

What Caused the Ethnic Revival? Multi-case Studies in 11 Southeast Asian Countries

Cut Maya Aprita Sari^{1*} and Kartini Aboo Talib @ Khalid²

¹Political Science Department, Faculty of Social Science and Political Science,
Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, 23111

²Institute of Ethnic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia, 43000

¹cutmayaapritasari@usk.ac.id; ²k_khalid@ukm.edu.my

*Corresponding author

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Abstract

Prolonged ethnic wars emerged due to disharmonious ethnic relations in Southeast Asian countries. Marginalized ethnic groups often create an ethnic revival in response to the dominance of other ethnic groups. The research analyzed the causes, processes, and ways to minimize ethnic revival in Southeast Asian countries. By using a multi-case study analysis, the results show that ethnic revival in Southeast Asia has similarities in terms of past conflict history passed down from generation to generation as well as the use of ethnic identity as a driving force of its movement. It also found that the cause of ethnic revival was the practice of injustice carried out by certain ethnic groups who dominated the government. Injustice then causes marginalized ethnic groups to use their ethnic identities to create ethnic sentiments, which are then used to form ethnic revival. Using Rawls' theory of justice, this research proposes three principles of justice: justice as fairness, principles of justice, and veil of ignorance that states must apply to create policies that are not ethnically biased.

Keywords: ethnic conflict, ethnic revival, Southeast Asia, theory of justice

Introduction

While inter-ethnic interactions in Southeast Asia appear to be going well, they still face various ethnic conflicts. The history of conflict shows that ethnic revival in the Southeast Asian region is widespread, especially in countries with heterogeneous ethnic compositions. Ethnic conflicts arise from the interaction between historical, cultural, socio-economic, and political awareness. In addition, the background of the conflict, such as economic inequality, injustice, and an autocratic government system, ultimately influences ethnic understanding to fight and the likelihood of conflicts.

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Southeast Asia is the continent with the highest cultural diversity in the world due to the combination of traditional cultures and colonial powers. The uniqueness of Southeast Asia is evident in its ethnic diversity and the way its people cherish their culture. This diversity is reflected in how they hold ceremonies, festivals, worship, and practice their beliefs. The diversity of religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam characterizes the physical structure and social relations of Southeast Asian society. Southeast Asia is also a conglomeration region where Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and ethnic and religious communities gather and form bonds between ethnicities (Abaya, 2016). In the study of sociology and political anthropology, it is found that inter-ethnic ties can pose a situational threat to the dominance of one ethnic group over another. As a result, individuals will react by forming appropriate defensive groups.

Injustice and ethnic domination can be done by majority or minority ethnic groups. Therefore, there is an ethnic revival as an ideological movement to achieve autonomy (Smith, 1981). Countries in the Southeast Asian region have something in common. They have carried out an ethnic revival against other ethnic groups that dominate them. Some examples of ethnic revival are the Burmese ethnic minorities experiencing ongoing rebellion and violence (International Crisis Group, 2020). Thai Pattani militant actors continue to fight for minority rights (Srisompob & Panyasak 2006). Furthermore, since its independence, Indonesia has experienced various ethnic conflicts, including the rebellion of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), the Free Papua Organization (OPM), and the Republic of South Maluku (RMS) (Aguswandi & Zunzer, 2008; Sari, 2018). Moreover, the Moro rebellion in the Philippines seeks to have their rights to be guaranteed by the state. In addition, expressions of disappointment, concern, and anti-ethnic violence were demonstrated through non-violent actions in Singapore (Brown, 2003).

Regarding conflict and ethnic revival, the state's role is crucial in minimizing conflict and distributing justice. Theoretically, this is discussed by Rawls (1971) in *The Theory of Justice*, that have three basic concepts: justice as fairness, principles of justice, and original position. These three basic concepts explain why ethnic revival occurs and what the state must do to manage conflict (Sari, 2020). Unfortunately, in some cases of ethnic conflict, the country is dominated by certain ethnicities and clashes with others.

The phenomenon of ethnic revival in Southeast Asia, along with the unfair practices carried out by the state, has led to the emergence of three research questions: (1) What causes ethnic revival?; (2) How does ethnic revival occur?; and (3) How does Rawls's theory of justice apply in minimizing ethnic revival? These three questions are answered by explaining cases of ethnic revival in 11 Southeast Asian countries. The research limits its discussion to cases of ethnic revival involving ethnic groups fighting against the domination of the central government which is controlled by certain ethnicities. These cases are analyzed using the concept of ethnic revival (Smith, 1981) and the three basic concepts of justice in Rawls's theory of justice (Rawls, 1971). Apart from answering the research problem, a significant output of this research is producing an ethnic revival scheme to obtain a clearer understanding of how the factors that cause conflict contribute to the formation of ethnic revival.

Literature Review

Ethnicity derives from the Greek, *ethnos* or *ethnikos*, and denotes a distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Barth, 1998). The research conducted by Eriksen (2015), Scupin & DeCorse (2015), and Smith (2001) also defines ethnicity as a human community that has a name, is related to one motherland, and has a common ancestral myth, shared memories, one or more common cultural elements, and a certain solidarity among its elites. The ethnic structure consists of two stratifications, namely the majority and the minority. Minorities are people who, because of their physical and cultural characteristics, are selected by society to live with unequal treatment. They occupy a low position in the hierarchy, live in poverty, struggle to find work, have limited education, reside in areas that may be less desirable, have little political power, and sometimes succumb to various social injustices (Wirth, 1945).

In multiethnic societies, a division also exist between dominant and subordinate ethnic groups. The dominant group is the group that occupies the top position in the social hierarchy. On the other hand, subordinate groups have little power, perhaps even no control. Majorities or minorities can exercise ethnic domination. However, in some cases, the dominant group comes from the ethnic majority. The stratification system is characterized by an unequal power distribution, which gives rise to social inequality and leads in ethnic conflict.

Ethnic conflicts can be categorized into inter-ethnic conflicts and intra-ethnic conflicts. The inter-ethnic conflict involves two or more ethnic groups living within the exact geopolitical boundaries (Aapenguo, 2010; Walter, 2004). Moreover, regional sentiments, religion, and marginalization can trigger these clashes. The root causes of inter-ethnic conflict are complex because they are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural beliefs of society. Certain disputes are difficult to resolve, which means they have the potential to give rise to recurring conflicts. Several researchers have studied inter-ethnic conflict (Alusala, 2005; Dunlop, 2021; Mwiza & Okinedo, 2018; Saidi & Oladimeji, 2015). Among them are the Balkan conflicts, violence between Hutu and Tutsi, Turks and Armenians, and Jews and Arabs. Another example is the conflict between the Moro tribe and native Filipinos who are non-Muslim, giving rise to prolonged inter-ethnic conflict (Madale & Medina, 2004).

Meanwhile, intra-ethnic conflict is a dispute between the same ethnic or subethnic group, occurring within the same or different territorial boundaries. The reasons may be political, religious, or economic. Intra-ethnic conflict is an important phenomenon and has caused thousands of deaths and displacement worldwide. In conflicts like these, ethnic groups often polarize themselves. Competition, changes in leadership, and numerous other factors prompt individual to employ competitive strategies even within their ethnic group (Jinadu, 2004). Some cases studied are intra-ethnic competitions in Serbia and Croatia (Caspersen, 2006). Furthermore, Kim (2010) studies cases of intra-ethnic conflict in China, showing the existence of international ethnic networks, namely South Korea and China. The two often conflict due to differences in economic and social status.

Ethnicity has two essential dimensions. First, it shares history as a common mythical origin and cultural source. Second, cultural differences have differentiated one ethnic group

from another ethnic group, thereby forming an ethnic identity (Eriksen, 2015). Identity is a set of concepts based on descriptive characteristics such as language, religion, phenotypic markers, clothing, way of life, customs, culture, or historical experience. These characteristics distinguish individuals as group members and can arise from the question, 'Who am I?'. Ethnic identity serves as a framework for individuals to identify feelings of belonging to one another due to shared traditions, behaviors, values, and beliefs (Barth, 1969; Horowitz, 1985; Ott, 1989; Waters, 1990).

Horowitz (1985) states that ethnicity is a concept that easily embraces groups differentiated by color, language, and religion, covering tribes, races, nationalities, and castes. Chandra (2006) further adds that the qualifying identity for members of an ethnic group is restricted to one's own genetically transmitted features or the language, religion, place of origin, tribe, region, caste, clan, nationality, or race of one's parents and ancestors. Every ethnic group has its own identity that can be a complex combination of ethnic, religious, gender, class, and other layers that all refer to the same person, either in self-definition or as defined by others (Alubo, 2009).

Ethnic identity ultimately forms ethnic boundaries and is used to justify judging other ethnicities as better or worse. This situation caused the emergence of ethnic sentiment, which developed into ethnic conflict and became a driving force behind the ethnic revival. Ethnic revival is an ideological movement to achieve and perpetuate the autonomy, integration, and identity of a society whose members are determined to form a nation with potential and realism (Smith, 1981).

Ethnic identity has been a driving force facilitating conflict in the world for many years (Eriksen 2015). Investigations into ethnic cases began to develop in the late 1960s. At the beginning of the 21st century, the world political situation gave rise to armed conflicts with ethnic or religious dimensions. The reasons vary, but ultimately, it occurs because of the politics of sovereignty and control of certain areas. There are also situations where Indigenous peoples and immigrant groups ask for their rights and demand equal status with the ethnic majority. Varshney (2002) explains that ethnic conflicts can be narrowly categorized into religious, racial, linguistic, and sectarian conflicts. Someone will join an ethnic mobilization movement to gain collective support in achieving their goals. However, rational choice theory explains that ethnicity is seen as an instrumental aspect. They focus on how movement leaders use ethnic manipulation strategies to gain power.

Furthermore, identity conflicts contributed to more than 70% of civil wars between 1960 and 1999 (Sambanis, 2002). Ethnicity has the power to facilitate collective action with different causal mechanisms (Akpan, 2008; Appadurai, 1998; Barbero, 2002; Gahramanova, 2006; Mamdani, 2003; Rubin, 2006; Vanhanen, 1999). Collier and Hoeffler (2004) stated that economic injustice was a cause of 78 civil wars in 1960-1999. In an ethnically diverse society, an authoritarian political system and centralized government can open up the expression of these conflicts (Arcan 2014). Coercive lawlessness, exploitation of natural resources, inequality, and unfair distribution of wealth often increase the accumulation of ethnic sentiment and lead to outbursts of anger called ethnic revival.

Previous researchers have studied ethnic revival in various aspects. Lecomte-Tilouine (2009) studies the relationship between ethnic revival and the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. The research explores the historical power imbalances, particularly between the Magars and the Hindu rulers, that led to resentment and marginalization among the Magars. This historical context, combined with the ethnic revival of the 1990s, explains why the Magars and other tribal groups joined the Maoist insurgency.

Lecomte-Tilouine and Dollfus (2003) highlight that ethnic revival in Himalayan regions stems from and fuels societal division, mainly when weak central power and past forced cultural assimilation exist. Furthermore, the political expression of these ethnic divisions, without addressing the root causes, worsens instability. Furthermore, Lian (2008) reveals how the Manchus, facing a complex interplay between state influence and cultural assimilation, utilized online platforms to revive their identity. The research shows that the shift to online spaces was driven by a desire to reclaim their history and navigate their marginalized position in China's socio-political landscape. This online revival became an important space for the Manchus to assert their presence and negotiate their identity in a context where traditional forms of social and political expression were limited. The Tai Lue people in Sipsongpanna are practicing a discreet ethnic revival through cultural activities such as temple restoration and language preservation, as a form of subtle resistance against government constraints (Davis, 2005). The research illustrates how ethnic revival can manifest as a quiet yet meaningful form of opposition, utilizing cultural practices to maintain identity.

Peterson (2012) traces the history of the East African Revival, a Christian conversion movement that spread throughout East and Central Africa in the 1930s and 40s. His research study reveals the tensions between cosmopolitan Christian converts and nationalist patriots during this crucial period in African history. Ultimately, the research study contributes to the complex and evolving fabric of post-colonial African identity. Tsuda (2015) focuses on a younger generation of Japanese-Americans seeking to recover their ethnic heritage. They carry out an ethnic revival in response to the racialization of Japanese in America. Ethnic revival is carried out by involving as many Japanese communities as possible to strengthen their cultural identity.

Existing research on ethnic revival rarely explicitly integrates Rawls's theory of justice. However, this theory draws attention to how systemic discrimination and government bias perpetuate inequality between ethnic groups. Although not in the context of ethnicity, several previous studies have used Rawls's theory of justice in various topics. Manzano (2018), Miller (2011b), and Pilapil (2019) explore how Rawlsian principles can be applied beyond national borders to address global inequality and international justice issues. On the other hand, the topic of social justice and fairness has been studied by several researchers, such as Daniels (2001), Kayagula and Lameck (2024), Ruger (2004), and Stureson (2022). Their research use the Rawlsian framework to address health disparities and ensure equitable access to health care and the social determinants of health.

Furthermore, the topic of economic injustice and capitalism, as examined through Rawls's theoretical framework, has also attracted the attention of previous researchers.

Koppelman (2023) investigates how capitalism produces economic injustice by exploring issues such as the role of market power, the influence of wealth on political processes, or the impact of financialization on economic inequality. On the other hand, Wolthuis (2017) uses Rawls' principles of justice to study the formation of economic unions. This study proposes using principles of justice that facilitate cooperation and mutual understanding between union members. Audard (2024) examines the relationship between Rawls' theory and broader social and political justice questions. This research also considers the role of democratic institutions and civic participation in addressing economic injustice in capitalist societies.

The current literature review shows that research studies on ethnic revival tend to focus on a specific region. The ethnic revival discussed only concerns the manifestations or consequences of ethnic revival (e.g., online activism, cultural revitalization, political mobilization). However, various factors contribute to ethnic revival, such as historical power imbalances, state influence, cultural assimilation, and marginalization. However, there is a significant lack of research examining ethnic revival in Southeast Asia, which has a unique history of colonialism, nation-building, and ethnic diversity. Although various ethnic groups have been studied in previous literature, there may be under-researched or marginalized ethnic groups in Southeast Asia whose revival experiences have not been documented.

On the other hand, while Rawls' theory of justice has been extensively discussed in political philosophy, its direct application to the phenomenon of ethnic revival, especially in the diverse context of Southeast Asia, is limited. Therefore, this research, which includes 11 countries in the Southeast Asian region, can contribute to filling the gap in previous research and offers the potential for a richer analysis of the causes of ethnic revival.

Research Method

The research applies qualitative methods and is based on several case studies with certain commonalities and differences. The multi-case study is chosen because it may show how the relevant phenomena change or remain unchanged in different contexts, settings, or circumstances, enhancing the validity and generalizability of the findings (Baxter & Jack 2015; Yin, 2009). In research on ethnic conflict, multiple-case study methods are barely available. Therefore, protocols are developed under RQ requirements. As explained by Creswell (2013), the multi-case study used in this research explores multiple real-life cases over time through detailed and in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. The primary data sources used in this research are text sources obtained from books, journal articles, and documents. The process of collecting text sources has been carried out by modifying several steps proposed by Schutt (2018) and Taylor et al. (2016).

First, collect literature and select cases related to ethnic conflicts in Southeast Asia. According to Yin (2009), identifying the specific cases and types must be implemented. This research selects cases of ethnic revival in 11 Southeast Asian countries and limits it to cases involving ethnic groups against the central government (dominated by certain ethnic groups). There is no periodical limit for cases, and if the case is related to ethnic revival in the Southeast

Asian region, then the case can be included in the analysis. Second, organizing and condensing data from literature searches. Previous publications studying ethnic conflicts were selected and arranged based on Southeast Asian countries' classification. Third, the literature was reviewed and described in thematic description to obtain information about how ethnic conflict occurs and what triggers it. Fourth, carrying out data analysis using the concept of ethnic revival (Smith 1981) to produce an ethnic revival process scheme and answer Research Question 1 (RQ1) - What causes the ethnic revival? and Research Question (RQ2) - How does the process of ethnic revival occur?, and integrating theory of justice (Rawls 1971) to answer Research Question 3 (RQ3) - How does Rawls's theory of justice apply in minimizing ethnic revival.

Thematic Description

Countries in the Southeast Asian region have similarities, consisting of multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, and have a record of ethnic conflicts, some of which are more serious than others. Based on a literature review, this chapter explains cases of ethnic revival in 11 Southeast Asian countries in a brief thematic description.

Moro's Struggle in Philippine

The armed resistance of the Muslim Moro tribe in the Southern Philippines against the Philippine government began in 1565 under Spanish colonial rule and remains unresolved. The background is that the state has not fulfilled the demands for political autonomy, development, socio-economic, social justice, and religious right for the Moro tribe (Buendia 2005). Montiel et al. (2012) explain that the Moro people experienced marginalization and discrimination, which caused them to establish the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1972 and aspire to establish the Bangsamoro Republik. Other armed groups also formed, including the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), formed in 1977 as the largest armed group in Mindanao. The New People's Army (NPA) of 1969 was the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines..

The Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) emerged in 2008 and is known as the MILF Splinter Group, which wants independence and rejects autonomous government. BIFF also has another faction, the Abu Turaijie Faction (Cook & Collier, 2006; Imbong, 2018; Niksih, 2007). The movement currently recognized internationally is The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), a splinter group from the MNLF and labeled as one of Southeast Asia's most violent extremist groups. This organization also has massively expanded networks with violent foreign extremists (Hutchison, 2009; Iacovou, 2000; Schuck, 2021; Singh, 2018).

Myanmar's Ceasefire Groups

Myanmar is also a country with a history of ethnic conflict since 1948 (South, 2008). The Myanmar government has been unable to address the complaints of ethnic minorities

struggling to form a national identity that reflects their ethnic diversity. The state gives Burmese privileges as the majority. In 2011, Myanmar's political system recognized ethnic diversity. However, the facts show that the majority still get more rights (International Crisis Group, 2020). The grievances of minority groups in Myanmar are the longest-running armed conflict in the world, where militarization and insecurity are growing. The exclusivity of the ethnic majority causes minority groups to develop several ethno-nationalist movements. A total of 40 ceasefire groups in Myanmar have been registered (Buchanan, 2016; Kyed & Gravers, 2014). Shan state, for example, has ethnically based armed groups, each of which fights to defend their communal rights. Another movement is the Karen National Union, which demands greater autonomy for its community (Core, 2009; Jolliffe, 2016).

Myanmar's most challenging ethnic conflict is between the Muslim Rohingya and the Myanmar government. Since 2018, the war has occurred in Myanmar's western Rakhine state. The Rohingya experienced an ethnic cleansing by the Burmese Myanmar military (Anwary, 2020; Laoutides, 2021; Selth, 2018). This conflict was determined by inequality in politics and religion experienced by Rohingya, which was listed as a crime against humanity. They complained about the failure of electoral democracy to provide representation for ethnic minorities. Juliano et al. (2019) also explained that the Rohingya Muslim minorities were evicted from their homes by the Burmese military. Since 2015, the number of Rohingya refugees has increased to 700,000 by October 2015. Meanwhile, the UN ASEAN has been unable to overcome this crisis.

Insurgency in Indonesia

Furnivall (2014) finds that Indonesians lived alongside other ethnic groups but did not unite. The existence of various ethnic groups has resulted in a high intensity of conflict. Therefore, a pluralistic society needs help to achieve its collective will. It turns out that Furnivall's concept of dividing a plural society is still valid in Indonesia today. The presence of various ethnic groups in Indonesia results in high conflict intensity. Researchers have focused on conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia since 1998. Disputes between the two religions occurred in various areas, including North Maluku, between 1999 and 2002 (Rahman, 2004; Trijono, 2001). Then, the Poso conflict occurred in Sulawesi from 1998 to 2001 (Ecip, 2002; Purwanto, 2007).

The anti-ethnic Chinese movement that occurred at the end of the Suharto government in 1998 led to increased criminal acts against ethnic Chinese. In the Solo-Central Java area, anti-Chinese violence occurred from 13 to 15 May 1998, caused by racial issues, ethnic differences, and social and economic inequalities (Nurhadiantomo, 2004; Pattiradjawane, 2000). How could it not be, considering that ethnic Chinese people are a minority but can still hold the title of "market-dominant minorities." Chinese Indonesians made up just 3% of the population in 1988. Nevertheless, they could maintain influence over Indonesia's top companies and almost 70% of its private economy (Chua, 2004).

Later, Indonesia faced a three-armed movement. First, the Free Papua Movement (OPM), founded in 1965, desires independence from Indonesia because of economic issues

and disappointment with the central government (Bhakti, 2005). Second is the Republic of South Maluku (RMS) movement, founded in 1950 because the Dutch were deemed to have illegally transferred the Maluku Islands to Indonesia. It turned out that the people of Maluku were still living in poverty while Indonesia was considered to be exploiting its natural resources (van Klinken, 2001). Third is the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), which aims to separate itself/secede from Indonesia. Minority discrimination, centralized government dominated by ethnic Javanese, exploitation of natural resources, and unequal welfare distribution caused the emergence of the three free movements (Nurhasim, 2008; Sari et al. 2019, 2022; Sari & Khalid 2024).

Pattani Movement in Thailand

The best-known ethnic conflict in Thailand is the Pattani movement. Historically, this dispute has its roots in the 18th century. Islam and the Malay language form the ethnic identity of the Pattani people, differentiating them from the majority of the Thai population, who are predominantly Buddhist. Srisompob and Panyasak (2006) explained that Pattani has existed since the early 20th century and was under strict administrative control under the Bangkok government. Since 1962, local Muslim actors have been in conflict with the central government in Bangkok because the Kingdom of Siam was known to want to annex the independence of the Sultanate of Pattani.

The ancient kingdom of Siam, under the rule of Marshal Pibun Songkram (1938-1944 and 1948-1957), implemented a nation-building policy by making Thai culture the primary cultural identity, and Buddhism became the national religion (Aphornsuvan, 2007). The symbol of the creation of nationalism began with changing the country's name from Siam to Thailand in 1939. Subsequently, Thai was made the only language that had to be used in educational institutions. The impact was the emergence of the first separatist groups in the 1940s and increased violence in the 1960s and 1970s. There were 468 violent incidents recorded between 1993 and 2000. The conflict reached its climax in 2004 in Narathiwat and Yala provinces, leading to more than 2400 deaths and 4,000 injured people (Melvin, 2007).

East Timor Tension

The ethnic conflict in East Timor has a unique historical background. Since Indonesia invaded in 1975, East Timor has become the 27th province in Indonesia. Under President Soekarno's regime, Indonesia's ideological foundation was based on Pancasila and a centralized government under Javanese rule. The people of East Timor disagree with the Indonesian government's forced unification of identity. This rejection occurred because East Timor felt it had a distinct identity and a different experience of colonialism from Indonesia (Narayan, 2000; Tsuchiya, 2021).

At the same time, the Indonesian military attempted to destroy the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) and integrate East Timor into Indonesia. Crimes against humanity and genocide occurred after Indonesia invaded and occupied East Timor in

1975. According to Scambary and Wassel (2018), around 100,000 people died during the occupation in Indonesia. Some of them suffer from malnutrition and contract various diseases. Disembowelment, beheading, and cannibalism are among the crimes committed against humanity. President Soeharto's regime brought people from other islands to East Timor to assimilate and erase the original culture, language, and religion.

Fretilin used the fall of the Suharto regime in 1989 to launch independence demonstrations. As a result, many demonstrators were arrested and imprisoned, including the Fretilin leader in 1992 (Arthur, 2018). East Timor is reported to be one of the regions with the worst cases of genocide in Indonesia. Therefore, international pressure and Indonesia's movement towards reform and democracy in 1999 led the UN to sponsor a referendum agreement between Indonesia and Portugal. Ultimately, the international world recognized East Timor's independence in 2002.

Racial Riot in Singapore

One of the critical experiences of ethnic integration in Singapore was marked by the racial riots in 1964. Cheng (2001) states that the dispute between the national identity and ethnic identity in Malaysia and Singapore caused Singapore's worst history. In this incident, at least 22 people were killed and 454 were injured. From this riot, it is also known that clashes between Chinese and Malays caused Singapore's independence. When Japan was defeated in World War II, Britain returned to Singapore and granted special autonomy to Singapore and Malaysia. Lee Kuan Yew, who was elected Prime Minister in 1959, chose to join Malaysia in 1963 (Clutterbuck, 1985; Suryadinata, 2015).

In Singapore, the ethnic Chinese are the majority, dominating the economy; in contrast, the Malay community is a minority (Liu et al., 2002). Several issues related to the country's separation finally surfaced in 1965. Failure to integrate racial identity and dissonance between the treatment of Malays and clashes with Chinese groups caused Singapore to leave Malaysia on 9 August 1965 to become an independent country (Goh, 2008; Narayan, 2000; Vasil, 1995).

Multiracialism remains deeply embedded in Singaporean society and is essential in everyday life (Huat, 2003; Rocha, 2011). Prejudice against ethnic groups still grows, especially among the Malay minority community. The formulation of the national ideology emphasizes the core values of Confucian morality, which is often associated with Chinese cultural chauvinism. This policy threatens the success of the People's Action Party (PAP) in creating a modern, secular, and multiracial society (Suryadinata, 2015).

However, the Malay minority in Singapore feared they would be relegated to the lower classes, and in response, they formed the Muslim Professionals Association. Therefore, the Singapore government continues to seek approaches to improve ethnic cohesion. 'One of them is to approve the 'Preservation of Religious Harmony Bill' to avoid political subversion or social unrest.

The Indigenous, Religion, and Ethnic Relation in Malaysia

The Malay tribe, as an indigenous tribe in Malaysia, has existed since the Malacca Sultanate, dating back to the 17th century. The main ethnicities in Malaysia are Malay, Chinese, and Indian. Malaysia recognizes Malay as the national language. Together with nationalism, Islam is an essential element in Malaysian cultural identity (Hooker, 2003; Saad, 1983). However, various contradictions over Malay Muslim domination have given rise to religious and ethnic tensions in Malaysia (Kumar, 2012).

Politically, Malaysia is ruled by a coalition of political parties representing different ethnic communities. The United Malays National Organization (UMNO) is the party that dominates the government, while the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) represents the ethnic Chinese community. Furthermore, the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) represented the Indian community, and the three formed a coalition of parties called the Barisan Nasional (BN). On the other hand, the opposition parties considered are the Malaysian People's Movement Party, the Democratic Action Party (DAP), and the People's Progressive Party (PPP) (The Asia Foundation, 2017).

Although Malaysian ethnic relations appear neutral and peaceful initially, they are very competitive. When ethnic Chinese DAP supporters won the election and challenged the UMNO party's hegemony, rioting broke out on May 13, 1969. To celebrate their win, thousands of ethnic Chinese marched through Kuala Lumpur on brooms. The Malay people were incensed by this behavior because they thought the Chinese wanted to eradicate the Malay ethnic group. At least 196 people lost their lives during Kuala Lumpur's five-day riots (Singh, 2001; Soong, 2007). Another tension arose in 1969 when Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak' explained that Malaysian culture should be based on indigenous Malay culture (Teh, 1983).

In another case, the First Malaysian Cultural Congress in 1971 issued a resolution stating that Malaysia's national culture would be based on Indigenous Malay culture, but the non-Malay community rejected it. Cultural intolerance was shown when the lion dance drew criticism from several Malay leaders who sought to change the lion symbol to a tiger. However, this was rejected by ethnic Chinese (Suryadinata, 2015). Case (1994) found that in 1987, UMNO split into the Mahatir and Razaleigh camps. Both of them competed for the support of the Malay ethnic group by competing to get the support from the Chinese tycoons. The Malay political elites and the Chinese capital elites were interdependent within the equal class, but the results differed according to social class, which cut across ethnic groups (Osman, 1989).

Moreover, tensions between Chinese and Malaysian are considered normal. Although they are a minority, ethnic Chinese constitute the majority regarding economic power. Ethnic Chinese enjoyed many years of economic prosperity due to British policies during the colonial era. They control the financial supply chain in Malaysia (Liu et al. 2002). Therefore, as a traditional community, ethnic Malays have the right to protect their land, rights, and nation as children of the land. As discussed by Chua (2004), this phenomenon is referred to as a

'market-dominant minority,' where China, as a minority group, holds significant control over the economies of several countries.

Right Abuses of Khmer Krom in Vietnam

The Khmer Krom are the fourth-largest ethnic minority in Vietnam, concentrated in the region south of the Mekong River. They are indigenous people who have lived in the Mekong Delta for a long time before the arrival of the Vietnamese (McHale, 2013). They speak Khmer, follow Theravada Buddhism, worship ancestral spirits, and observe ceremonies, customs, and art. Their culture is unique but heavily influenced by the Vietnamese government's development policies (Taylor, 2014b).

The Khmer people of the Mekong Delta were displaced and lost their land during the 20th century. Economic development in the mining and industrial sectors has reduced the welfare of the marginalized Khmer community. The ethnic Khmers, especially farmers, have been displaced, affecting their livelihoods. As a result, they protested, demanding the return of their ancestral land. In response, the Vietnamese government stated that the Khmer Krom community was not recognized as indigenous, meaning their property would not be returned to them. It is also known that promised compensation was never paid (Doan, 2017; Taylor, 2014a).

Ethnic antagonism has existed since the 18th century and has made a long-term contribution to today's rivalries and conflicts. Restrictions on freedom of religion, language, and education led to a public protest by more than 200 monks on February 8, 2007, which was carried out peacefully. However, the Vietnamese government prohibited and restricted the formation of human rights associations and instead arrested and fired 20 monks and imprisoned five monks. Human Right Watch (2009) notes that the Vietnamese government opposed dissent, freedom of expression, assembly, association, and movement for the Khmer Krom. Restrictions caused the Khmer Krom to go to Cambodia to seek political asylum. Crossing Cambodia was an option because the Cambodian government was more tolerant of the Khmer Krom and gave them access to housing, work, and study.

However, the Cambodian government states that ethnic Khmer citizens in Cambodia must fully comply with the Cambodian constitution. On the other hand, Cambodian authorities often reacted harshly when the Khmer Krom are too critical of Vietnam. This reaction is caused by Vietnam's close relationship with the Cambodian government.

Racial Stereotype of Vietnamese in Cambodia

Cambodian Khmer is the ethnic majority in Cambodia and have a strong sense of nationalism. French colonialism increased Vietnamese immigration to Cambodia, resulting in racial rivalry due to French favoritism towards Vietnamese people. Vietnam was considered more competent in accepting Westernization, which made it easier for France to dominate the role of government and business. Fear and hatred of ethnic Vietnamese have historically been deep-rooted and have become a form of verbal discrimination passed down from generation

to generation. The history of racial stereotypes against Vietnamese people is caused by historical narratives circulating in Cambodian society. It is said that the king of Cambodia was once tricked into marrying a Vietnamese princess; therefore, the Vietnamese could access trade and temporary settlement. The implication was that Cambodia was deceived and lost Khmer territory and culture (Chandler, 2000).

Another history is described by Hinton (2005) about Vietnamese people who allegedly buried the body of a Khmer maid up to the neck. They put wood stoves on Khmer butlers to boil tea for the Vietnamese people. This story has been passed down from generation to generation, depicting Vietnam as an ethnically cruel, manipulative, and encroaching Khmer nation. The sentiment was evident under the Pol Pot regime, which seized power from the Khmer Rouge in 1975. As a result, approximately 150,000 Vietnamese minorities were killed in repression and genocide (Chan, 2004; M. A. Miller, 2011; Neupert & Prum, 2005; Zimmer et al., 2006). Lewis (2015) also explained that history shapes a country's ideological beliefs through the Khmer Rouge regime. Pol Pot expanded racial hatred and determined people's social status based on ethnicity. Pol Pot differentiated between 'us' (Khmer-Cambodia) and 'the enemy' (Vietnam) to mobilize Khmer Rouge sympathizers to discriminate and destroy Vietnam.

The Stateless 'China' in Brunei

Ethnic Malays are the indigenous population and dominate Brunei. They are divided into seven subethnicities: Brunei Malay, Kadayan, Tutong, Belait, Bisaya, Murut, and Sama Baiau. The majority religion is Islam (Fanselow, 2014). Meanwhile, the Chinese community was the largest non-indigenous group to migrate to Brunei during the British protectorate, namely 10.3% of the total population (Ho, 2021; King, 2001; Ullah & Kumpoh, 2019).

The Brunei authorities grant special privileges to the native Malay population, such as access to higher education, employment opportunities, and civil services. The government also generously provides land and houses to the poor Malay community through the 'Jati People's Land Resettlement Program.' However, the Chinese-Bruneian community does not benefit from this policy. Up to 90% of them do not hold full citizenship, despite being third-generation descendants born in Brunei (Loo, 2009). They lack access to health and housing services. The annual quota for accepting Chinese Bruneians as citizens is minimal. Moreover, many applicants do not pass the Malay language competency test. In 2005, the government regulated Chinese New Year celebrations in Brunei, with traditional dances restricted to certain times, days, and places. Restrictions were also imposed on public Christmas celebrations. As required by the Brunei National Law of 1961, Brunei authorities instructed the commercial sector to remove Christmas decorations. Due to their decision to integrate or flee, there are fewer ethnic Chinese today than there were fifty years ago (Sinaga, 2022).

Hmong Minorities in Laos

About 49 ethnic groups are found in Laos. The Lao ethnic group makes up about 55%, the Khmu 11%, the Hmong 8%, the Vietnamese 2%, and other smaller ethnic groups comprise 26%. The term 'indigenous people' is not commonly used in Laos, and instead, the term 'ethnic minority' is often used to refer to non-Lao ethnic groups. The Lao ethnic group, often referred to as Lao Loum, holds a dominant cultural and political position among other major ethnic groups (Schlemmer, 2017). In the past, they were used as resistance groups against communism and were armed by the United States during the Vietnam War.

Following the fall of Laos to communist rule in 1974, an estimated 350,000 Hmong fled to Thailand, and 130,000 immigrated to the US. As a result, the Hmong are now considered second-class citizens in Laos. The government prohibited them from establishing independent religious, political, and labor organizations and restricted their rights to freedom of expression (Lum, 2010).

The online media ASEAN Today wrote that Laos' military operations were against the Hmong ethnic community on April 9, 2021. The government is tightening control over development and investment target areas. Lao military forces have repeatedly attacked Hmong residents living around Mount Show Bia in Xaysomboun province, north of Vientiane. This coincided with the development of Mount Phou Bia as an attractive tourist destination for foreign investment, economic integration, mining, logging, and hydroelectric power generation. Therefore, 20,000 Hmong lived hidden in the forests, suffered social discrimination, and were subjected to policies that led to their extinction (Lao Movement for Human Rights, 2005).

Analysis

Caused and Process of The Ethnic Revival

A thematic description of ethnic revival in 11 countries in Southeast Asia can answer RQ1 and RQ2. Conflict cases in Southeast Asian countries share two similarities. First, each country has a history of disharmonious ethnic relations that has persisted for many years. History refers to past conflict events that have not been resolved or passed down through generations. History can also be in the form of experiences, origins, or identities of each ethnic group, which differ from one another. Certain ethnicities usually dominate the country and tend to make policies that support their ethnic group. The way to do this is to consolidate the ethno-nationalist framework and convert it into national loyalty. For reasons of nationalism, ethnic identities are tried to be eliminated by making them national identities. This is undoubtedly ineffective, considering that each ethnic group in a country has its identity and uniqueness that must be respected. Therefore, ethnic identity becomes the driving force for ethnic revival. Figure 1 visualizes the ethnic revival within the Southeast Asia region.

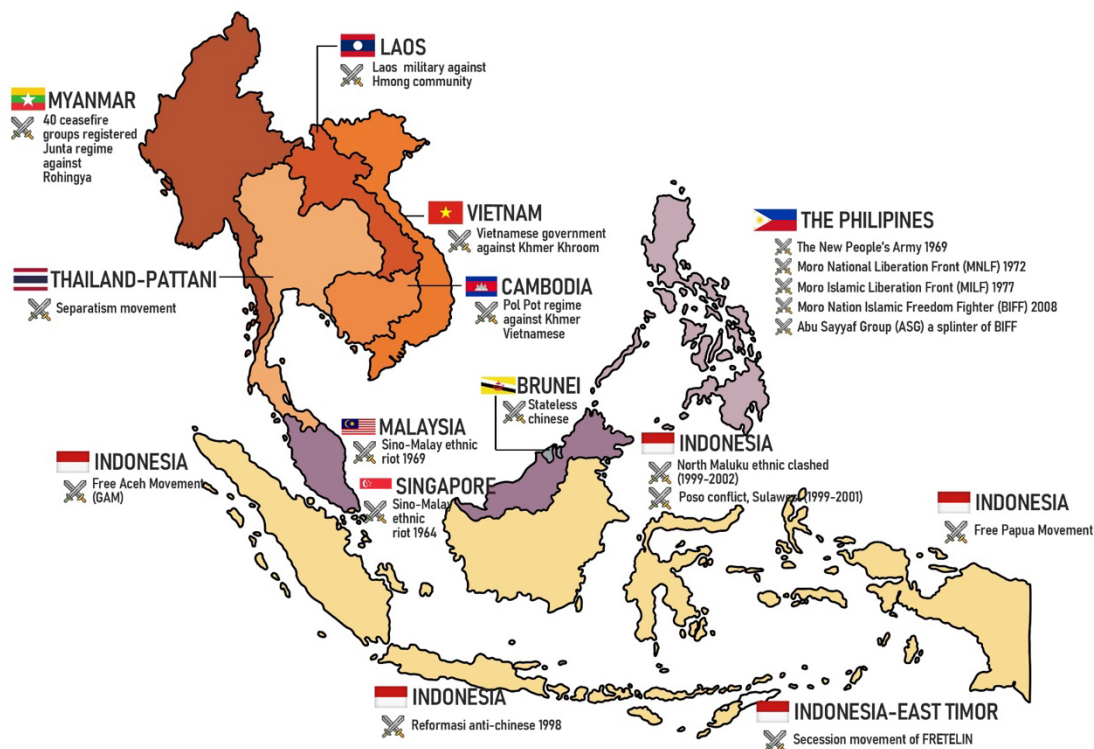


Figure 1. Visual Map of Ethnic Revival in Southeast Asia

RQ1 has been answered – one of the leading causes of ethnic revival is injustice carried out by the state (usually dominated by certain ethnicities). The injustice experienced by subordinate ethnic groups includes exploitation, discrimination, marginalization, an autocratic system, domination, centralized government, racial stereotypes, and rights abuses. The history of disharmonious ethnic relations due to injustice has been passed down from generation to generation, forming an ethnic revival that has never been resolved. This situation shows that the main political driver of ethnic revival is state-driven injustice. Politically, this often manifests itself in policies that favor the dominant ethnic group, leading to the marginalization and discrimination of minority groups.

Historical injustices, both recent and long-standing, serve as powerful political rallying points for ethnic revival movements. These grievances are not simply historical; they are actively politicized and used to mobilize support. For example, in Cambodia, the history of racial stereotypes due to inherited verbal discrimination is a common experience among ethnic Vietnamese (Chandler, 2000). Furthermore, the Hmong ethnic minority was hostile because of their history of involvement in the Vietnam War (Lum, 2010). Moreover, Aceh, East Timor, and Papua rebelled because they believed their histories differed from those of other ethnic groups in Indonesia. The history of injustice in Aceh, East Timor, and Papua, which has been part of Indonesia, has also shaped its collective memory, passed down from generation to generation (Bhakti, 2005; Sari et al., 2023; Scambary & Wassel, 2018). The history of Muslim

resistance in the Philippines dates back to 1965, whereas in Thailand, in the twentieth century (Aphornsuvan, 2007; Buendia, 2005).

The second similarity is that every ethnic revival found in Southeast Asia uses ethnic identity as the driving force behind its movement. Ethnic identity has become an important tool for political mobilization. Movements strategically use religious, customary, or other identity markers to unite and mobilize their constituents. Identity politics involves framing political issues regarding ethnic group interests, which can lead to internal cohesion and external conflict. The ethnic identity used can consist of various combinations. Ethnic movements in Moro Mindanao, Aceh, Pattani-Thai, and Malaysia use religious identity.

Furthermore, the indigenous issue is raised by the ethnic movements of Myanmar, Malays-Singapore, and Khmer Krom-Vietnam. Meanwhile, a combination of other identities, such as differences in physical characteristics, language, and place of origin, is used by the stateless Chinese in Brunei, the Hmong Minority in Laos movements, RMS, OPM, and Vietnamese in Cambodia. "Consolidating an ethno-nationalist framework" involves the state's attempt to impose a single national identity, often at the expense of multiple ethnic identities. This is an inherently political act involving the state's power to shape national identity. Attempts to erase ethnic identities through nationalization policies create a political backlash, as they deny minority groups political recognition and representation.

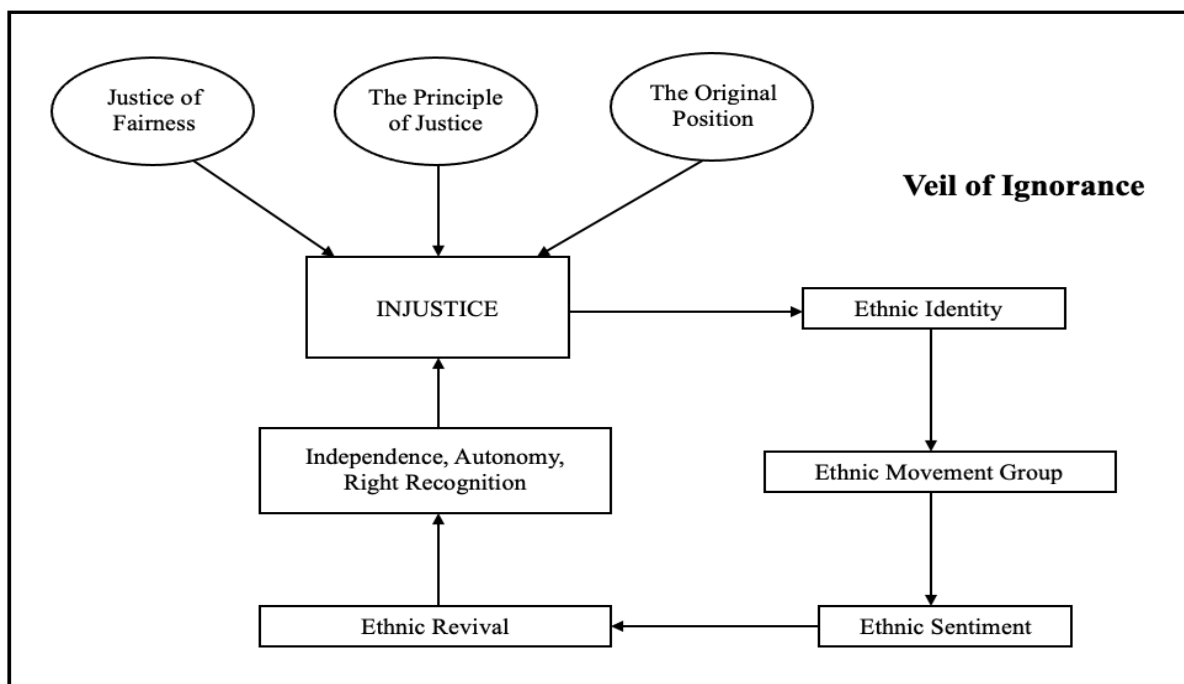


Figure 2. Scheme of Ethnic Revival

Figure 2 shows the process of ethnic revival and provides an answer to RQ2. When marginalized, exploited, or subjected to other injustice, subordinate ethnic groups often seek protection for their ethnic identity. Ethnic identity includes religion, social class, skin color, language, history, and other aspects. This identity clarifies who is "us" and who is "other."

Thus, creating ethnic sentiment and ethnic revival. Ethnic revival movements often pursue political goals, such as autonomy, self-determination, or increased representation in government. These movements challenge existing political power structures and demand a redistribution of power and resources. The quest to recognize minority rights is a direct political challenge to the existing political framework. The state can apply the three concepts of justice outlined by Rawls (1971) to inhibit or even prevent ethnic revival.

Rawls's Justice Theory in Minimizing the Ethnic Revival

The state plays an essential role in the distribution of justice, as Rawls (1971) discusses in his *Theory of Justice*. The theory is the preeminent treatise on contemporary political philosophy and an essential reference for studies in social philosophy (Sari, 2020). Rawls explained three essential concepts: justice as fairness, principles of justice, and the original position through the veil of ignorance. Three of Rawls's concepts of justice can be used as an analytical tool to study ethnic conflicts. Rawls's concerns are expressed in essential questions about privilege, social status, and justice. One of the key questions asks what kind of justice system people would prefer if they were to lose their privileges and social status. For this reason, Rawls formulated the concept of justice as fairness. For him, society is the main subject of justice and has a basic structure comprising all social, political, legal, and economic institutions (Edor, 2020; Fanton, 2020).

Society can only accept social justice if the state provides its people with a fair system and individual freedom. Justice as fairness is the first concept that explains how the state is expected to regulate competition between ethnic groups by prioritizing a justice system. Fairness is defined as a competition arrangement based on strength groupings. Therefore, social cooperation is necessary in three forms: social cohesion, where the state must make policies that acceptable to various groups; the state guarantees the absence of group domination; and all elements must work together to achieve the greater good.

Ethnicity cannot be distinguished from social justice, a concept that has generated much debate worldwide. Unequal government treatment causes marginalized ethnic groups to be used as a means of ethnic mobilization (Varshney, 2002). Cases of injustice often arise from exploitation, neglect of minorities, autocratic systems, domination, centralized government, and corrupt societies. The difference in ethnic identity and injustice perpetuated by the government is a significant factor in ethnic revival. Table 1 shows the relationship between Rawls' justice theory and the cases of ethnic revival that occurred in Southeast Asian countries.

Table 1. Application of Rawls' justice theory on ethnic injustice in Southeast Asian countries

Concepts on Rawls's Theory of Justice		Injustice Experiences
Justice as Fairness	Competition arrangement based on strength groupings.	Southeast Asian countries are characterized by power groupings based on ethnic hierarchy. Injustice is carried out by dominant ethnic groups (which usually dominate/close to the government). Meanwhile, subordinate ethnic groups are marginalized in various aspects of life.
Fair Equality of Opportunity	Emphasis on equal rights and freedoms for all. Opportunities should be open to all, regardless of social background.	Subordinate ethnic groups frequently experience limitations on their liberties, including political, cultural, and religious freedoms. Limit opportunities for subordinate groups, hindering their social and economic mobility.
Difference Principle	Social and economic inequalities should benefit the least advantaged.	Southeast Asian countries exhibit significant inequalities, with subordinate ethnic groups often disproportionately disadvantaged. Exploitation and marginalization are common.
"Original Position" and "Veil of Ignorance"	Ideal scenario where which personal matters (including race, gender, class, education, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, career, family, and other factors) are behind a 'veil of ignorance.'	Historical and ongoing inequalities demonstrate a departure from this ideal. Dominant groups have historically shaped societies to their advantage. In many cases, the state is perceived as a source of injustice, favoring dominant ethnic groups and suppressing subordinate ethnic group rights.

The ethnic revival in Southeast Asia does not embrace social cooperation or competition arrangements. It is suggested that the violence resulted from growing power disparities between various ethnic groups. For example, most Chinese in Brunei are stateless because many applicants fail Malay language proficiency tests. Justice as fairness in this case is contradicted by the difficulties faced by ethnic Chinese individuals in achieving high standards of Malay language competency. In Indonesia, the anti-Chinese movement stems from economic hostility, as ethnic Chinese have become a minority that dominates the market. In a different situation, Khmer Krom people are treated as second-class citizens by the Vietnamese government, which limits their freedom of speech. Therefore, they are ethnically backward in many ways. It is possible to analyze this example of ethnic revival to show that social justice was not realized because the state failed to deliver justice as fairness.

Certain ethnic groups in Southeast Asian countries are given special privileges by the state, giving rise to ethnic disparities that trigger conflict. Therefore, to achieve a just society, Rawls (1971) proposes a second idea known as the principle of justice. The idea is based on the principle of fair equality of opportunity and the difference principle. The state must control the provision of equal opportunities for each ethnic group to obtain their fundamental rights within the principle of fair equality of opportunity. In other words, the state must apply the difference principle when it finds social and economic disparities. The way to do this is by

managing these differences to provide more significant benefits to less fortunate communities. However, the state is unable to implement these two principles.

The state's failure to implement these two principles is a contributing factor to ethnic revival. A ceasefire group is formed in Myanmar because the government supports the dominant ethnic group. Another example is how the Philippine government marginalized the Moro community. When the government fails to provide fair equality of opportunity, the realization of equal liberty in society will be hampered. Similar events also occur in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, and Laos during ethnic revivals. Other examples are the Pattani movement in Thailand, armed Muslim resistance by the Moro community in the Philippines, and tensions in East Timor.

State-driven injustice, where the dominant ethnic group makes policies that marginalize the subordinate ethnic group, directly contradicts Rawls's principles. It violates the principle of fair equality of opportunity and the difference principle. The exploitation, discrimination, and marginalization of subordinate ethnic groups demonstrate an apparent failure to ensure fair equality of opportunity and to organize social and economic inequalities to benefit the least advantaged. The persistence of historical grievances passed down through generations demonstrates a failure to build a just and stable society. Rawls emphasizes the importance of a well-ordered society in which the principles of justice are upheld. The fact that historical injustices are not redressed means that the basic structure of society is inherently unjust, and thus, the stability of that society is questionable. Ethnic revival movements are attempts to redress injustices and demand adherence to Rawls's principles. The quest for autonomy, recognition of minority rights, and justice reflect a desire for fundamental equal freedoms and fair treatment. In this way, these movements aim to bring the societies in which they exist more in line with Rawls's ideals.

The original position is the third concept that explains how to achieve justice. Rawls explains that the original position is a hypothetical situation in which personal matters (including race, gender, class, education, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, career, family, and other factors) are behind a veil of ignorance (De Coninck & Van De Putte, 2023; Jackson, 2005; von Platz, 2017). By wearing the veil of ignorance, a person will not know anything about themselves—their abilities, physical condition, and societal position. People's general beliefs about justice and injustice are based on personal experiences. Therefore, the veil of ignorance significantly impacts producing a just society. According to Rawls (1971), applying the three concepts of justice can help the government decide that the rules of society must be structured relatively.

However, the reality of ethnic conflicts in Southeast Asian countries shows that the ideals of the original position have not been fulfilled. That is, the people who built the basic structure of this society did not do so from behind the veil of ignorance. They do not create a system that is fair to everyone, but rather a system that benefits their group. If the state and its apparatus wear a veil of ignorance, they can ignore personal matters. The veil of ignorance will help the state avoid biased views from ethnic majorities or minorities, indigenous or non-indigenous, dominant or subordinate. Rawls understands that the veil of ignorance is a tool

that enables a person to think clearly and protects them from knowing specific things that they can use to support members of society. Therefore, the resulting policies can be realized in a series of fair and objective settings for everyone (Huang et al., 2019; von Platz, 2017).

To answer RQ3, the three concepts of justice can be used to minimize ethnic revival. The state is responsible for implementing a fair system in a multi-ethnic society. All institutions (social, political, legal, and economic) have their respective functions to distribute social burdens and benefits to individuals. Everyone involved must be free, rational, and equal. For example, economic institutions must distribute welfare to the community. Legal institutions distribute protection and guarantee rights and freedoms for individuals. Socio-political institutions will distribute power to individuals.

The distribution of social burdens and benefits must be carried out with the principle of justice. The goal is for individuals from diverse backgrounds and social conditions to have access to their fundamental rights, which ultimately lead to social justice conditions (Sari, 2020). Furthermore, the state must regulate the principle of fair equality of opportunity and the difference principle to provide justice for disadvantaged ethnic groups. The assumption is that the state will succeed if it adopts an original position and employs the veil of ignorance to create just policies.

Conclusions

A multi-case analysis of ethnic revival cases in 11 countries in the Southeast Asia region reveals a consistent pattern: historical and ongoing injustices experienced by marginalized ethnic groups are the primary drivers of these movements. These injustices, often perpetuated by dominant state actors, fuel ethnic sentiments and mobilize ethnic identity, creating a cycle of "we" versus "them" that culminates in ethnic revival. The research highlights the deep-seated impact of state-driven disparities on intergroup relations.

Furthermore, applying Rawlsian principles of justice highlights the state's critical role in mitigating ethnic conflict. By failing to uphold justice as fairness, principles of justice, and original position through the veil of ignorance, governments inadvertently contribute to the conditions that foster ethnic revival. Conversely, a commitment to these principles can provide a framework for creating equitable policies that address the root causes of ethnic grievances and promote social harmony. Ultimately, the research suggests that a just and inclusive state is essential for preventing the resurgence of ethnic tensions and fostering lasting peace in the Southeast Asian region.

Overall, the research is unique and novel. Discussing ethnic revival in 11 diverse Southeast Asian countries allows for identifying similarities and variations in the phenomenon across different political and social landscapes. It also shows how ethnic identity serves as a driver of ethnic revival movements. It explains how marginalized ethnic groups use their shared identity to challenge dominant groups, often leading to conflict. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of identity politics in ethnic revival.

A significant novelty is a direct link between ethnic revival and the state's failure to uphold principles of justice. This framework offers a theoretical lens for understanding why certain countries are more susceptible to ethnic revival movements than others. It argues that state policies that perpetuate injustice and discrimination against certain ethnic groups directly contribute to the likelihood of ethnic revival.

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About The Authors

Dr. Cut Maya Aprita Sari., S. Sos., M. Soc.Sc served as a lecturer and researcher at the Political Science Department of Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, since 2013. She earns her doctoral degree at the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Her research interest are Political Theory, Conflict and Peace Studies, Ethnicity, Identity, and Nationalism. Her current publications can be viewed at <https://fsd.usk.ac.id/cutmayaapritasari/>.

Prof. Dr. Kartini Aboo Talib @ Khalid, Ph.D. in Law, Policy and Society at Northeastern University Boston, Massachusetts. She is a principal fellow at the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA) UKM and an expert in public policy analysis. Her current publications can be viewed at <https://www.ukm.my/kita/academic/kartini/>.

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