Culture, Religion and Conflict in Muslim Southeast Asia: Negotiating Tense Pluralisms. **Edited by Joseph Camilleri and Sven Schottmann. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013. Hardcover: 196pp.**

This is a welcome addition to the academic debate on the political effects of ethnicity, religion and culture. Edited by Joseph Camilleri and Sven Schottmann, with contributions by eight scholars, it focuses on Southeast Asian countries that have either Muslim majorities or significant Muslim minorities. In their introductory chapter, Camilleri and Schottmann argue that while ethnicity, religion and culture may be politicized to serve the interests of political actors, they may also serve as instruments facilitating dialogue and building harmony.

The book consists of two parts. Part I covers "states, discourses and *grandes idées*". Comprised of four chapters, it looks at Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines and investigates cases of conflict and reconciliation. Taking a regional perspective, Camilleri in Chapter Two explores the challenges and opportunities in applying principles of dialogue and conflict-resolution strategies in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies in Southeast Asia. Appraising the structural limitations of regional institutions such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum, Camilleri advocates the use of track-two (i.e. non-state) consultative processes to assist states in managing and resolving conflicts beyond formal negotiations or the bargaining tools usually employed by states.

Chapters Three and Four, on Malaysia's policies of managing its multicultural society, by Gerhard Hoffestaedter and Sven Schottmann respectively, come to very different conclusions. Hoffestaedter argues that the Sino-Malay sectarian riots of 1969 were a defining moment in the politics of Malaysia. Since then, Islam has dominated identity politics in the country (p. 47), creating tensions between ethnic and religious groups, and blocking the space for social and cultural interaction between the different racial and religious communities. Conversely, Schottmann credits Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad with consolidating the country's democratic institutions and boosting its economic progress, while promoting Islam as a religion of tolerance. Schottmann argues that Mahathir's ability to frame policy within Islamic norms transformed the multicultural and multi-religious polity into a state where representative democracy and economic growth thrive.

In Chapter Five, Michael Barr analyses Singapore's attempts to neutralize Islamic radicalism and reduce prejudice against Muslims and Malays, but concludes that the effort has been unsuccessful. The government's twin policies of "modernizing" Muslims by "mainstreaming" them towards a Chinese-dominated society, while increasing institutional supervision of mosques, has not only failed to integrate Singaporean Malays into mainstream society but also contributed to their seclusion and marginalization.

Part II discusses concrete examples of "conflict and reconciliation". In Chapter Six, Alberto Gomes examines policies in Malaysia that increased harmony between the major ethnic groups — Malays, Chinese and Indians — while noting that strong tensions nonetheless remain below the calm surface. Gomes argues that, unless Malaysians "free themselves from their obsession and preoccupation with ethnicity" (p. 106), inter-racial conflict will remain a problem.

In Chapters Seven and Nine, Virginie André and Peter Sales examine the quest for self-determination of Muslims in Southern Thailand and the Southern Philippines, respectively. In Southern Thailand, André finds that the emergence of an exclusivist Islamic discourse and adoption of global jihadism gave separatists a new meaning to their struggle. Alluding to Roland Robertson's theory of "glocalization", André observes that insurgents have framed their struggle as a "glocalized" jihad to "restore the Islamic Patani state through waging a vengeful, violent war against the infidel Siamese oppressor" (p. 120). By contrast, Sales argues that separatism in the Philippines is fundamentally an issue of poor governance and socio-economic inequality that could be contained through provision of meaningful political autonomy.

In Chapters Eight and Ten, Jemma Purdey and Damien Kingsbury look at Indonesia and examine the potential for conflict resolution using grassroots and indigenous modes of reconciliation. Synthesis is provided in Chapter Eleven by Syed Muhammad Khairudin Aljunied who draws on arguments from the previous contributors to conclude that culture and religion have helped to foster harmony in multi-ethnic and multicultural Southeast Asia.

The book is a worthy discourse on nation- and state-building in the region. Overall, however, it falls short of its stated objectives. Chapters Three, Four and Six on Malaysia, and Chapter Five on Singapore, have failed to demonstrate the sustainability of dialogue and reconciliation as pursued by authoritarian regimes. Meanwhile, the case of Southern Thailand in Chapter Seven demonstrates the intractability of conflict between Muslims and Buddhists without

providing a clear vision of how culture and religion might mitigate armed conflict. Chapter Nine on the Philippines is little more than an account of findings from earlier studies with no new insights on conflict resolution. The complexities of inter-clan and inter-tribal conflict, conflicts between secessionist movements, and clashes between the Moro movement and the Communists, have been glossed over. These different levels of conflict have contributed to the difficulty of resolving disputes in the Southern Philippines. Sadly, too, the book ignores the case of the Cham, the largely unexplored ethnic group consisting mainly of Muslims in Cambodia and Hindus in Vietnam. While Chams continue to be ethnically united but divided in terms of religious beliefs and practices, the differences in engaging with states where they live such as Cambodia and Vietnam have defined the politics of ethnicity, religion, and conflict between states and politicized minorities. A discussion of how and why the Chams became integrated in Cambodia but secluded in Vietnam would have added to the book's value, as this issue remains to be examined.

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