conflict, new narratives should be introduced to change the identity perceptions in the process of peace building. Without actively changing the narratives a society can remain heavily segregated. These narratives are in a way self-enforcing and can for example include historical grievances and feature in the place of identity politics in this research model. In crisis times this factor is commonly introduced to better justify the created identities at the time.

Methodology – A pragmatic approach towards understanding identity dynamics

This research project will focus on the shift in identity discourses surrounding violent conflict in the Moluccans. To investigate this concept a phenomenological research design is used. Through a qualitative research project that will focus on identity aspects within the three different discourses surrounding the conflict. A comprehensible framework will be created with the model displayed in the previous chapter. To understand the shifts in identity discourses that took place surrounding this violent conflict it seems logical to use a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to understand and give more insight in this development.

The research project is set up as follows. Relying on several key interviews this research project aims to discover in what way identity played a role in the Moluccan conflict and why it is crucial to understand the intersections of identities surrounding the conflict and the major shift in identity that took place during the conflict in order to understand the Moluccan conflict. This research will focus on understanding the shifts in discourses that led to the conflict and on understanding the current process of reconciliation and the emergence of the new discourse on identity. Kota Ambon and the surrounding communities will be the main focus to keep the scale of the project to a level that is sufficient for a master thesis. Another reason to limit the research project to Kota Ambon and the surrounding communities is the fact that in more rural areas segregation between different ethnic and religious groups was more severe, which meant that the epicentre of the conflict was in the city itself. To investigate this phenomenon a grounded theory approach is chosen. A grounded theory approach can aim to understand the differences in how this identity shift was experienced in the different communities of Kota Ambon.

A Phenomenological research design is used, focussing on how people experienced the shift in Identity preceding the conflict, the change of identity during the conflict and identity during the current process of reconciliation. different groups will be used to help in understanding the role of identity before, during and after the conflict. These experiences will be useful to understand in what way people perceive(d) identity in Ambon. These results might help other conflict situations around the world that struggle with identity related conflicts. This research project will focus on a specific non-Western case study and aims to provide a clear picture of the changes of identity discourses in a non-Western context.

This research project will gather empirical data through several interviews using a variety of different respondents with different religious backgrounds. Respondents will be categorized in two main categories being, respondents with personal involvement and experts. These categories can be further split into victims and former perpetrators in the personal involvement category and academics and people involved through media or reconciliation attempts in the expert category. These respondents are gathered in cooperation with the Heka Leka Foundation. This foundation aims to improve social cohesion between the communities through education in order to improve the Moluccan society as a whole. While doing so they rely on traditional Moluccan culture and values. Their office is located on the former border between different religious areas and has been burnt down twice during the conflict. The Heka Leka foundation consists of both Muslim and Christian employees and is a symbol of working together in the area. This organization helped with organizing the research project through arranging interviews on 18 occasions as well as having many 'informal' talks about the conflict, helped exploring different areas of the city and helped with understanding elements of the Moluccan culture which is quite different from the Javanese culture. Understanding these cultural elements is relevant

for understanding the process of reconciliation, this will be elaborated on further in the contextual chapter. Through personal connections it was possible to arrange one more interview with an author that had an interesting view on the conflict. An interview with this person would be interesting to be able to ask several questions about his book. Heka Leka provided a workspace to conduct the interviews, helped with communications during the interviews and shared their personal experience and showed me areas around the city that held meaning connected to the conflict.

When talking about the interviews in the next chapters, both the terms interviews as well as respondents will be used in order to have some linguistic variety. The interviews are theoretically separated into two main categories. The first category are victims, people that have experienced the conflict and that mostly talk from their own experience. The category of victims is not randomly selected but were mostly people that were known to have had traumatic experience during the conflict. In this category there are three former child soldiers as well, representing both sides of the conflict. These victims would give insight in the more practical side of the conflict, mostly through some dramatic personal stories. The second category of interviews are mainly experts. These interviews would be with people from the media, academics and people working in the process of reconciliation. The interviews that fall into this category were also people that experienced the conflict, although be it not as combatants, that does not mean they had less dramatic experiences. What really sets these interviews apart is the fact that they could think in a more analytical way, providing answers that are on a different level. Besides the respondents through interviews conducted in Kota Ambon, there were extended talks with experts from the university of Unika Soegijapranata in Semarang on the island of Java in order to better understand the Ambonese social structures. It often becomes clearer when 'outsiders' explain a certain social structure, since they do not unconsciously withhold information that they perceive to be general information. As a researcher that comes from a background that is even more different than a considered outsider this was very helpful. These social structures are crucial to understand the conflict, more on this topic will follow in the next chapter. Interview 12 was conducted with people from the Universitas Kristen Indonesia Maluku (UKIM) in Ambon, in order to have an academic perspective from them as well. One interview was conducted with a teacher on the Pattimura university in Ambon, an expert on the process of reconciliation, having seen it herself as she was personally involved in this process, after being selected for receiving training on this process in Australia. This means that for this master thesis academics from three universities have been involved to get a complete picture on the discourse of identity surrounding the conflict.

In the end 18 recorded formal interviews have been conducted in the categories previously discussed. One of the interviewees, a former child soldier met up with me on a separate occasion. Together we visited places of interest throughout the area to better understand the conflict, where it took place and what impact it made on the society. Since this thesis covers a geography topic it is important to get a feeling for the area that is covered in this research project. In many places there were still burnt down houses or religious buildings, this provides a clear perspective on the scale of the conflict. It is important to note that these former child soldiers are now important figures in their respective communities since they are the image of reconciliation. Through several initiatives they promote reconciliation, by hosting musical events, and by initiative like art for peace. These initiatives will be elaborated on more in the coming chapters since these are relevant for the second shift in the identity discourse within the conflict. Several interviews were with people that were part of the media at the time. It is important to Understand their vision on the conflict, knowing what role the media played and what they perceived as the differences between media on a national and a regional level. For the victims there has been a variety of people from different ages. These people have been divided in three categories based on age, these were people in their late 20's and early 30's, people in their late 30's until around 50 years and people older than 50 years old. These categories are important since

different generations have different views and experiences surrounding the conflict. People from different sexes have been included, both male and female since in the Ambonese society which is more traditional in the roles for men and women are different leading to different experiences. Lastly and maybe the most important division is that respondents from both Muslim and Christian communities are included. It is important to note that initially the Catholic community was seen as separate and not involved in the conflict, however this changed later on. To sum it up these 18 interviews involved people from different angles of Ambonese society, different age groups and different religious communities.

When analysing the data, a grounded theory approach will be used to come to sensible conclusions on this topic. The focus on discourses and identity shifts will be built from the ground up scanning and coding the interviews in a way where certain patterns emerge will help to understand how the shifts in identity discourse played a role in the three stages of the conflict, before, during and after the conflict. It is also important to understand how this shift in discourse is occurring right now since it still plays a massive role in the current process of reconciliation. Different patterns for different religious groups, social groups, different communities and different generations are to be expected. This will help me to provide a clear overview on how the Moluccan conflict is influenced by shifts in identity discourses. The literature on the role of identity in conflict situations will be taken into account. Many different ideas on the role of identity during conflict situations exist, a comprehensible overview of the different perspectives and developments in the academic world on this topic are provided. This research project can offer a unique insight on the role of identity during the Moluccan conflict.

All the factors mentioned will result in an understandable and unique insight on the identity shifts surrounding violent conflict in a case study that has not seen much researched too much in the current situation. A perspective on identity discourses built up with a grounded theory approach through a phenomenological research design and the reliance on qualitative methods to gather data.

The interviews are analysed through coding on several different categories. Elements that talk about the development of identity, aspects of identity and the interaction with culture are the most important. These elements have been chosen since they can explain the development of the different discourses throughout the conflict and can explain the different aspects of identity within each individual discourse. Combining the patterns that emerge through the different interviews there are clear answers on which aspects are important and which aspects are not mentioned a lot. In some categories most respondents answered in a very similar way, in other aspects the answers showed a lot of variety. These results will be discussed in the empirical chapter.

After this paragraph in figure 2 an overview of all the respondents are included along with the date the interview was conducted on. To give some more information on their background their religion and age will be mentioned as the role they had in the conflict. In some cases, respondents had specific information that is relevant. In these cases, it is mentioned as well. This can be various remarks like 'Child Soldier' or 'Reconciliation'. More information is given in the empirical chapter on the background of the respondents. In the overview the main point of interest will be mentioned. Up to a point everyone is a victim of the conflict, but if there is a more specific role of the respondent that will as their primary role. For the interviewees to remain anonymous among a wider audience the names in this figure will be hidden and in the following chapters the respondents will be referred to by their number. All interviews have been conducted between the 12th of July 2019 and the 26th of July 2019.

Figure 2: Overview Respondents		
interview:	Date interview conducted on:	Background Respondent:
Respondent 1	Friday 12-07-2019	Christian; Victim
Respondent 2	Friday 12-07-2019	Muslim; Former Child Soldier
Respondent 3	Friday 12-07-2019	Muslim; Victim
Respondent 4	Monday 15-07-2019	Christian; Reconciliation
Respondent 5	Monday 15-07-2019	Christian; Former Child Soldier
Respondent 6	Tuesday 16-07-2019	Christian; Victim
Respondent 7	Tuesday 16-07-2019	Muslim; Victim
Respondent 8	Tuesday 16-07-2019	Christian; Victim
Respondent 9	Wednesday 17-07-2019	Christian; Former Child Soldier
Respondent 10	Thursday 18-07-2019	Christian; Reconciliation
Respondent 11	Saturday 20-07-2019	Muslim; Victim
Respondent 12	Monday 22-07-2019	Christian; Academics
Respondent 13	Tuesday 23-07-2019	Christian; Victim
Respondent 14	Tuesday 23-07-2019	Christian; Writer
Respondent 15	Wednesday 24-07-2019	Christian; Academic
Respondent 16	Wednesday 24-07-2019	Muslim; Media
Respondent 17	Thursday 25-07-2019	Christian; Victim
Respondent 18	Friday 26-07-2019	Catholic; Media

Contextual chapter – Explaining the Moluccan cultural system

This chapter will have two parts where important aspects of both the geographical and cultural context of the conflict will be discussed. The contextual information is crucial to understand the complex nature of the Ambonese society. This information is composed from parts of the literature as well as interviews with experts and observations. The information will include the geography, social and legal situations and should give a more in depth look on the situation on the ground.

Geographical overview – a vast archipelago on the geographical age of Indonesia

Since this research project covers a geography topic, a couple of maps have been included to better illustrate the area that is being researched. Figure 3, the following map represents the administrative divisions of Indonesia. In the given map two areas have been roughly outlined. The area on the left is the capital city of Jakarta where the government is located. The area on the right is the 'Maluku' province of Indonesia. This province covers a vast area with many remote island groups. The island of Ambon with Ambon city on it, being the capital of the province is located close to several of the major islands in land mass. From the provided map it becomes clear that the capital Jakarta, with the economic and political centre is located far from the Moluccan archipelago in the Western part of Indonesia. This results in less economic opportunities, separatist tendencies over the years and a strong feeling of regional identity. Demographically the focus is mostly on the island of Java since more than half the population lives there. In comparison Kota Ambon is only a small provincial city located on a three-hour flight from Jakarta. The entire area Indonesia is situated in is comparable to the size of Europe from West to East, it should not be underestimated what the absolute and relative position of Ambon is compared to Jakarta on the island of Java.



Figure 3 map of Indonesia with administrative divisions (Source <https://nl.maps-indonesia.com/indonesi%C3%AB-politieke-kaart>)

The following smaller maps in figures 4 & 5 illustrate the Moluccans in more detail. The part that the research project covers is outlined in the map on the left, the island of Ambon with the focus on the capital of Kota Ambon. The surrounding communities are important to understand the conflict as well

since they are well connected to the capital. To put that area into context the map on the left is outlined in the bigger map of the area on the left, which portrays most of the Moluccans. In the map the administrative divisions of the Moluccans are not visible however. Some of the islands far away from the centre are not visible on the map as well, it is just to put the map into context. The island of Ambon consists of two parts that are separated by a large bay. In the time of the conflict the only way to get to the other side is to drive around the bay or use a ferry. In 2016 however President Joko Widodo opened a bridge that connected Kota Ambon with the other side, in the process making it easier to reach from the Pattimura airport. The bridge is named 'Jembatan Merah Putih', which means red and white bridge. The name obviously refers to the flag of Indonesia as well as both the Christian and Muslim communities.

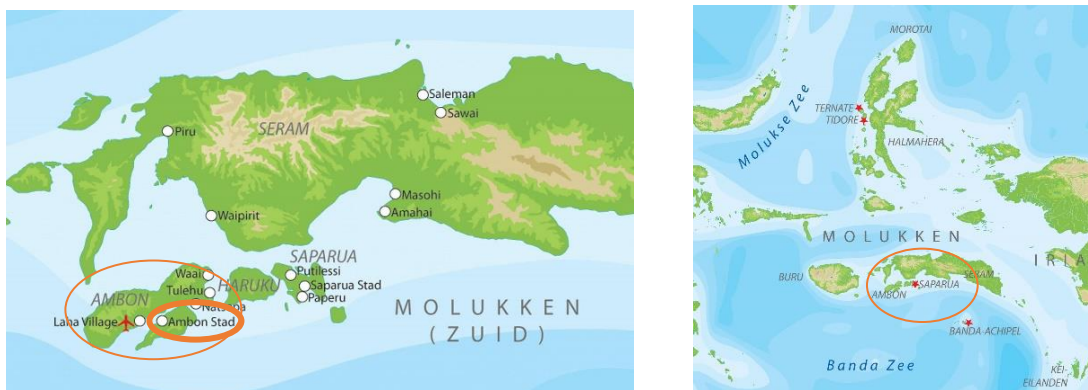


Figure 4 map of the Mollucans in detail and figure 5 map of the Mollucans
(Source: <https://www.vanverre.nl/indonesie/kaarten-van-indonesie/molukken>)

Explaining the *Adat* – A highly complex legal and cultural system

In the second part of this chapter, the cultural and legal situation will be explained. In the Moluccans, a very complex legal and cultural system exists next to the more national centralized system. This situation evolved through a mix of tradition and local culture. This system played an important role during the conflict, mostly in the part of reconciliation where this system was revived again. Without understanding these different structures, it will be very difficult to grasp the complex concept of identity in the Moluccan context. To say that the Moluccan geographical, political and legal situation is complicated is an understatement. There is an overlap of different legal systems and communities with a high level of autonomy. An explanation will show the complexity of the situation and is necessary to understand the different factors that are crossing each other in this conflict.

It is important to note that in Ambon there are basically two legislative systems. These systems can be divided in state areas and traditional areas. The State areas are called 'Batu' and are often located around the city. One of the quarters that was often mentioned in the research for example was called 'Batu Merah'. The other system that exists is called 'Negeri' which means something like country, this system follows the traditional 'Adat' law. In these areas a more traditional system is in place with very tight communities and a higher level of social control. These areas are more often located away from the bigger city. This system is in place for both the Christian and the Muslim Moluccan groups. There are also villages that follow the state law that are away from the main city.

The way that the different 'Negeri' are governed is very complex and traditional. Every negeri has a traditional leader which is named 'Raja' which translates as king. Besides the Raja there is a counsel of

wise people called the 'Saniri'. This counsel is made up from the different family structures which they represent. The traditional leader, the Raja, can only come from a certain family making the title inheritable, the powers that he holds are executive. The Saniri however are picked from a family structure where multiple families unite in one 'mata rumah'. Several of those collected families are united in a 'SOA'. From these SOA's the Saniri are chosen, they hold the legislative and judicial powers.

The central government has tried to influence the way that these 'Negeri' function by restricting several elements of liberty in these areas. For example, they limited the amount of people that a 'Saniri' can hold. Still these traditional systems are regarded as very important and are at the heart of the Moluccan cultural belief system.

The different 'Negeri' also have special connections with other 'Negeri' which are then called brothers (Pela and Gandong). These connections often are created between Christian and Muslim communities after armed conflict. These ties mean that they are obligated to help each other and give what the other community asks from you. It also means that it is not allowed to marry a person from the community that you have this bond with. Many of these relationships exist between communities and also between families. Most families live almost exclusively in different communities. This means that when you know someone's last name it is known what community he is from. In the city these communities are less strong, but they still exist. The relationships previously talked about also exist between specific families. In different islands there are many variations of these cultural systems, often with different names that have historically grown. The systems in place are not just theoretic, during the conflict these ties often played a major role between communities. Even though the 'Pela' and 'Gandong' system are often mentioned together almost like the 'Pela'-'Gandong' system, there is an important distinction between the two terms. The Gandong relationship often points out a common ancestry or origin between two communities of families. The 'Pela' relationship however often was created after conflict with another community and often exists between communities with different religious backgrounds. Since the 'Gandong' relationship often dates back to common ancestry it is therefore considered even stronger. These relationships that exist have implications in behaviour towards the other community. These structural ties are often recognized by the family name or the name of the community the other person comes from.

According to Jeroen Adam after the fall of President Suharto in 1998 there was a revitalization of the Adat system.⁴⁹ According to Adam this revitalization had two purposes. It served the political and economic interests of the indigenous elite and it strived for a return to a more purified version of Ambonese culture. The original systems of Adat including Pela and Gandong were used after the conflict to overcome the differences between Muslim and Christian communities.⁵⁰ The revival of the Adat system came after a period in time where the system was under pressure by both religious leaders that wanted to purify the religion, leaving indigenous systems behind as well as the national government which wanted more focus on the Javanese political system of '*Desa*' decreasing the political use of the system. He states that the traditional Adat system is used to prevent future conflict by focussing on this common values and culture despite religious differences. He further states that there is a widespread belief in Ambonese society that the conflict was set up by outside forces by use of provocateurs.⁵¹ The renewed focus on traditional Adat beliefs can therefore not only help with the process of reconciliation but should prevent future conflicts by emphasizing the common identity. An

⁴⁹ Jeroen Adam, 'Forced migration, adat, and a purified present in Ambon, Indonesia, *Ethnology* (september 2008). 227-238.

⁵⁰ Adam, 228.

⁵¹ Adam, 229.

important part of Adat is the historical and cultural connection of local communities with land, the system is therefore used to help resettle IDP's in the area. One of the challenges reimplemented the Adat law up to a point is the fact that IDP's feel this connection with the land, however Adat can also facilitate the return of these IDP's. Adat was therefore part of the problem as well as part of the solution. In the pre-conflict discourse Adat was heavily politicized however in the post-conflict narrative it played a crucial role in the conflict resolution part.

According to Nalesti Dewi et al, the traditional Adat law is since 2014 mostly used to revitalize Ambonese society and to contribute to the peaceful transition of the divided people.⁵² According to them the need for reparation for both individuals and communities has been largely ignored by the national government. Reintroducing the Adat law can play a crucial role in this process. The national government has focussed many of its financial reparations on material and economic damage. Legal issues and the reparation of emotional damage has been largely ignored.⁵³ The renewed focus on Adat law with two key principals in a leading role. These principals are *Hidop Baku Bae* and *Hidop Orang Basaudara*, meaning *living and peace* and *living with brothers*. These two key principals focus on living in harmony through the traditional Adat law. The renewed focus on Adat law can therefore facilitate in creating a durable peace throughout the several communities with a focus on shared history and cultural beliefs.

This renewed interests in traditional customs and values is an important factors in the conflict. During the conflict that in practice often was about interreligious violence the Pela and Gandong bonds were often still honoured. There are several examples of this, these will come forward from the interviews in the next chapter. A point of tension that these relationships evidently have is the fact that immigrants do not partake in this system. As a consequence, there is a large immigrant community of the Muslim faith that is also asking for support from the Muslim communities over there. The tension is thus the Muslim Moluccan people that were torn between their faith and ethnicity up to a point. This concept of a renewed interest in the traditional Adat system coincides with a more global trend, the resurgence of religion. According to Scott M. Thomas, there is a global trend visible where religion and tradition are taking a more central stage in the world after a period of decline.⁵⁴ This trend is a direct consequence of globalization and is in a way a counter-force to modernization. In many parts of the world there is a tension between modernization and tradition.

Menelusuri Identitas Kemalukuan (Searching for the Moluccan Identity) : This book focusses on the diversity of Moluccan culture and emphasises the common values that exist throughout the area.⁵⁵ The Moluccans are an area with many different islands spread out in a vast area. The historical influences in the area through contact with the Portuguese and the Dutch colonial powers and then the emergence of Indonesia left its marks. In the later part of the 20th century there is a renewed interest in the own culture. After the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998 and the subsequent decentralization efforts in Indonesia combined with the search for a national identity makes way for a revitalization of Moluccan culture in general. The violent conflict left its marks in the area and afterwards this renewed interest in local values and customs was a strong tool in the process of

⁵² Nalesti Dewi, Trihoni, Jonathan Kwik, and Aholiab Watloly, 'the strategic role of Lembaga Adat Negeri in the fulfilment of victim's rights to reparation in post-conflict Ambon', *Udayana journal of law and culture* 1:2 (2017) 157-180.

⁵³ Nalesti et al., 'the strategic role'.

⁵⁴ Thomas, Scott M., *The Global Resurgence of Religion and The Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of The Twenty-First Century* (2005).

⁵⁵ Lembaga Kebudayaan Daerah Maluku, *Menelusuri Identitas Kemalukuan* (Yogyakarta 2017).

reconciliation. The focus on Moluccan identity seems successful so far in rebuilding the Ambonese society. However the book also has a critical note, it explains the violent conflict partially through the search for self-determination and the attempts to revitalize local customs and traditions.⁵⁶ This development that was triggered by the political transition in Indonesia and several decentralization phases, most notably the ones in 1999 and 2004 was a contributing factor to conflict. There are two main issues with the revitalization of these local customs and values however. The first one is that re-strengthening of the traditional Adat law and customs legitimizes authoritarian local elites and the troublesome treatment of outsiders and migrants who do not partake in this system.

When talking to Indonesians in general it is important to realize that they have many traditional beliefs and superstitions. For example, they will tell you stories about magic and traditional beliefs that seem really farfetched, however for them it is very real phenomena. In the more developed or modern parts of Indonesia, like Java, they are still convinced that magic, ghosts and supernatural phenomena exist and are very real. They are convinced that ethnic minorities in the outskirts of Indonesia are able to put spells on you and that you can identify someone from royal decent by their appearance. Traditional healers and other sorts of community leaders are widely respected. All these ideas and beliefs make for a very different kind of environment to work in or to conduct research in. In interviews it is mentioned several times that black magic was used or that people put a spell on themselves to become invisible. It is difficult to deny the reality of people that you investigate, since Western academics do not have experience believing in these kind of phenomena.

Besides the superstitions Indonesia is a very religious society when compared to (Western) Europe. This layer of religion is visible in all aspects of society and is a very powerful part of identity. It can also be used as a powerful tool to get political advantages and to change the political landscape. Something we have seen several times in Indonesia's recent history. A point has to be made that these superstitions often cross with religious boundaries making them intertwined into cultural beliefs and identity. This is actually a very common development since most world religions were adapted into several different societies, none the less it is important to also mention the elephant in the room when it comes to identity.

⁵⁶ *Menelusuri Identitas Kemalukuan*, 888.

Empirical chapter – the respondents on identity issues

In this chapter the answers of the respondents will be covered. Through 18 interviews it was possible to gather a great deal of data. Studying this data can lead to a consensus on giving a generally accepted view on how the identity shifts took place and which aspects of identity played a role. In some cases, respondents also had a divergent view or opinion. How to interpret these findings and how to put them into context and how to compare them with existing literature will be covered in the next chapter. The interviews are conducted with an abundance of different respondents. The list of respondents and their background is visible in figure 2 in the methodology chapter. There are different categories of respondents and this will be taken into account in the answers provided by the respondents.

This chapter will be divided into four distinguishable parts. The first part will mostly describe the becoming of the conflict identity discourse in the beginning of the conflict. The second part will then go over different aspects of identity that were of importance within this discourse and the two separate identities. This part also includes cultural and linguistical aspects that were used to enforce group identities. The third part will focus on facilitation by the media and provocateurs. The fourth part is going to revolve around the second shift towards a post-conflict identity discourse. This part will also talk about the role of Moluccan culture and active attempts to change identity perceptions in this context.

Part 1 – Outbreak of conflict and the emergence of a conflict identity discourse

The main narrative that is mentioned by nearly all the respondents is the fact that the conflict started with an argument between a Bugis Muslim passenger and an Ambonese Christian bus driver. This happened in the area of Batu Merah, a predominant Muslim quarter in the city of Kota Ambon. Shortly after that there was unrest between the communities of Batu Merah and Merdika, a predominant Christian area. This narrative is so common and persistent that it might have become part of the grand narrative rather than exist as personal experience per se. As explained previously the conflict started on the 19th of January 1999, on the day of the Eid al-Fitr celebration, the day after the Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting. For the Christian communities it is common to visit Muslim friends on this day, thus many had plans to do so. In the experience of many of the Muslim community called their Christian friends on the phone that it was not a good idea to come that day or they would be confronted with the fighting on the way to the other communities, this is confirmed by respondent 8, a victim.

Is this actually the beginning of the conflict? Almost all of the respondents state that the conflict came as a surprise on a holiday and most of them were caught while being out on the road or in the town. This fact indicates the sudden eruption and nature of this particular violent conflict. There is however an indication that this was not the first violent clash that took place. Respondent 18, a journalist, mentions that there was a precedent that happened about a month earlier. In late 1998 in 'Hative Besar', next to Ambon City there was an interreligious clash. In this instance many houses of the Muslim inhabitants were burned. As a reaction the main headline in the news was 'unite the Christian-Muslim Mollucans'. This points towards the fact that the violence in January 1999 was not the first incident in this conflict and that there were definitely tensions between the (religious) communities. The article in the newspaper that covers this events chose to take a religious narrative as framing of this particular incident.

After the outbreak of the conflict through a number of different structural causes as well as local developments there emerged two main identity groups. These identity groups were built on a religious foundation. The conflict would also be remembered as the Muslim group versus the Christian group. However, in a diverse and mixed provincial capital city like Kota Ambon with many ethnic and religious minority groups there were many elements of identity that played a part. In this chapter it will be explained which elements of identity played a role and in what way they fit into this narrative and conflict identity discourse. It is important to note first that the religious composition of Kota Ambon had two main groups as well as a few other groups. When talking about the Christian group, respondents often referred to the Protestant communities. The Catholic community was only a small minority in Kota Ambon prior to the conflict and as told by the respondents they did not play a role early in the conflict. Respondent 9, a former child soldier, mentions that initially it was mostly about Christian versus Muslims. Other groups, Catholics, Buddhists or Hindus were not included in the conflict. When talking about Christians this usually refers exclusively to protestants.

Respondent 8, a victim, among others, mentions that even though there were different religious communities at the time they did not perceive them to be that different. The conflict made this respondent realize that there were different communities. The important holidays like Eid al-Fitr and Christmas would always be celebrated with friends from the other communities. Even though religious community lived geographically separated there was sufficient intergroup contact. The relationships between religious groups were usually perceived as decent or good.

During the research, the respondents were asked about their experience first. Knowing the experience of the respondent makes it possible to put their answers into context. After this question they were asked what the conflict was about in their experience. The answers this question provided were very diverse, they talk about a variety of aspects of identity in their answers. Some respondents answered more out of personal experience and some answered more from an analytical perspective. What most of the respondents have in common though is the fact that in their perception the conflict came out of nowhere. This perspective is not limited to the victim category. There were several aspects of Identity that were talked about during this question. One of the answers of the respondents, mainly the victim category, was that they did not really know what the conflict was about. The main aspects of Identity that were mentioned or talked about were communal violence, political identity, ethnicity, culture, independence struggles and economic issues. These different aspects of identity will be discussed thematically in the second part of this chapter.

Part 2 – Components of identity and how to enforce the new group identities

Different aspects of identity were discussed with the respondents or were brought up by the respondents. These will be discussed thematically in this part of the chapter. The way the two distinctive religious identities were enforced will be elaborated on as well.

Community violence

The literature suggests that the outbreak is connected to communal violence. The start of the conflict seems to have revolved around the communities of Batu Merah and Merdika, two communities of different religious backgrounds. In several interviews communal violence was mentioned between the youth of Batu Merah and Merdika, a predominant Muslim and Christian quarter, respectively. However, this example of community violence between these groups should probably not be explained religiously but rather communal. The communities in Kota Ambon were very tight and group orientated. These expressions of violence, often described like street brawls, would be mentioned to occur annually. Interviews 12 and 18 among others mention that it was normal for youth to be fighting near the border of their communities. The emphasis on communities rather than religious affiliation being an important factor becomes more clear when seen that the Catholic community initially was not part of the conflict, the main Catholic church near the Paso area was spared in an area where most Christians were driven out. The Paso area would become one of the main places where the conflict saw hard fighting, with the Christian community being mostly killed or driven out from that area. Respondent 4, involved in reconciliation is from this area and told about her experience during the conflict.

The sense of community and social structures within different quarters of the city seemed to be very important. This sense of community meant that there would be regular brawls between the youth of two or more quarters. From different interviews conflicts between two quarters were mentioned to be quite common almost to the point that it would become a 'tradition'. Perhaps the rivalry that it brought could be compared to the rivalry between two football clubs, like a kind of hooliganism. When there was fighting on this day on the 19th of January 1999 between these two quarters most people were not surprised and were expecting it to pass like usually, this is confirmed by the respondents of interview 12, academics. According to respondent 5, a former child soldier, communities were very distrustful to outsiders. This element led to them not trusting news from outside of the community. The importance of religious and community leaders in the form of the priest is also emphasised.

Several respondents mention the role of Jakarta on a different level. During the political transition there were gang-related conflicts as well in the capital. Many Ambonese people returned as a result through community ties, there could have been a continuity of the gang conflict in Ambon. Respondent 2, a former child soldier, mentions this as a factor of importance. These factors are mentioned in parts of the literature as well. In what way these factors might have been connected to identity issues is complex, but it is a factor in the conflict. This factor was also mentioned in the literature. This gang rivalry and violence from Jakarta because of unrest in the capital might have strengthened religious identities, since the identities in the capital revolved around similar issues as well. Gang violence and gang organisations are often connected to territory as well as a community that is why this factor could be regarded as closely linked to communal violence.

Ethnic identity

Respondent 2, a former child soldier, mentions that one of the main identity issues in the beginning of the conflict was ethnical. In response to the initial outbreak there were many demonstrations against the 'BBM' people. 'BBM' stands for Buton, Bugis and Makassar and refers to the majority of the

immigrant population. These three areas are located in the island of Sulawesi. Migrants from these areas formed communities near the harbour area. Respondent 7, a victim, says the conflict was framed as being about 'race and religion' since that is what people said at the time. Respondent 9, a former child soldier, mentions the ethnic and cultural conflict between Ambonese people and the people that moved in over time. These are mainly the 'BBM' people. To make the distinction between those people and the original Ambonese people religious characteristics were used. According to respondent 9 the initial conflict resolved around a combination of ethnic and cultural identity and was a very local conflict. Kota Ambon at the time had many ethnic and cultural minorities and was very mixed. Respondent 10, involved in reconciliation, mentions ethnic identity as well as a major identity issue at the start of the conflict. However, he makes a link between ethnic and religion. The Ethnic identity of the 'BBM' people groups was linked with Islam, so they could have used that to enforce their group identity. The respondents of interview 12, academics, also confirm that there was an ethnic and cultural origin to this conflict, referring to the known story that instigated the conflict. Thus, various respondents mention that ethnic identity seemed to be the way the conflict was framed in the beginning before it was framed along religious lines. It had mostly been the Christian community that protested against the 'BBM' community present in Kota Ambon. Presumably, the binding factor of these people groups was their religious affiliation, being Islam.

Role for the elections

The literature suggests that the decentralization and thus the democratic elections for districts have a role in the conflict. However, this factor is not mentioned a lot by the respondents. Several respondents mention it briefly. There seem to have been several elections that heated up tensions between different groups during the years and the years after the conflict. Interview 8 mentions the role of identity during elections. Elections in the time of conflict and the years after would heat up interreligious relations again. Candidates inside the election would use the religious narratives. Using identity politics in elections led to stronger segregation and polarisation between the different communities. Respondent 10, involved in reconciliation, states that the different identities that were emerging during the conflict were continued into political parties, giving it a political dimension. Respondent 15, an academic, mentions that the political transition meant that identity politics had a huge role. Ethnic and religious elements would be used a lot throughout this process.

Politics and Provocateurs

Arguably one of the most important factors in the Conflict is the political transition of Indonesia at the time. To understand what impact this transition had on the Indonesian society it is important to mention a couple of facts about the Indonesian political system. Since the Indonesian independence from the Dutch, Indonesia had two autocratic presidents, Soekarno and Suharto. These presidents had the control and support of the military which had and still has a major role in Indonesian politics. The military gained legitimacy during the independence struggle with the Dutch and held on to that ever since. The democratic transition period meant that the army would get a different role in the Indonesian society compared to the more autocratic period that preceded it, this created tension. Another point of tension is the fact that Pancasila, the Indonesian dogma of unity in diversity was under pressure. The autocratic period always suppressed religious hardliners that wanted a stricter religious Indonesia instead of the idea of Pancasila that also gives recognition to religious and ethnic minorities. The fact these autocratic force to suppress these ideas was gone meant that religious hardliners could start to organize themselves. Another factor that was mentioned in the literature was the impact of the decentralization laws of 1999 and 2004. In both years there were violent peaks in the conflict. In the next paragraphs it will be discussed how the respondents view political reasons as being part of identity and conflict.

In many of the interviews it is mentioned that the conflict was ignited by provocateurs from outside together with the conflict being a plan engineered in Jakarta by political elites. Interview 18, a journalist mentions that he believes the national government was afraid that the Moluccan situation would undermine the national identity situation. Therefore there was tension between the national development and the development on the Moluccans, which can have had an influence on the conflict. Interview 4 mentions the Moluccans as 'crushed between two rhinoceroses', the area being the victim of political competition in Indonesia. Religion was used according to this respondent since it was a very powerful tool. According to respondent 3, a victim, the conflict seemed religious at the time, since it broke out on the most important Islamic holiday, however she believes it was mostly the result of the political struggles since the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998. Ambon was a victim of a struggle in political context, according to respondent 3, a victim. Interview 1, a victim, mentions the same political context but mentions specifically the role of the army. At the time it was perceived as an argument between people of different religions. Respondent 6, a victim, mentions provocateurs a couple of times as well. Since he was still young during the conflict, his memories are based on hearing his parents talk about provocateurs a lot. His perception on specific identity issues during the conflict is difficult since he states that the different identities are a result of provocation. Respondent 9, a former child soldier, also mentions that the Moluccans are the victims of political developments in Jakarta. Interview 14 is convinced that the conflict is a conspiracy from the central government in Jakarta. He thinks the issue of RMS was used to integrate the area into a national identity. The ambiguous role of the army is also mentioned by respondent 15, an academic. Interview 16, involved in media, mentions 'the military business', economic interest of the army. Besides there were hardly any soldiers stationed in Ambon at the time due to the political transition.

RMS – Republik Maluku Selatan / Republic of the Southern Moluccans

Was there still a sizeable separation movement at the time and did it play a role in the conflict?

Respondent 9, a former child soldier, mentions this as one of the factors in the conflict. He mentions that the separation issue was not necessarily a Christian theme or issue, but that it became joint with the Christian narrative. Part of the reason was the fact that this cause also used the colour white, just like the Christians used to wear at the time. The issue was not necessarily a Christian only movement, but it became one in the conflict. The RMS issue according to him became part of the conflict in later times, during 2004. According to respondent 10, involved in reconciliation, the separatist issue had an impact as well. At one point in the conflict there was a nationalist versus separatist narrative with the separatist part of identity being intertwined with the Christian identity and the Nationalist ideas becoming part of the Muslim identity. The respondents of interview 12, academics, talk about how the RMS idea was used to (partly) explain what the conflict was about, however they say that this movement does not have the capacity or weapons that were used in the conflict, so they say this is not plausible.

Whether actual separatist movements made an impact or not is one question, whether one or more sides in the conflict perceived it as part of the conflict is another. From the Christian side it is often mentioned in the interviews that separatist tensions or 'RMS' (Republik Maluku Selatan) is not a relevant factor during that time. The Muslim side however mentioned it in interviews as if it was a relevant factor in the conflict. This means that the framing of the conflict and identity was important. From one party the Christians were framed as separatist and not nationalistic and from the other side the Muslims were framed as religious extremists that wanted to create an Islamic Indonesia with little space for other religions.

Economy

As the literature suggests, economy usually only plays a role in the background. Many conflicts start when people have economic problems. However economic motives are usually not used to mobilize people. The Asian financial crisis that started in 1997 hit Indonesia quite hard. It is estimated this had a major impact on society. This financial crisis was also one of the major factors in the political crisis that followed in Indonesia when President Suharto was forced to step down in 1998. The economic crisis meant inflation of the national currency, the rupiah, and areas in the periphery of the Indonesian republic were hit the hardest. None of the interviewees mentioned that this played a role. One of the writers that mentioned the economic situation in his book would downgrade the role of the economic situation in the interview. In some way economics are a very rational system that people can not relate to as much. When the economic situation is poor, they usually blame some institution or people group. For many Moluccan people, these people might have been the immigrant population living mainly near the harbour. While for those groups the fact that they could not really participate into the Ambonese society may have been more confronting in times of crisis. Respondent 4, involved in reconciliation, mentions the role for the economy but does not elaborate on that. Respondent 14, a writer, mentions that for him the economy is not the most important part. However, he is of the opinion that the resources that are available throughout the Moluccans are plenty. He recognizes that the regional income is very low but that is because of bad management of the resources. He thinks transportation through the air from Ambon to Jakarta is insanely expensive and that is not fair for the local people. Respondent 15, an academic, mentions the economic reform through the economic crisis as one of the issues leading up to the conflict.

Historical segregation

One of the factors that is mentioned in the literature is the fact that the colonial era left a segregation between the Christian and Muslim communities. This is confirmed by respondent 15 who mentions this inequality between the communities as a factor of importance. Besides the continued relationship between mostly the Christian community and (communities in) the Netherlands makes for an uneven playing field. The segregation from colonial times was continued into the conflict according to interview 16. This meant that the Maluku people worked mainly in office jobs and as teachers. The Bugis, Buton, Makassar and Javanese people worked in the markets. This is a clear segregation in the economy.

The idea that was presented in the literature about unequal treatment during colonial rule is confirmed in one of the interviews. The fact that the Christian community was favoured by the Dutch colonial rule in areas such as education lead to a feeling that was really felt throughout the different Islamic communities in the archipelago.

Both the literature as well as the respondents paint a picture where several aspects of identity played a role in this conflict. The result however seems to be two opposing religious identities where other aspects were integrated into. What other aspects of identity are mentioned that are relevant for the conflict?

Enforcing the new group identities

Respondent 4, involved in reconciliation, talks about how group identities were enforced. The different religious group identities there were several physical aspects of people that were changed. The Christian people would start to wear red coloured clothing or bandana's while the Muslim people would start wearing white clothing or bandanas. This was meant to be more distinct from each other. Respondent 10, involved in reconciliation, mentions that the Christian side initially used a purple colour to identity their own group but that was changed swiftly towards the red colour. The respondents from interview 12 also mention the use of these headbands. However, they view this as religious elements

being used rather than religious identification. Respondent 4, involved in reconciliation mentions that different nicknames were made up for both groups, 'Acang' coming from 'Hasan' to signify the Muslims and 'Obet' coming from 'Robert' to signify the Christians. To further differentiate the different religious groups words that indicate relations in the Moluccan culture were altered. These words often indicate whether somebody is older than you or has a higher position in society and are used to talk respectfully to one another. These words would be altered in a way that an 'older brother' as a general term changed to two different words that would indicate if that 'older brother' was either Muslim or Christian. These changes seem like a mental segregation of the two religions as well.

Not only did the different religious identity groups develop nicknames for the 'other' group, they started changing parts of the language. In Indonesian and Moluccan culture, it is a custom to address other people with a social title. These titles often refer to a kind of family relationship and can be of a more or less formal nature. The titles often translate to 'older brother', 'younger sister' and several more variations. These titles were uniformly present amongst both religious groups before the conflict. However, when the conflict progressed and the identity groups became more enforced, these terms were changed in a way that the term implicitly gave information on the religious background of the person that is addressed. Inspiration for these 'new' words came from Latin for the Christian side or from Arabic for the Muslim side.

Another factor that enforced the religious boundaries of group identities were the influence of outsiders on the conflict. For the Muslim side, the introduction of militant groups from islands such as Sulawesi and Java under the name 'Laskar Jihad' (Jihad warriors) enforced these religious group identities. The influx of these militant forces further escalated the conflict. However, confirmed by respondent 11, a victim, these people had a different cultural background and were therefore not always welcome in the Muslim communities. The fact that they were perceived as different people's groups was often based on their different way of speaking, having a different accent compared with the more local Moluccan way of speaking. The Christian side received aid from family and the diaspora in the Netherlands, which in some ways also strengthened the segregation, this was mentioned in interview 10.

A very interesting part of the conflict is that to gain legitimacy The Christian and The Muslim sides both tried to identify with an outside conflict. However, their understanding of this conflict is overly simplistic when compared to reality. This was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Christian side would identify with Israel while the Muslim side would identify with the Palestinians. In Ambon there are still Israeli and Palestinian flags and symbols in Christian and Muslim quarters, respectively. These flags and symbols show the segregation in spaces and places that is still going on to this day. The suggestion that Israeli people would not always identify as Christian and not all Palestinians are Muslim does not matter to them. The perspective of the area is that the conflict in Israel Palestine is exactly about religious boundaries. This is not the only way people tried to differentiate themselves from the other party. The Christian militias would usually wear red and The Muslims white to differentiate themselves from the other party. Different areas within the city are marked with the different symbols making the conflict spatial as well. After the conflict the current president Joko Widodo, often named 'Jokowi' opened a bridge called 'merah-putih' or red and white to overcome these differences. This is not just a bridge, it actually goes all across the bay connecting both sides of the island, allowing important economic development.

Part 3 - Facilitation of group identities? – issues surrounding media portrayals and provocateurs

Role of the media?

Widely mentioned in the interviews is the part of misinformation. The most persistent rumours that were mentioned several times by the Muslim respondents is the fact that they heard the main mosque in the city, the Al-Fattah mosque, was burnt down. This triggered mobilisation by Muslim communities outside of Batu Merah as well. During the course of the conflict, there was often news of upcoming attacks. However, through inter-community communication there was often no plan to attack at all. This often led to the belief among Mollucan people that there were provocateurs that intended for this interreligious violence to happen. In interview 12 for example, they talk extensively about 'invisible hands.'

Just the presence of tensions within societies as they develop and advance through times, especially in the modern era is not uncommon. These tensions however alone are not sufficient for the outbreak of conflict. Besides an obvious trigger there are role for the Indonesian government and the media. The way that the government and the media acted may have facilitated the conflict. When there are sufficient tensions in society alone, they might not lead to conflict but the conditions that are created by other factors combined with local developments might be sufficient for the outbreak of violent conflict.

To have a clear overview it must be established first which media were relevant during that period. It only comes naturally that in 1999 even though only 20 years ago the digital media landscape was very different. The amount of people having access to television was probably negligible, there are no official statistics about this but in the interviews, it was almost unanimously said that they did not have a television at the time. Other forms of media that did play a role were mostly the newspapers and the radio. A major distinction must be made between local and national media. Within the different local media there were very outspoken newspapers and relatively neutral ones. It is very likely that they had an impact in strengthening group identity, helping the conflict to escalate beyond boundaries. Another way of communicating that was crucial at the time was the use of walkie-talkies, making it easier to spread news within communities. The impact of these devices should definitely not be underestimated.

The responses with regards to the media are mixed with several respondents not sure what to say about it. The general misinformation that spread from individual to individual and from community to community seemed to have a big impact. According to the respondent of interview 18, the mass media of Jakarta, contributed to a cloudy atmosphere, it being an important cause for the shift in identity towards religion. Respondent 16, a journalist, mentions that all the media at some point met in Bandung/Bogor near Jakarta with representatives to agree on a media code. This code had to address issues surrounding misinformation. To accomplish this simple rules were made, for example, every statement had to have a source and was checked by other before something was published.

The respondents that worked in the media at the time explained that there were two major newspapers at the time being Suara Maluku meaning the voice of the Mollucans, and Ambon Ekspres. Suara Maluku was made up from entirely Christian reporters and Ambon Ekspres was made up from entirely Muslim reporters. This meant that the readers would either read one of the two newspapers based on their religious background. Another factor was that the reporters could only go to one side to check the news and to report on the stories creating a very one-sided image. This led to over-reporting of casualties heating the tensions between the two sides of the conflict. This information is based on the interview with respondent 16, a journalist.

Respondent 16, a journalist, talks about the creation of the Moluccan Media Centre (MMC). This news platform was a cooperation between several journalists from both sides with the goal of providing reliable news, through responsible journalism. This started as a result of the previously talked about segregation of the media along the lines of the Ambonese society. This basically had several effects on reporting the conflict, both locally as nationally. The fact that Christian media could not access Muslim areas and vice versa meant that stories could not be verified and as a result there was mostly reports about losses within their own group. Most newspapers and or radio and television broadcasts were mostly followed by either the Christian or the Muslim areas, respectively. With the start of more cooperation between the different religious groups and the foundation of the Maluku Media Centre (MMC) there was a shift in reporting on the conflict. Peace Journalism became the key focus and an ethical code for the media was established. This had a positive impact on the conflict. The media took responsibility by accepting the role of their reporting on the conflict and took active steps to adapt their reporting to not further fuel the conflict. Their initial reporting strengthened their identities of the different religious groups in the conflict and the willingness of combatants to continue their struggle.

When it comes to the role of the government it is not necessarily their active role rather than their passive role that had an impact on the outbreak of the conflict. Through the ideas of Hobbes it has been a very accepted idea in political philosophy that the absence of a national state can lead to anarchy and violence between people. His idea of a social contract in the form of a national state that should prevent violence are very applicable here. The democratic transformation of Indonesia as previously talked about led to just that vacuum of power. This vacuum of power created the conditions the conflict could flourish in. Many Moluccan people would say that it was a preconceived master plan by the national government to let the conflict happen to further an agenda. This however is a very bold claim and it would be impossible to find any evidence for that in a research like this. What can be said though about the role of the military that they did not always step in and in some cases either joined the conflict directly or because of corruption sold weapons and ammunition to combatants. Many interviewees have come up with these suggestions or provided examples of this happening. The fact that a military outpost would be built in a certain region did not always lead to a feeling of safety by local residents. The fact that there were other people having an interest in the conflict besides potential spoilers and provocateurs seems clear, however this research is not about the role of these factors in the conflict.

Part 4 – Reconciliation through culture?

Kota Ambon is a city that consists of many different groups of people. Several of the respondents actually moved into Kota Ambon after the initial start of the conflict. Some from nearby communities but a couple from more remote islands as well. This would in some cases be a consequence of the new identity discourse, where religious minorities would in many cases be evicted from their land area.

The unique geographical location of Ambon within the Moluccan archipelago became a struggle on its own, the patchwork of different communities in the area meant that they had to cooperate to travel and move to other places, often access to certain locations and roads was denied by the opposing party. This meant that different villages had to work together to make sure supplies could be obtained from other areas by speedboat, children could go to school and medicines could be brought to different communities.

In this part the role of women in the reconciliation process will be highlighted, they were the ones going to different villages buying fish for example and starting the reconciliation effort from grassroot level. This enabled the larger reconciliation process between former combatants to be relatively successful. The fact that communities often had to work together in order to survive, a kind of mutual dependency had major impact on identity and the conflict. As long as communities do not need each other it is easier to stick to principles and completely deny the other side access to space, resources or any form of cooperation for that matter. The use of space and place is very different in the city compared to the other communities on the island as well. For example, people from the island of Saparua could only reach Ambon city if they took a ferry through the village of Tulehu. It happens to be that the population of Saparua is almost entirely Christian and the community of Tulehu is almost entirely Muslim. This meant that these communities had to work together because they did not have a choice. In this case the traditional Adat law played a huge role in the identity of people since they often encountered groups they were related to or had connections with the opposing side. These relations made communications and reconciliation efforts way easier since in their strong regional identity the other had a place of respect and tradition.

Spaces in the city can now be divided into Christian and Muslim neighbourhoods. In the middle of the city there is a big boulevard that is located on the place where most of the fighting took place and is therefore considered as the border between quarters. This area can be seen as an area of opportunity where the younger generations of both groups meet and exchange ideas. The shared space between the different quarters is therefore a unique and vibrant area in the city. Around this area there are many coffee places and restaurants where youth likes to meet, according to respondent 10, involved in reconciliation, this is at the heart of the Moluccan culture.

Besides the obvious connections through culture, Adat law and traditional structures, there is one sport that was used to make communities connect. Even during the conflict reconciliation through playing football was present in some communities. It does not seem like much but with football sometimes they could forget their different identities and play and practise together. At some point a Moluccan team won a tournament in Jakarta and they could celebrate together even though they were still in conflict, this story was told by the respondents of interview 12, academics.

The respondents all point out the fact that elements in the Moluccan culture help in the process of reconciliation. The systems of 'Pela' and 'Gandong' facilitate a renewed focus on the Moluccan identity instead of a divided mindset that only allows for religious identity. These systems are not just in place for intercommunity cooperation but also facilitate dialogue. In the answers of the respondents there are many examples where these relationships still respected regardless of the religious conflict. There are two main principals that talk about the religious duality within the Moluccan culture coming from

the Adat system. These are 'Sagu salemping bagi dua' and 'Potong di cucu rasa di daging'. These principals are translated as followed: 'The Sagu is divided into two parts' and 'Cut the nails and taste the flesh'. The Sagu is the traditional tree, with food coming from it considered traditional. This unlike the rice that Indonesia is known for, which is a more Javanese introduction. By saying the Sagu should be divided into two, this means acceptance of the religious duality within the Moluccan community. The Sagu should be shared and the communities should take care of each other. The other saying should be interpreted as when you cut your nails, you should not win. Meaning that there is no purpose on having conflict within.

During the conflict there are several examples of inter-religious cooperation between communities with 'Pela' and 'Gandong' relationships. A good example was mentioned by respondent 8 where one house of the community was spared after they wrote their 'Pela' relationship in letters on their house. This indicates that these relationships were still respected during the conflict. The clearest example that these relationships were still respected comes from respondent 11, a victim. This interview was taken in a community a bit further from Kota Ambon, in the community of Tulehu. The answers this respondent provided were very different from other respondents. The literature suggests that the violent outbreak spread to most areas around the Mollucan archipelago. However certain communities chose not to partake in the conflict and to preserve peaceful relationships with neighbouring communities from the different religious affiliation.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that although the conflict was mostly framed around religious identity it started out with two different factors, communal violence and ethnic identity issues. Several other identity factors played a clear role as well, nationalist versus separatist, economic issues, electoral violence as well as cultural and political struggles. All these factors together were framed into two main identity groups that fell within religious boundaries. Historical segregation and group mobilisation were factors in putting up religious boundaries as well. These groups were enforced by physical and linguistical-cultural elements. To further enforce these group identities actors from outside were brought in which put the focal point even more on religion.

The identity shift that took place was enforced by the media which were segregated by religious boundaries as well. This led to misinformation further fuelling the conflict. The presence of provocateurs is mentioned a lot as well; however it remains difficult to pinpoint the issue. When looking at the process of reconciliation it seems that the focal point shifted from religion towards the shared moral and cultural values. Local organisations, peace building efforts and the rise of responsible local media helped to facilitate this second shift. The nuance should be made that this second shift is still in progress. The next chapter will elaborate on how to interpret the different findings through the empirical data.

Analytical chapter – how to interpret identity dynamics in the Mollucan conflict

As shown in the previous chapter the findings from both observations and the interviews are in regard to a few aspects quite mixed and in others they are very similar. For example, when talking about which aspects of the local culture could help in the process of reconciliation, they almost collectively refer to the traditional *Adat* system with the 'Pela' and 'Gandong' cultural systems. However, when it comes to influence of the media the responses are more mixed, recognizing a lot of influence by the media or not at all recognizes their influence on the conflict. In what way can they be analysed? It is possible to identify several developments that can be categorized into two major shifts in identity that surrounded the Moluccan conflict. The first shift that took place was from a pre-conflict identity discourse into a conflict identity discourse. This development did not happen suddenly but was a development that occurred slowly in the background and was heavily influenced by both international, national and local developments. When the violence ended in Ambon there was a presence of a negative peace, with occasional outbursts of violence. To move on into a positive peace a second major shift in identity discourse occurred. This shift was a more conscience attempt by both communities, individuals and other organisations to create a durable peace. What the main identity aspects of both major shifts in identity discourse were will be covered extensively in this chapter. The main difference in the process between the first and second major identity shift is the fact that the second shift was for a major part actively shaped like that by people in order to overcome the conflict, while the first shift was more of a passive development which was the consequence of a wide array in developments. Before the conflict there was a lot of cultural variation between different communities, however the religious identity would become the main shared factor in the conflict.

This chapter will be divided in two main parts, which cover two distinct developments surrounding the conflict. Naturally the first part will be about the first shift in identity discourse from pre-conflict to conflict with relevant corresponding identity aspects. After that the latter half of this chapter covers the second major shift in identity discourse. This division has been applied to make this chapter more comprehensible and to emphasize two vastly diverging developments that took place in the area in modern history. At the end of this chapter an adapted conceptual model is represented through figure 7 that shows the analytical perspective on identity discourse around the Moluccan conflict based of this research project.

In the interviews there is distinction between personal experience and the analysis of experts within the interviews. Most people in Ambon would say, when asked about their personal experience, that the conflict came out of nowhere. It could be argued however that this might be their experience but that it is not entirely true that the conflict came entirely out of nowhere. Existing structural tensions present in Ambon despite the absence of major conflicts before this one, confirms the presence of a negative peace.⁵⁷ This means that there was an absence of direct violence but tensions between communities were present. The idea that Ambon was a very vibrant community with lots of interactions between different groups with different religious or ethnical backgrounds before the conflict and strict segregation after the conflict is therefore an exaggeration of the situation before the conflict in comparison with the situation after the conflict. While it is true that after the conflict most communities or quarters were entirely homogenous, the situation before the conflict was not much different. Throughout most of the Moluccans village had either an entirely Muslim or Christian population. Kota Ambon was therefore the exception on the rule. It is actually a very logical situation

⁵⁷ John Galtung, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research', *Journal of Peace Research*, 6:3 (1969) 167-191.

that in the capital different parts of the population live next to each other and this is a common geographical phenomenon. In Kota Ambon however the different neighbourhoods still have very strong identities and a sense of community. It is estimated that before the conflict about 90% of the population in certain quarters belonged to one of the two major religions. The conflict meant that the minorities living in a quarter where the majority was of the other religion were driven out and that segregation was further enforced.

Segregation in Ambonese society is not only along religious lines it just happens that the conflict was framed that way. Later in the second part of this chapter it will become clear that aspects of identity were made to fit along these religious boundaries. The first division comes out of colonial times, when the Dutch colonial government had a preference to work with Christian groups in the area. Most people working for the local government therefore used to be Christian. In Kota Ambon there are many ethnic minorities that originally came from three distinct places on the island of Sulawesi, these are the Bugis, Buton and Makassar people. These people did not fit into existing community structures which lead to them mostly living and working in the harbour area of Kota Ambon. These ethnic minorities were of Islamic faith which became an important factor in the conflict. The fact that Ambonese people are very attached to their cultural identity led to tensions with immigrants from other parts of Indonesia.

Pre-conflict to conflict- an analytical perspective on identity discourse evolution

When stating that the first major shift in identity discourse from a pre-conflict identity discourse into a conflict identity discourse took place in the build-up towards the conflict it has to be explained first what the pre-conflict identity discourse looked like, what aspects of identity were important and how did they function. The pre-conflict identity discourse focussed mostly on regional identity, community identity, cultural identity and religious identity. This would change however into two identity groups that focussed almost exclusively around religion, with other parts of identity being prescribed or claimed by each religious group. A good example of this is the fact that RMS, the struggle for an independent republic of the South Moluccans was exclusively part of the Christian identity while the Muslim identity in contrast was connected to nationalism.

The extraordinary part of the conflict is that unlike most intrastate conflicts the respondents almost universally said that the conflict seemed to come out of nowhere. That means no conflict rhetoric or a build-up towards a violent outbreak that is to be expected. This absence of a conflict rhetoric does not mean however that there are no underlying tensions between different communities. There were several tensions that were either present because of historical circumstances or the unique composition of the Ambonese society. These factors together were not sufficient for a violent conflict, but these were definitely major factors that facilitated it.

Provocateurs

When asking respondents what the conflict was about, they are heavily convinced that outside forces or provocateurs with an interest in creating conflict had a central role in creating the different identities and exploiting the emotions of different communities. The different identities aspects are in this case strengthened through religious affiliations, escalating the conflict. The framing into a religious conflict escalated the conflict drawing more and more groups in from inside and outside Ambon who were triggered by this new conflict paradigm. The level of misinformation and rumours that were mentioned often in the interviews could come from these agents provocateurs or just a general chaotic time without clear communication possibilities between individuals and groups.

The outbreak of the conflict did not resolve around religious identity, both respondents and the literature seem to suggest there were different factors at play. After the initial incident at the bus station, the Christian communities mainly from the Merdika quarter rallied and started protests the Bugis, Buton and Makassar people. These were the main immigrant groups that lived in Kota Ambon. However, these identities that mostly resolve around ethnicity were quickly abandoned in favour of religious identity. The 'BBM' people groups, coming originally from several areas on the island of Sulawesi were of Islamic faith. In reality, these groups had different cultural, ethnical and linguistic backgrounds. Those factors combined had made them outsiders in the Ambonese society. Strong group organisation in that time contributed to rapid mobilisation. This ethnic identity theme only lasted for a couple of days when religious identity took over. One of the more plausible reasons on why this happened is the fact that it is logical to organise around a religious identity. Communities already resolved a lot around religious identities, thus it being the strongest factor to rally around. For the 'BBM' people that was the uniting factor and for the Christians, they would organise through communal identities, which were mostly religiously homogenous.

In order to facilitate this religious identities several conflicting aspects would be acquired by each of the sides to make for two complete identities that were fundamentally different in the state mind of the people. Did these identities come out of nowhere or were there any precedents or historical and cultural developments that facilitated this switch? Arguably the segregation not just geographically but politics and the economic situation could have influenced the situation and lowered the threshold for these identities to take central stage in the conflict. To explain this situation several of the factors will be covered one by one in order to make it more understandable.

The idea that segregation is mostly a post-conflict realisation is not fair. Before the conflict there was a segregation where usually around 90% of a certain area would be part of one of the communities. The conflict would result in a stronger segregation, but the pre-conflict situation was quite segregated as well. The strong segregation continues to immigrant parts of the population. The immigrant population is for Ambonese people quite distinctive. This geographical segregation stemmed from a historical development that dates back to the colonial times.

The Moluccans were in turn influenced by Arab traders and consequently by Portuguese and Dutch colonial powers. These three influences result in the three major religions in the area being Islam, Catholicism and Protestantism. The Dutch colonial rule had a preference for the Christian population when it comes to serving in the military, the royal Dutch Indian army (KNIL). Besides the military the Dutch colonial government started with segregation between the communities by putting mostly Christian people in government positions. The segregation that stems from this policy is one of the factors of segregation in the area. After independence this remained the case, the Christian population was overrepresented in government positions. During the later years of the New Order regime Christians would be more and more replaced by Muslims, mostly in the national government. Through a more Islamic positioning of the national identity the Christian population felt threatened. The immigration of 'BBM' Muslim people into the area only increased the segregation since they mostly took up jobs in the harbour area or working in trade and on the markets. With earlier disputes the Muslim Ambonese population more and more chose the side of the immigrant population at the time. Thus as a result Christian 'Negeri' felt left behind when Muslim 'Negeri' more often chose the side of immigrants of the same religion while Muslim 'Negeri' felt that they always had a worse position than the Christian 'Negeri' still from the colonial times.

Ambonese society has really strong communal organisation. Mostly through the strong traditional system, but around religious communities and family ties as well. The strong communal segregation as part of the culture has its downsides as well. Communities are easily mobilised which is a risk factor

when it comes to conflict. The organisation of the communities also facilitates the rapid spread of misinformation which was a factor that should not be underestimated. Whether provocateurs or an unfortunate collection of circumstances, this contributed heavily to the emotion of communities. The effect of the communities being organised this way is obvious, identity would be shaped around the same religious community.

From the fact that many of the respondents confirm that initially the protests and violence was mostly around the immigrant part of the population of Kota Ambon, it can be concluded that this was the real issue. For several, mostly, but not exclusively Christian communities, the issues with these communities were cultural and political. The protests may have been instigated by the economic situation. The economy was very segregated as well, with the majority of the immigrant population working in the markets and harbour areas. This strong economic segregation may have been a strong factor in the economic crisis since some branches of the economy would be hit more severe than others. This could have resulted in unrest in several communities since they would be the ones hit the hardest.

To make more of a distinction between the different groups parts of the language changed as well for both religious affiliations. It is important to note that in Ambon they speak 'Bahasa Ambon' which is a variant on the Malay language. The national Indonesian language of 'Bahasa Indonesia' is also derived from the Malay language but in a later stage than the 'Bahasa Ambon'. 'Bahasa Ambon' is influenced a lot by the Portuguese and Dutch colonial languages. With the emergence of the conflict and the emergence of a religious based identity discourse both groups changed and adopted new words. In Indonesian and Ambonese culture family and societal relations are much clearer defined than in the Western culture. These relations are often defined by age, status and sex. All these relations are then defined by a title that is used often to address the other person. This system works similarly for people that you are not familiar with. In the conflict both Christian and Muslim sides adopted different words to identify an older person. Older persons are often addressed with 'older brother' or 'older sister'. Both communities started to use different words for this title which used to be one word in Ambonese society. This linguistical change indicates the change of mindset. At first the religious background was not crucial in living together with other persons. However apparently the need for knowing and thus addressing the religious background of the other person became more urgent. The different words were often inspired by the cultural background of each religion, being either Arabic or Latin. These different linguistical titles show very clearly that there was a major change in the identity discourse from a Pre-conflict identity discourse into a conflict identity discourse.

Another factor that became part of both group identities is whether they would like to secede or not. The Mollucans tried to secede from Indonesia in 1950 to form an independent Republik Maluku Selatan. This secession attempt was crushed by the Indonesian military at the time and a larger presence of military in the area had existed since then. The secession attempt was in reality more supported by the Christian population than the Muslim part of the population but was definitely not exclusively supported by the Christian communities. Many prominent Muslim community leaders supported the movement at the time as well. However during the conflict, the Muslim side would ascribe this part of the identity on the Christian communities while the Christian communities did not seem to fully support this idea. While there are still parts of the population that support this idea, this seems to be not connected to either of the religious groups.

Leading up to the fall of the New Order regime in 1998 there was a renewed interest in the traditional Adat legal and cultural system. In the same time there was rising trend to preserve and record the religious history of Islam and Christianity in the region. These two trends were at odds with each other since one focussed on a 'return' towards a traditional society where there was a more prevalent role

for traditional ways of governing. The other trend focussed much more on the religious identity without a need for the traditional system. Since the failed secession in 1950 the central government tried to centralize the political system and restricted many parts of the Adat system, leaving it to be mostly ceremonial. Only after the decentralization laws of 1999 and 2004 there would be more room to focus on the traditional system and its legislative and political role.

The more prevalent interest of the history of religion within the area prior to the conflict books were published that did not emphasize the general Moluccan culture rather the Islamic Moluccan culture. A good example of this is the book *Sejarah Perlawanan Masyarakat Islam Terhadap Imperialisme Di Daerah Maluku (history of resistance of the Islamic community against imperialism in the area of the Mollucans)*.⁵⁸ Books like this one mostly focussed on the own religious groups and were a precursor to the mindset that not necessarily focussed on the Moluccan Identity but on the religious identity instead. This book therefore forms a sharp contrast with books that were published after the violent conflict. A good example of a book that was published with the Post-conflict identity discourse in mind is *Perdamaian Berbasis Adat Orang Bersaudara (peace based of the Adat law and living in brotherhood)*.⁵⁹ Books like this emphasize the Moluccan culture with local values and promote the message of living together. So, when looking at the publication of books there is a clear development as well that falls in line with the different identity discourses.

⁵⁸ H. Maryam RL Lestaluhu, *Sejarah Perlawanan masyarakat Islam terhadap Imperialisme di Dareah Maluku*.

⁵⁹ Aholiab Watloly et al, *Perdamaian Berbasis Adat Orang Basudara* (Yogyakarta 2016).

Conflict to post-conflict – an analytical perspective on the road to durable peace

The second major shift in identity that took place from a conflict identity discourse into a post-conflict identity discourse is arguably still ongoing. During this transition there were two major aspects of identity that changed. The religious part of identity was no longer the main point of identification and the Moluccan part of the identity became more central. To facilitate this shift there has been a strong emphasis on reviving local culture in the form of the Adat law and customs. There are many grassroots peacebuilding attempts emphasising the shared culture as the main factor of identification. The successfulness of the implementation in Moluccan youth is mainly due to the fact it relies heavily on singing and dancing events where youth of different religious affiliations is coming together and 'putting the new discourse to practise.' The revival of the traditional Adat law and customs started in the later years of the New Order regime and was strengthened through Indonesian decentralization laws in 1999 and 2004. The challenge of putting this discourse in the minds of the Moluccan people will be to keep it inclusive for people from outside and to keep working on this discourse, because it is not finished yet.

How did this shift take place, from a central religious identity discourse that led to conflict to a more cultural approach that promotes a system of peaceful coexistence? In order to answer this question this part will go through the different troublesome aspects of identity that were present during the conflict and explain what happened to it. To be clear the religious identity will still be very important to Moluccan people, but the focus should be on being Moluccan first.

The major shift in this stage of the conflict was the focus on a common culture. The resurgence of the Adat system, a development that started in the decades before the conflict and was continued afterwards helped to create a new identity discourse. Through several factors this resurgence had a relatively successful implementation. The first factor is the involvement of academia to go back to the roots of the Moluccan culture and to publish many books on the elements of the culture. In a way this seems a bit like the 'invention of tradition' development, as seen in many developing nations to create a stronger group identity. The second factor is the implementation through grassroots peacebuilding efforts often initiated by local actors. The third factor is the need for reconciliation of existing relationships between different religious communities. The strong reliance on the narrative of provocateurs helps to reunite the Ambonese society up to a point. When the perpetrators are coming from outside it is easier to accept this new narrative that focusses on common identity. This narrative therefore facilitated an easier shift towards a post-conflict identity discourse.

The need for reconciliation between these communities was not the same everywhere. As interview 10 clearly showed there were many communities that did respect the old Pela and Gandong relationships. In many other instances houses were not burned when the Pela relationship was mentioned, indicating that in many instances these relationships were in fact respected. However, the religious divide needed to be bridged, to use an existing cultural and political system was therefore a logical choice.

The separatist tendencies that were often used as a factor in the conflict have probably moved towards the background. The respondents mentioned the importance of this perception within the conflict rhetoric but when it came to the post-conflict perspective, they were oddly enough not mentioned a lot. It seems therefore that the Christian side has attributed this trait for their identity without it being representative for the whole group. The fact that certain individuals still strive for independence is understandable, but they do not speak for the whole group. The post-conflict discourse actually

allowed for both Muslim and Christian communities to have a strong focus around their local Mollucan identity. The issue around strong nationalist tendencies versus strong separatist tendencies seems to have been dissolved somewhat through the process of conflict resolution. However, there are still quiet voices who strive towards more autonomy or even independence through the idea of Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS). It is however not visible at all in the society on a daily basis, perhaps since this movement is very much depressed by the national government. The movement in the Netherlands however is still of a moderate size. This point will most likely remain a point of tension within the Ambonese communities outside Ambon and the Ambonese people who have a very different culture in some ways than other parts of Indonesia.

The initiatives for reconciliation are mostly coming from the grassroots. The grassroot way of peacebuilding is dominant. The role of the government is minimised by the respondents who name three categories of peacebuilding actors. The first group of actors are foreign NGO's who trained local people in order to facilitate this process. Among others respondent three was trained in Australia to better facilitate this process. This respondent was involved in projects bringing together former child combatants from both Christian and Muslim communities. The second major actor when it comes to peacebuilding are local initiatives by NGO's and community leaders. The influence these actors have over their respective communities is quite important. The third category of actors involved in the process of peacebuilding are the young and local people. The young people used a variety of tools to unite around shared passions to leave behind the segregation between communities in all aspects of daily life. Good examples of these are groups that enjoy the nature, photography or playing sports. In these groups there is a lot of interreligious interaction which contributes to the Mollucan identity becoming a more prevalent factor in the minds of the people.

Many previously mentioned initiatives like Art for Peace, exchanging of community members for a 'live in' and the emergence of photography and dance groups to practice a shared passion have really contributed in as shared vision on the future. The focus on indigenous cultural elements like singing and dancing brought groups together in a quite successful attempt of peacebuilding. The role public space has in this process of reconciliation is important as well. Although the communities are still living in highly segregated ways the public space is where the communities meet. In Kota Ambon there are many examples of coffee houses and restaurants located in the middle of communities on the place where the border between communities used to exist.

Another crucial role is held by the media. During the conflict, the regional media was heavily segregated, which each religious denomination having their own newspaper. Through the creation of the Maluku Media Centre (MMC), where reporters of different religious affiliations work together and can check each other stories a new situation occurred. The Maluku Media Centre that had been created with the idea of peace journalism in mind greatly helped to calm the situation down. The media and rumours had a major role in the outbreak of the conflict, spreading news that increased people's security dilemmas and increasing anger with the population with unconfirmed rumours. However the promotion of peace journalism that was implemented in Ambon can focus on the Mollucan identity instead of the religious identity. During the conflict it was often not possible to confirm stories since the media could only report on their respective side of the religious divisions and borders. The Maluku Media Centre is one of the initiatives to overcome this problem. The news should not be one-sided since it can lead to self-enforcing the religious identities and contribute to violent conflict. There is still a very strong contrast with the national media that often still uses sensational headlines whenever a new incident occurs. The national media is however partly dependent on news coming from Ambon. To check the news through responsible reporters that promote peace journalism remains important.

Even though these initiatives are of crucial importance to hold up this new post-conflict discourse there are always risks that the conflict discourse has not yet disappeared. Structural factors have a major impact on the shift in a discourse. Ambon is benefited by a stable economy and political situation. The investments that have been made by the government to exploit and grow Ambon's economy should contribute to long-term stability. The fact that different communities still live geographically segregated from each other remains a risk if new conflict may occur. An issue that still exists is the renewed feeling of religiosity, a national development, to become an important factor as well. Several remarks that have been made, mainly by respondent 4, show the challenges teachers are dealing with in this sensitive area. Other new issues can lead to new tensions between the Moluccans and the central government as well. An important issue is the fact that the price of transportation from Ambon to other parts of Indonesia and vice versa is enormous. Many local people can therefore never afford to travel to the other parts of the county. This is a new point of tension within Indonesia and can hopefully be resolved.

In the empirical chapter the elections were mentioned by a couple of respondents. These elections would put the different religious identities at odds with each other since the political candidates would frame themselves through their respective religions. This problem has not been solved yet it seems, when incorporating the presidential elections of spring 2019 votes were mostly cast along religious lines. The two presidential candidates at the time being Joko Widodo, who was sitting president, and Prabowo who challenged him. When looking at the result of these elections it becomes visible that the Christian communities mostly voted on Widodo while the Muslim communities mostly voted on Prabowo.⁶⁰ This is not that surprising since Prabowo is mostly portrayed as the more conservative Muslim candidate, while Widodo is more moderate. Jokowi would eventually win the 2019 elections for a second term in office. This whole situation shows that using identity in political affairs remains widespread in Indonesia and that this can result in segregation between communities.

The Moluccans are not there yet, and a certain level of mistrust will remain with the middle generations. The young people are like in many societies the ones that change the society. However, the fact that the focus is around the common values and culture has a chance of connecting the whole society. Occasional relapses into violence have happened until 2011 and there have been smaller incidents later but with a focus on the shared identity and the focus on peace journalism the Mollucans have a real chance to escape the conflict trap.

Conclusion

In what way do the dynamics surrounding identity follow the academic debate? The Mollucan case is able to nuance several of these debates.

However more research is necessary of specific dynamics that played a role in this conflict to truly make the academic debate more nuanced.

Several phases of identity change have been described throughout the conflict. The identity shifts will first be summed up and then it will be explained how this processed worked and in which way it was influenced by the core Moluccan identity. The first phase was mostly about ethnicity, different groups clashing within the city. These different ethnic groups were the Moluccans in Ambon city and the 'BBM' Bugis, Buton & Makassar people that had migrated there the decades before that. Without going into the reasons why these identities clashed we focus on what happened next. These initial clashes were

⁶⁰ <https://www.newmandala.org/indonesias-elections-in-the-periphery-a-view-from-maluku/>

mostly in Ambon city before it spread to the rest of the archipelago. The time frame of the initial clash was therefore January and February, so a relatively short but important period in the conflict. These immigrant populations were almost exclusively Muslim and organised around that. As a result, the Christian Ambonese, initially only the protestant part started organising themselves around religious boundaries too. The religion became the main focus of the identity in the clashes that happened from April 1999 to 2002. After that the Christians were compared with RMS tendencies, separatist ideas and the Muslims were linked with the idea of remaining. These longer existing ideas were drawn into identities leading into the 3rd phase where people groups were even more divided. The fourth phase could be described as a phase of grievance. During the conflict there were many kidnappings in the city. Up until 2011 there were revenge actions, more or less sporadically. This does not necessarily bring a new aspect to identity but it shows that the created group identities are further enforced by grievance and the need for revenge.

Figure 6, the adapted conceptual model, attempts to portray a comprehensible overview of the identity shifts happening around the Moluccan conflict. Structural causes have been mostly left out of this overview as those are not the central focal point of this research project. Figure 6 aims to show the three different discourses pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict. The conflict identity discourse central to understanding the conflict lists the main points of tension connected to the violent conflict. All of these tensions were connected to the major religious identities, the Christian and Muslim identities. Through the role of civil society, local organisation, community leaders and responsible local media a renewed focus emphasised the common values of the Moluccan culture regardless of religious communities. The revival of the Adat cultural system along with the components of both 'Pela' and 'Gandong' the conflict identity discourse will slowly fade away. In reality the main difference between the first and second identity shift is the speed of the process. The first identity shift is influenced by long term development and processes but the shift itself was very abruptly. This happens mainly due to the outbreak of violence and the need to mobilize around a group identity quickly. The second shift however is a much slower process that does not move at the same speed for every community or individual. It takes time to leave the conflict behind especially for people having emotional and traumatic memories of the past conflict. The identities are not just passively created by processes but are shaped actively by individuals and organisations. Three main facilitators can be identified through the interviews, group mobilisation, media portrayal and provocateurs. The renewed focus on a shared cultural identity is shaped actively as well through civil society, local organisations, community leaders and responsible local media. Mediation attempts through common cultural activities are the means used to obtain this goal.

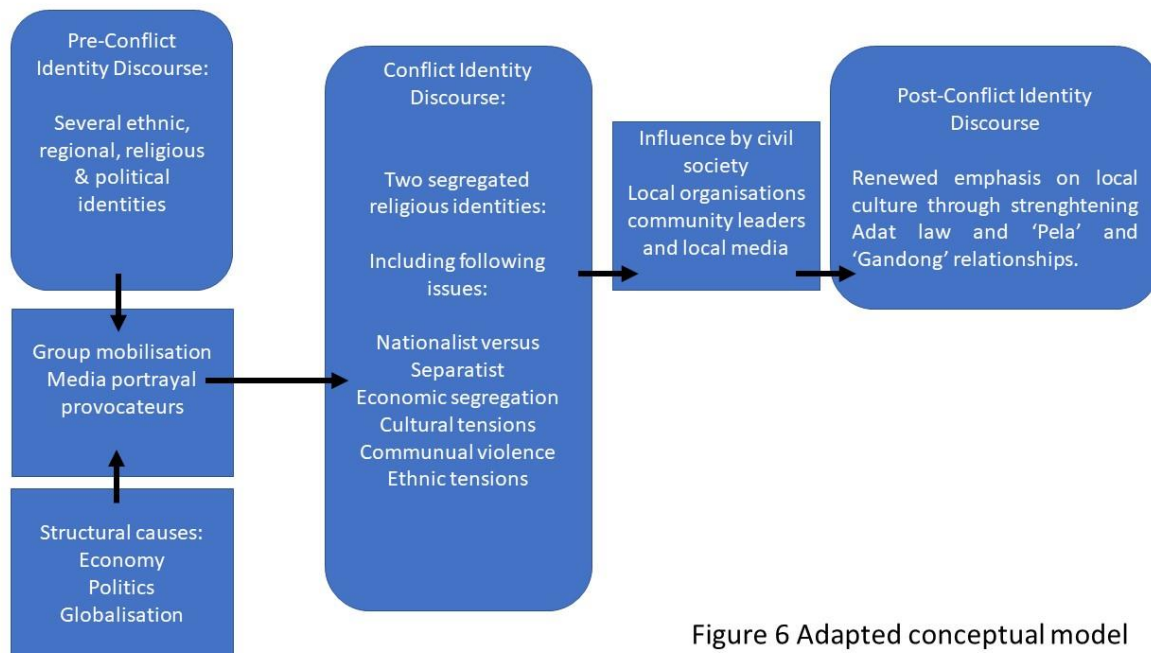


Figure 6 Adapted conceptual model

Conclusion – synopsis of complicated identity matters

The aim of this research project was to focus on identity issues in the Mollucan conflict. To better understand these identity shifts with the corresponding identity discourses a model was built to reflect the development of identity in violent conflict. In the next paragraphs the main research question and sub questions will be repeated in order to show where this project started at.

Recognizing the importance of identity discourses in violent conflicts: in which way did identity dynamics through identity discourses contribute to the outbreak of the violent conflict in Kota Ambon in 1999 and in which way did these dynamics contribute in the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding after the violent conflict?

Which aspects of identity played a role in the initial identity shift from a pre-conflict identity discourse to a conflict identity discourse and therefore contributed to the outbreak of the conflict?

Which aspects of identity played a role in the second identity shift from a conflict identity discourse to a post-conflict identity discourse and therefore contributed to the process of reconciliation?

In what way did actors such as the media and local organisations have a role in actively shape these discourses?

The fact that the Mollucan conflict is often framed as a religious conflict is unfair and overly simplistic. Through the historical segregation that started during the colonial period there were strong boundaries between the religious communities. Christians worked mostly in government and office jobs while the Muslim communities often worked in the market. This segregation was enforced during the New Order regime of Suharto. The influx of migrants from Bugis, Buton and Makassar strengthened the economic and communal segregation in Kota Ambon. The original *Adat* legislative and cultural system was under pressure by rules from the central government. When the New Order regime of Suharto fell in 1998 a national political transition resulted in the fact that the government was either not capable or lacked the will to intervene in many local conflicts. The democratic transition also meant that through elections the different identities were politicized and even more enforced. The Asian economic crisis which had an influence on this political transition had much impact on the segregated Ambonese society. Communal violence led to Ethnic violence which was quickly framed into religious violence.

The four structural aspects that set this development in motion were globalisation, economic depression, political transition, and a historical segregation. The global dynamics have had a serious impact on the Moluccan identity. These global dynamics include a resurgence of religion in the last part of the 20th century as well as migration and the integration of the world into one economic system. Another development has been the influx of Western ideas such as the right of self-determination and self-governance. These ideas were often suppressed by the New Order regime which focussed on a national identity on the principals of Pancasila. Pancasila would have many aspects but its main principal of unity in diversity would mean in practise that the focus was on the national identity. There was no room for a strong regional identity in that system. The national identity of Indonesia had always been a question mark. Through the introduction of an 'outside' language as the national language with the introduction of *Bahasa Indonesia*, the situation that came into existence was the fact that the Indonesian population did not speak 'Indonesian' as their first language. The balance between the national and regional identity was therefore always a point of discussion.

Throughout the New Order regime of Suharto there was more emphasis on the national identity in Indonesia. In the later stages of the Suharto regime though, there were two distinct important

developments on identity. The first development was a more prominent role for religion in one's identity both regionally as well as nationally. The second development was a greater emphasis on the traditional and local systems of culture and governance. These two dynamics were at odds with each other and created a field of tension between them. After the fall of the New Order regime and the subsequent decentralization of Indonesia the renewed focus on the traditional Adat system had more room. The issues with the traditional Adat system are however that it has some autocratic and non-democratic elements and that is not an inclusive system by definition, not including migrants from other parts of Indonesia in the system.

In the Mollucan case this meant that there were several identity issues that were at play and were strengthened through the national political turmoil. These issues were ethnic identity, communal violence, economic issues, political identity and the nationalist versus separatist ideas. These different aspects of identity led to two major groups emerging, the Christian and the Muslim identities. These identities emerged because of several reasons. The communities were already relatively segregated and had their own media channels. The security dilemma and organisation of communities in a time of crisis reinforced these identities. These different identity discourses based on religious affiliation were further enforced through the use of colours, the change of language and the identification with outside conflicts through identification with one of the two parties of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Outside forces like the Laskar Jihad and economic aid from the Moluccan diaspora in the Netherlands further strengthened the Muslim and Christian identities respectively.

Throughout the process of reconciliation there was a central role for the Adat law. Through a grassroots type of peacebuilding with many of the initiatives coming from local people and initiatives there was a strong emphasis on the Mollucan culture and values. The reinstating of the traditional Adat law and customs aided the shift towards a post-conflict identity discourse. However arguably the shift is still ongoing. The challenge will be throughout this transition to include the migrant population as well thus not creating new ways of segregation between different ethnic groups.

The fact that the reconciliation phase is part of decentralization and focuses on traditional cultural and legislative systems which also have non-democratic elements shows that perhaps there is more than just a Western teleological development model that is universal. On the other hand, democratization goes hand in hand with identity politics, which have side-effects like polarization and segregation as well. When the traditional system can lead to durable peace it might be the best solution for the area and therefore a positive development.

Even though incidents occasionally still occur, there is a reason to be optimistic about Ambon's reconciliation attempts as well. The incident that sparked a small violent uprising in 2011 shows that religion can still be a reason for conflict, even though it has nothing to do with a specific incident. The focus on traditional values through the *Adat* together with grassroots peacebuilding initiatives seem to be relatively successful in Ambon. The focus on Mollucan culture with the Adat system as the backbone of common values and traditions can lead to sustainable peace as long as it is inclusive for outsiders as well. Both respondents and experts on the situation claim that even though parties still live segregated from each other they merge in the public space. Structural changes in Indonesia and Ambon make a new outbreak of violence unlikely in my opinion. Many of the factors that led to the direct outbreak of the conflict have been addressed as well. The Indonesian government is more established and the army better organized making them more capable of tackling new conflict. A successful program of reconciliation and continued integration of these programs with education should lead to a younger generation that is well educated on these topics and should not be prone to violence as much as the generation before them. There have been initiatives in place that make media in Ambon and religious

and communal leaders more aware of the role they have in society. These initiatives should lead to the fact that they exchange information between the communities and try being responsible with the influence they have. Possible dangers for the future are the role of social media where false information can spread quickly and globalisation that might lead to an intensifying of religious feeling. One of the experts on the topic phrased in a good way saying: “extremist ideas are still out there, and they always will be.”

Reflection – evaluating the past and how to move forward

This part will focus on possible shortcomings of this research project. Potential ethical dilemmas, biases and limitations of this research project will be discussed. One of the possible limitations of this research is that the field research in Ambon to talk to activists, NGO's, and local people, but 'outside forces' are not included. The conflict, physically speaking, obviously took place in Kota Ambon, however the literature and respondents suggest that there was an influence of gang violence, the Jakarta elite and the military. These instigators may only be active in the background and it is not possible to interview them easily. However, this research project focussing mainly on identity perceptions, hence including mostly Moluccan people in this research project makes a lot of sense. The research project is mostly focussed on Kota Ambon, for reasons mentioned in the thesis itself. This urban area and surrounding communities were at the epicentre of the outbreak of violence and is still the provincial capital. This research project was at times practically challenging at the least. To gain different perspectives visiting nearby islands and communities as well as taking part in several educational projects provided extra perspectives. The topic of the Moluccan conflict is still quite sensitive in Indonesia especially when placed in the wider democratic transition at the time. Therefore, the respondents were almost exclusively provided by the Heka Leka Foundation, an organisation that aims to improve social cohesion through education in the Moluccans. However, I feel that they came up with a wide variety of respondents that had different perspectives on identity around the conflict.

In terms of possible bias, through personal affiliation with any of the conflicting parties or through sympathy with actors involved in the conflict there should not be any issues. Through several study opportunities in Indonesia I spent much time in Jakarta and Semarang on Java, but I have seen many parts of the country besides the campuses of the universities that I studied at. Through studying and volunteering in extracurricular activities I developed a great understanding of the Indonesian language and culture which helped to gain a more 'insider perspective' on the country and the conflict being described in this research project. In terms of regional bias, there should not be a strong regional affiliation that would affect the objectivity of this research.

No clear ethical dilemmas in conducting my research have been identified. Nothing specifically comes to mind in terms of negative consequences that my presence can instigate. By spending enough time in Indonesia, it is possible to develop a cultural awareness and to know how to be respectful towards local people. Besides the informalities it really helped to be able to discuss aspects in the local language, using solid skills in *Bahasa Indonesia*, which could be perceived as a strong personal asset in this specific research projects. Interviews have been conducted both with the victims of the conflict and also former perpetrators as well as experts and people involved in media and reconciliation. The different categories of respondents have provided this research project with several different perspectives.

It is important to mention that a master thesis will never grasp the full conflict and a complete answer to the theoretical problems that this master thesis poses. However, this research project has

attempted to come up with a broad spectrum of literature on the conflict and many different interviews across the involved parties to give a nuanced overview of different actors and their perspectives. This thesis has focussed on applying an identity perspective to a conflict where obviously many factors were at play. With the knowledge that identity issues are a crucial part of modern conflicts and applying a similar perspective to different regional conflicts can only enhance the understanding of identity concepts in conflict areas. To this end there are several recommendations for future research. The main recommendation will be to apply this perspective to more regional conflicts. This master thesis has shown that (actively) changing identity perspectives after a conflict situation can be one of the main factors in preventing a relapse into violence. Actively supporting local grassroots peacebuilding processes and a focus on local culture in creating a bottom-up shared cultural identity are key factors in this process. Further research projects can also focus more specifically on the change of identity perceptions in the Moluccan area in the build-up towards the conflict or the aftermath of the violence. This research project focusses mostly on the development of the discourse, however future research can perhaps provide an even more in-depth analysis of a specific part of the conflict to even better understand why this conflict happened, and how to prevent conflict in the future.

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