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2. Human security and the specific vulnerability of religious minorities

Although religion has been a neglected topic in the social sciences as I stated in the introduction, this does not mean that scholarship has nothing relevant to say about the vulnerability of religious minorities. On the contrary, numerous contributions in a wide range of disciplines have been made about aspects that directly or indirectly touch upon my research topic. Various philosophical reflections have been made about the notion of vulnerability and about the role of religion in society. Some of the analytical concepts about minority and ethnic groups developed in the broad field known as conflict theory are applicable to observe the vulnerability of religious groups (this is done among others by Toft 2007; Marsden 2012; Vüllers, Pfeiffer & Basedau 2015; Basedau, Fox, Pierskalla, Strüver & Vüllers 2017; Henne 2019). Moreover, the regained interest in religion in recent decades in both civil society and academia has led to a prolific development of religious freedom assessment tools that also provides relevant insights.

In this chapter I review some of the most relevant theoretical and analytical frameworks in terms of their value for the observation of the specific vulnerability of religious minorities. Notwithstanding their important contributions, I argue that they fail to detect important threats that are faced by religious minorities for both conceptual and methodological reasons.

I organize my presentation of approaches not by discipline but by theme. I first present a selection of ways to understand the reasons behind the vulnerability of religious minorities (2.1), before looking at the contributions of conflict theory to understand ethno-religious conflict (2.2). I then discuss literature about the notion of resilience, referring to how religious minorities can cope with vulnerability (2.3). Finally, I conclude that each of these interpretative models offer valuable pieces to the puzzle of the vulnerability of religious minorities, but also have their limitations and can clog an open-ended observation (2.4).

2.1 *Ways to understand the reasons behind the vulnerability of religious minorities*

In this section I discuss different types of theories that provide micro and macro level interpretations of the vulnerability of religious minorities: the relation between religious identity and vulnerability (2.1.1), vulnerability as a result of deviant social behavior (2.1.2), the specific vulnerability of commitment to justice (2.1.3) and state regulation of religion (2.1.4). Some of these theories have explanatory pretensions, while others have a normative character. Because I am primarily concerned with the observation of the vulnerability of religious minorities, I simply take them as complementary interpretations that guide the observation.

2.1.1 *The relation between religious identity and vulnerability*

A frequently cited explanation for civil conflict is that societies with minorities that are visible and have a strong identity, which religious affiliation is *par excellence*, are prone to violence, as is the central postulate of Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' theory (1993). The deterministic claim that differences of identity, whether cultural, religious or racial, unavoidably lead to conflict has been contested by numerous authors for its lack of empirical evidence (Fox 1999; Stewart 2008; Grim & Finke 2011). However, this does not mean that

identity, in particular religious identity, does not play a role in explaining conflicts. In this section, I present the contributions of a selection of scholars who qualify the role of (religious) identity as an explanatory factor of conflict.

In *Identity and Violence*, Amartya Sen explains the dangers of what he calls the “assumption of singular affiliation”, by which a person’s identity is reduced to a single identity marker, instead of recognizing that “identities are robustly plural, and that the importance of one identity need not obliterate the importance of others.” In his view, this kind of approach to identity is prone to violence for a number of reasons. One of them is that identity-based thinking is susceptible to manipulation, of which Sen offers ample empirical evidence in his book. To cite just one example, Sen establishes a link between the reductionist characterization of India as a “Hindu nation” and sectarian violence against Muslim (and Christian) minorities (2006:46).

The manipulation of identity is also a central theme in the work of Gurr (1993, 2000), Horowitz (2000) and Schlee (2008). In *How Enemies Are Made: Towards a Theory of Ethnic and Religious Conflicts* (2008), Schlee explains that “virtuosi in identity manipulation” implement different strategies to broaden or narrow identities based on rational cost-benefit calculations of including or excluding particular groups of people. (For example, “within the religious dimension one can identify with Christianity as a whole or with just one small elect sect.”) A broad definition of identity may be useful to obtain certain benefits (such as a larger army), but a narrow definition may be preferred when it comes to sharing these benefits.

Sen does not attach any particular significance to the religious itself. He is primarily interested in the dynamics of identity, which can of course have a basis in religion; he rather views religion as a cloak for identity. Another reason Sen gives for why identity-based thinking is prone to violence is because it removes the capacity of individuals to identify with others. By downplaying their affiliation to other associations as well as their belonging to a nation, it is easy for a minority, including a religious minority, to be singled out as different, and what is different can then be viewed as having less worth or as a threat to the social cohesion of the community. It also makes it particularly easy for a minority group to be singled out as a ‘scapegoat.’ I come back to this concept below.

Making a slightly different point, Buijs warns against “the danger of unity”, referring to the “unitarian” conception of what a well-functioning political community should be like, a society in which all citizens are expected to share the same language, traditions, dress, lifestyle and convictions, in opposition to “pluralism”, which seeks to maximize freedom and diversity as ingredients for a successful society. The rigid insistence upon unity is often a recipe for violence (2013).

To summarize, religious identity can evidently be a factor of vulnerability, but it should be properly understood. As Sen asserts, differences of identity are not an automatic cause of conflict; rather, the view that reduces individuals to a single identity – reductionist and manipulative interpretations of identity – can increase the vulnerability of religious minorities. This being said, as I argue in the following sections, a narrow focus on religious identity ignores the role of religious behavior.

2.1.2 Vulnerability as a result of deviant social behavior

References to the vulnerability of people who display deviant social behavior, which includes religious minorities can be found in the work of Émile Durkheim, Martha Nussbaum, René Girard and Max Weber. In many, if not almost all societies that we know of, some form of religion is seen by these authors as an essential element that provides unity and cohesion to a society. Under different scenarios, religious minorities can be perceived as deviant, and therefore as a threat to the cohesion of society, which creates vulnerability for them.

Durkheim's work on deviance in *De la division du travail social* (1893) is particularly illustrative in this respect. He argues that shared norms and values, including religious beliefs, constitute the glue that holds a human society together, by providing a sense of 'collective consciousness', which, at least in premodern societies, was viewed as essential to its preservation. When individuals within a society question its shared norms and values, for example because they adhere to a different religion, they risk being viewed as a threat to the cohesion of a society. Schlee's analysis of exclusion dynamics as a result of a strife for "ritual purity" in both Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Africa (2008) can also be interpreted in terms of vulnerability as a result of deviant behavior. A modern-day illustration of this dynamic can be observed in communist and post-communist countries, where religious organizations are labeled as 'foreign agents' by the government.

The idea of religious minorities being a threat to social cohesion connects with Martha Nussbaum's reflection about how "irrational" and "misguided" fear leads people to imagine an alleged fault in a (religious) minority group, such as, historically, the fear of a Jewish world conspiracy – as laid out in the "Rabbi's Speech" (1872) and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1902) (collected in Mendes-Flohr 2011:336-343) – and, nowadays, the fear that Muslims pose a security threat to Western society. In both examples, a similar pattern is at play:

"Fear typically starts from some real problem. (...) Fear is easily displaced onto something that may have little to do with the underlying problem but that serves as a handy surrogate for it, often because the new target is already disliked. (...) Fear is nourished by the idea of a disguised enemy." (Nussbaum 2013:31)

The problem with this process is that it leads to very real consequences for religious minorities. In Nussbaum's example, the unfounded and amplified fear of Muslims in Western society has translated into political reactions against certain forms of religious expression, leading to bans on burqas and minarets in Western countries, among other things. (I come back to the topic of regulation of religion in section 2.1.4.).

René Girard's influential *The Scapegoat* (1989) presents similarities with Nussbaum's perspective, with one qualitative difference: the vulnerability of religious minorities is not explained by fear, but by frustration. Girard posits that humans are driven by "mimetic desire", i.e. the human need to want the same as the other. Girard argues that in a human society, mimetic desire is contagious and inevitably leads to conflict at some point because the mimetic desire of all people can never be completely satisfied. This is when the "scapegoat mechanism" is triggered, by which one person or one group, is attributed the blame for the discontent. All frustration of society is directed to this "scapegoat", thereby relieving the tensions in that society.

Girard contends that the victims of social discontent may be totally random, but stereotypes and prejudices generally play an important role. Some people or groups of people are particularly easy targets, however absurd the claim that they are responsible for a disaster. Religious minorities in particular are vulnerable to be singled out as scapegoats:

“The appetite for persecution readily focuses on religious minorities, especially during a time of crisis. (...) [Public] opinion is overexcited and ready to accept the most absurd rumors” (ibid. 6)

“Ethnic and religious minorities tend to polarize the majorities against themselves. In this we see one of the criteria by which victims are selected, which, though relative to the individual society, is transcultural in principle. There are very few societies that do not subject their minorities, all the poorly integrated or merely distinct groups, to certain forms of discrimination and even persecution.” (ibid. 17).

Now, Girard does not conclude that differences necessarily lead to conflict. He does argue, however, that differences increase the likelihood of persecution, but not without observing the importance of behavioral aspects, particularly in the case of groups who share behavioral codes such as a religious group:

“In any area of existence or behavior abnormality may function as the criterion for selecting those to be persecuted. For example, there is such a thing as social abnormality; here the average defines the norm. The further one is from normal social status of whatever kind, the greater the risk of persecution.” (ibid. 18).

As a nuance to these theories, it should be observed that religious differences do not always lead to divisions. In *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*, Putnam and Campbell argue that religion can also perform a “bridging” function; it can be a source of social capital that “connects people of different backgrounds.” (2010:537) For example, these authors find that religious Americans are more likely to be “good neighbors” than secular Americans, not because of their faith but because of the communities. Scenarios such as Nussbaum’s “politics of fear” or Girard’s scapegoat mechanism should therefore not be seen as a necessity in religiously diverse societies.

Religion can also be perceived as a political threat. In his essay “Politics as a Vocation” (1919), Max Weber argues that religion is a source of legitimacy which unavoidably enters in conflict with existing power structures. Such conflict is not necessarily violent, but there is always a tension between state authority and religion, which is “an all-encompassing normative system [that] poses an authority alternative to the state”, as Scolnicov explains (2011). In other words, religion and the state can be viewed as competing sources of legitimacy (Habermas 2006; Buijs, Sunier & Versteeg 2013). Similarly, Fox argues that religion can constitute a source of legitimacy for the state and political institutions but can also become a factor that undermines this legitimacy. The competing legitimacy between the state and religion can be observed in classic communist countries, where the state wishes to be only source of legitimacy, and is therefore suspicious of religion (2013).

The aforementioned authors all provide complementary interpretations of how ‘deviant’ behavior – in comparison to the norms of the majority – can translate into vulnerability of religious minorities when they are perceived as a threat to the cohesion of society (Durkheim),

inspire an “irrational” fear (Nussbaum), become scapegoats for frustrations (Girard), or are viewed as a threat to the state authority, or by extension to other forms of authority (Weber). This set of theories underlines the importance of considering behavior as a cause of vulnerability alongside identity-based interpretations.

2.1.3 *The specific vulnerability of commitment to justice*

In *The New Religious Intolerance*, Martha Nussbaum makes an ontological claim about the intrinsic vulnerability of humanity. The starting point for this claim is what she calls “the vulnerability premise”, which is the notion that the faculty of conscience, which is at the essence of human dignity and hence of humanity itself, “can be seriously impeded by bad worldly conditions. It can be stopped from becoming active, and it can even be violated or damaged within.” (2013:65) In other words, as Turner (2006) and Scruton (2017) agree, to be human means to have the faculty of conscience – for many people, religious convictions are a matter of conscience upon which they base certain life choices; in their experience, the faculty of conscience is closely connected to what can be called the ‘religious faculty’ –, but this faculty is always vulnerable to be impeded by what can be referred to as ‘the world’, meaning everything surrounding a person.

The immediate normative implication of this claim is that religious freedom must be protected in the broadest possible way. It also implies that whenever the social and political conditions do not sufficiently protect both “equal liberty” and “ample liberty”, as Nussbaum contends, human dignity itself is vulnerable to be “coerced, oppressed, and manipulated” (Bock 2014). Therefore, it is important to understand the social and political conditions that impede the faculty of conscience – and by extension, restrict religious freedom – and therefore directly violate human dignity (Turner 2006).

Although the vulnerability premise is universal, Nussbaum argues that the human dignity of people who are strongly committed to justice, which includes many religiously motivated people, is even more at risk of being violated. In *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986), she argues that because vulnerability is an intrinsic aspect of the human condition, individuals who want to be good will inevitably be confronted with an ethical dilemma: a good human being will always want to have an openness to the world, but it is precisely this openness that leaves him or her fragile to extreme circumstances beyond their control. In other words, to be good is to be fragile, and to be fragile is to risk being shattered (Verbrugge, Buijs & van Baardewijk 2019).

Judith Butler, although she rejects Nussbaum’s ontological claim about vulnerability, makes a similar point in *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016) where she argues that “resistance” – engaging injustice – increases risk. She gives the example of a street protest: all who are present are at risk of detention, arrest, and in the most extreme case forcible handling and death. Psychological research suggests that altruistic individuals, particularly those who adhere to strong moral convictions, tend to face general resentment (Monin, Sawyer & Marquez 2008; Parks & Stone 2010). In the same vein, liberation theologians speak of ‘martyrdom’ as something inevitable for anyone who responds to the Christian duty to promote justice. In order to promote justice, ‘oppressive social structures’ need to be confronted, and this inevitably exposes anyone who is dedicated to justice to risks, of which martyrdom is the ultimate expression (Gutiérrez 1988; Ellacuría 2002; Sobrino 2005).

Taken together, these authors suggest that a strong commitment to justice increases vulnerability. This is relevant for this research for two reasons. The first is that it provides support for the hypothesis that there is a relation between religious convictions, when they inspire moral behavior or social engagement, and the vulnerability to suffer human rights abuses. The second is that there is indeed something specific about the vulnerability of religious minorities, because this vulnerability can be understood as a consequence of religious convictions that lead them to engage injustice and therefore put them at risk.

2.1.4 State regulation of religion

Depending on the context, the ‘regulation of religion’ can be an important explanatory factor of the vulnerability of religious minorities. This concept can simply be defined as “all government laws, policies, and practices that limit, regulate, or control the majority religion in a state, or all religions in a state” (Fox 2013:41). In chapter 3, I present some religious freedom assessment tools that attempt to measure aspects related to the regulation of religion by the state. Here, I discuss the role of antireligion and religious political ideologies as motives for the regulation of religion, before presenting an alternative explanatory model, rooted in the religious economy approach.

Antireligion political ideologies

The various ideologies that can be grouped under the term ‘secularism’ or ‘political secularism’ deserve a separate mention because of their relevance for my case study on Cuba (chapter 7). From the outset, it is necessary to specify that political secularism is not monolithic; there are important variations within this political ideology (Fox 2013:33-35). At a basic level, secularism can be defined as “an ideology or set of beliefs advocating that religion ought to be separate from all or some aspects of politics and/or public life” (Fox 2015:28), a position many religious and non-religious people share. Political secularism is not a violent ideology in itself. Countries like Mexico (1857), France (1905) and Turkey (1921) have religious policies based on secularism, but this does not necessarily lead to physical violence against religious groups (although it could be argued, that there may be forms of symbolic violence against religious groups in these countries).

Political secularism can, however, lead to significant restrictions on religious minorities and religious groups in general (Gill 2008; Grim & Finke 2011; Fox 2013, 2015; Koesel 2014; Sarkissian 2015). As a political ideology, it is central to various totalitarian ideologies, including communism and fascism, which are characterized by “extreme hostility toward religion” (Koesel 2014:7). These “antireligion political ideologies” or “extreme secular ideologies” seek to implement policies that ban religion from all aspects of public and private life (Fox 2015:31), or to limit and control religion as much as possible (ibid. 55). When societies are governed by such antireligious ideologies, they target religious groups (Sarkissian 2015:3) and “are likely to experience conflict over the role that religion should play in public life and politics if portions of the population do not subscribe to the ruling ideology” (ibid. 19). Contemporary examples of antireligious political systems are North Korea, China, Belarus and Vietnam, to cite some of the most extreme cases.

Although generally not violent, political secularism can also take the form of what has been referred to as ‘secular intolerance’, which can be defined as a radical expression of secularism

seeking to exclude religion not only from the public domain but also from various private spheres, in direct contradiction of the principle of pluralism (Buijs 2013; Buijs, Sunier & Versteeg 2013). It is based on the indifference to, rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations based on the conviction that religion should not have a visible influence on society, particularly on education and politics (Philpott 2002; Petri & Visscher 2015). Nussbaum (2013), while almost exclusively referring to cases of intolerance against Muslims, analyzes the sharp rise of anti-religious sentiments in the Western world, especially since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (this trend is commonly referred to as ‘securitization theory’; see Cesari 2013).

Religious political ideologies

Antireligion ideologies can create vulnerability for religious minorities, but so can religious ideologies, such as Islamism or Hindu nationalism. Indeed, groups that are motivated by religious ideologies can target members of minority religions and societies that are governed by religious ideologies tend to be intolerant toward religious minorities, implementing a wide range of discriminatory policies that restrict particular religious practices (Grim & Finke 2011; Wellman 2012; Cesari 2014; Sarkissian 2015; Fox 2016; Philpott 2019). The most extreme cases include theocratic states such as Iran, Mauritania and Saudi Arabia.

Although religious ideologies can indeed create vulnerability for religious minorities, the claim that monotheisms, and all religions for that matter, are inherently violent or lead to violence, as put forward by Paul Cliteur in *Het monotheïstisch dilemma [The monotheistic dilemma]* (2010) cannot be sustained by any empirical evidence and is “a mistake of judgment”, as Buijs says. Rather, violence should be viewed as “an option that expresses itself in any ‘worldview’: polytheist, monotheist and atheist, but cannot be exclusively attributed to one of these” (2013:34).

Equally wrong is the claim that some religions are more likely to promote violence than others, as Max Weber seemed to believe. As scholars like Fox and Buijs contend, all religions have within them both violent and peaceful tendencies. This being said, “fundamentalists can exploit the violent potential a religion contains even when that religion is rarely perceived as having violent potential” (Fox 1999:433). Within the same religion, justifications can be found for both pacifism and violence, but this does not mean that religions are inherently violent (Cavanaugh 2009; Sacks 2017). As Buijs says, “if one does so, one chases the wrong suspect.” (2013:34) In other words, religion itself should not be viewed as a source of vulnerability for other religious minorities, but interpretations of religion that legitimize violence can be. Fox therefore cautions “to look for factors outside of the religions themselves to explain when and why religion exhibits its revolutionary and violent tendencies.” (1999:435)

The religious economy approach

Notwithstanding the role antireligion and religious political ideologies can play in explaining the state regulation of religion, complementary explanations are offered by what is called the ‘religious economy’ approach. In short, the religious economy approach applies micro-economic theory and rational choice to the sociology of religion. First applied by Peter Berger (1967), it observes the religious environment as a ‘marketplace’ for ‘religious goods’ that can be more or less ‘free’, ‘regulated’, ‘monopolistic’, etc. In this theory, religious participation is

viewed as a function of religious regulation. Some works that have used this theory are Finke & Stark (1988), Gill (1998, 2008), Chesnut (2007) and Grim & Finke (2011).

In *The Political Origins of Religious Liberty* (2008), Anthony Gill argues that political interests explain the regulation of religion to a considerable extent (Johnson & Koyama make a very similar point in *Persecution and Toleration*, 2019). As an extension of religious economy, Gill claims that politicians will only expand religious freedom if this serves their interests: maintaining power, maximizing government revenue promoting economic growth, minimizing civil unrest and minimizing the cost of ruling. Following this perspective, the degree of religious freedom is thus determined by the feasibility of restricting or not restricting the rights of religious groups. Gill has applied this perspective to explain the relaxing of Mexico's anticlerical policies halfway the twentieth century. Goldenziel (2009) applied it to assert that there were opportunistic political reasons for the Cuban state to partially relax the regulation of religion in the 1990s.

The religious economies approach is also insightful to understand the consequences of the regulation of religion. In *The Price of Freedom Denied*, Grim & Finke (2011) claim, based on a statistical model called 'the religious economies model', that the existence of restrictions placed by the state on religious freedom increases the risk of violence against the religious groups whose religious freedom is restricted. The authors argue that the denial of religious freedoms directly restricts the diversity of religious options on the religious marketplace. They further argue that "to the extent these restrictions increase, and religious freedoms are denied, violent religious persecution will also rise" (ibid. 70). This pattern is observed "regardless of motive", in line with the opportunity-based approach that argues that motivations are indeterminate to explain conflict.

The religious economies model is helpful to observe how the interaction between social and governmental actors can increase the vulnerability of religious minorities. In this model, the actions against religious minorities by both types of actors tend to strengthen each other. It normally seems to start with a specific social group (a mob, typically) representing the majority religion whose actions encourage the government to repress religious minorities, which in turn encourages social groups even more to attack religious minorities. This all leads to a dynamic in which social hostilities involving religion and government restrictions of religion mutually reinforce each other. Empirically, such scenarios can be observed in countries like Egypt where mobs and the state tend to reinforce each other; it does not seem to apply to countries like Cuba where the regulation of religion by the state is not driven by a mob.

This empirical conclusion offers a strong justification for the protection of religious freedom. When this right is insufficiently protected, religious minorities can be expected to be vulnerable. According to Grim & Finke, the protection of religious freedoms reduces conflict because violence against specific religious groups by non-state actors is less tolerated when religious freedoms are protected. Fox adds that the protection of religious freedoms further reduces the risk of conflict because it neutralizes social pressures on the state leading to religious persecution of minority religions and because it reduces the grievances of minority religions (Fox 2013:131). Inversely, it is more likely that a religious minority will be persecuted when there is impunity for crimes committed against it (Grim & Finke 2011) or when a "culture of vigilantism" is encouraged by religious policies such as blasphemy laws in Muslim-majority countries (Saiya 2017).

In sum, the theories presented in this section provide a number of keys to interpret specific aspects of the vulnerability of religious minorities. The first is that the regulation of religion by the state can be the consequence of antireligion or religious political ideologies or of political incentives. The second is that restrictions of religious freedom can increase the risk of violence by non-state actors against religious minorities. The third is that the degree of respect for religious freedom is often the result of an interaction between state and non-state actors.

2.2 When vulnerability becomes conflict: understanding ethno-religious conflict in conflict theory

In conflict theory, three schools can be distinguished that offer concurrent interpretations for civil conflicts, which include ethno-religious conflicts: the first explains conflicts as a result of ‘grievance’ (2.2.1); the second explains them as a result of ‘greed’ (2.2.2); the third favors an approach in terms of ‘opportunity’ (2.2.3). Notwithstanding the arguments both within and between these schools with regard to what is the best statistical predictor of civil conflicts, for the purpose of this research, I simply take them as complementary interpretations that can shed light on the vulnerability of religious minorities, in agreement with Ballentine & Sherman (2003) and Weinstein (2007). This is also what Johan Galtung proposes when he analytically distinguishes between “value conflicts” and “interest conflicts”, with the former referring to conflicts over resource scarcity and the latter to conflicts over ideological disagreements (1969).

2.2.1 Grievance

‘Relative deprivation theory’ is probably the best-known motivational framework for interpreting conflict. Developed by Ted Gurr in his seminal work *Why Men Rebel* (2016 [1970]), this theory is one of the most influential political science frameworks of political protest and rebellion. It postulates that relative deprivation, defined as the “perceived discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities” is a strong determinant of the potential for collective violence. Drawing on social psychology, Gurr argues that relative deprivation – also referred to by other scholars and by Gurr himself as “popular discontent”, “sense of injustice” or “grievances” –, leads to frustration, and frustration leads to aggression, which is the “primary source of the human capacity for violence.” Similar notions can be found in the work of other scholars: “rancor” (Galtung 1969), “rage” (Sloterdijk 2007), “rancor” (Schaap 2012), and “anger” and “resentment (Nussbaum 2016). In Gurr’s model, frustration will lead to rebellion if a number of conditions are met: this frustration must be sustained through time by a group that has a sufficient degree of organization, it needs to be supported by ideological justifications, and political action needs to be judged to be pertinent. The discontented people must also judge they have the capacity to act (Gurr 2015, 2016).

Frances Stewart (2008) favors an approach in terms of ‘horizontal inequalities’, defined as “inequalities in economic, social or political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups” to determine the likelihood of conflict as well as their potential for mobilization. Using this concept, Cederman, Gleditsch & Buhaug (2013) argue that grievances based on political and economic exclusion at the group level do cause civil war, and measure this through an alternative dataset which they consider to be more suitable than Gurr’s Minorities at Risk dataset, who had actually reached a similar conclusion in 1993. Among other

things, these authors find that ethnic groups that are excluded from governmental influence or face group-level economic inequality are more likely to experience conflict.

In spite of their differences, the aforementioned scholars all agree on one thing: that motivations, specifically, grievances, whether based on real or perceived injustice, are the primary explanatory factor of conflict between ethnic groups, and that under favorable circumstances, such as widespread impunity or sufficient organizational capacity of the antagonistic groups, this can lead to violent mobilization.

Although ideological justifications are considered, the grievance-based approach says little about the role of religious convictions and generally focuses on material acceptations of grievance rather than immaterial ones such as religious disagreements. The only exception is Fox (1999), who developed a theory of ethno-religious conflict by integrating religion into the Minorities at Risk dataset, but this theory only holds explanatory power when it comes to inter-ethnic conflicts in which religion and ethnicity overlap, which is not the issue in my case studies (chapter 6 is about an intra-ethnic conflict and in chapters 5 and 7 ethnicity does not play a role).

2.2.2 Greed

Rejecting the grievance-based approach, a number of scholars have argued that greed – economic and political incentives –, not grievance, is the primary explanation of conflict (Collier & Hoeffler 2004). The proponents of greed do not deny the importance of grievances but are skeptical of the ‘self-serving explanations’ that are employed to justify rebellion, considering that these narratives should not ‘naively’ be taken at face value (Kalyvas 2006; Schlee 2008). In Collier’s words, rebels should be viewed as “profiteers”, rather than as “freedom fighters.” In agreement with this perspective, in *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (2004), Jessica Stern unequivocally concludes that religious terrorist organizations use religion as a motivation and a justification to recruit soldiers, but that the driving force behind such organizations is “power, money and attention”, or greed, in other words. It is indeed a legitimate question whether insurgencies such as the FARC guerrillas in Colombia or Al-Shabaab in Somalia are really ideologically motivated (by communist ideals and by political Islam, respectively), or simply criminals, who make money of drug trafficking and piracy.

Apart from scenarios of rebels who use a religious discourse as a mobilization tool or to conceal their actual intentions, applying the greed-based approach to interpret the vulnerability of religious minorities might seem counterintuitive, as religious conflicts are commonly understood as conflicts over values. However, the main significance of the greed-based approach for my research is that it introduces the possibility for alternative interpretations to grievance-based accounts. Indeed, most accounts of religious persecution tend to focus on religious motives, misjudging conflicts in which the vulnerability of religious minorities is caused by rational calculations of a group or organization that is driven by economic or political incentives (Toft 2011). In other words, even when religious grievances are absent, religious minorities can still be vulnerable, a point I come back to in my case studies.

This being said, the role of immaterial factors of conflict should not be ignored altogether, a distinction that is insufficiently made in both the grievance-based and the greed-based approaches which tend to overemphasize material factors. A helpful typology is offered by

Achterhuis & Koning in *De kunst van het vreedzaam vechten [The art of peaceful fighting]* (2017:111-137), who distinguish between conflicts over interests – which could be (a) competition for the same interest (Girard’s “mimetic desire”) or a (b) struggle over opposite interests – and (c) conflicts over value differences, such as identity, ideology or religion. Achterhuis & Koning stress that, in practice, these three types of conflict can occur simultaneously and interact. To the authors, a holistic approach to conflict is preferable; different elements should be considered, instead of singling out only the material, a point I come back to in the synthesis of this section.

2.2.3 Opportunity

In later work, Collier, Hoeffler & Rohner (2009) put forward the concept of ‘opportunity’ – this concept was already present in the work of Charles Tilly (1978, 1998, 1999) –, nuancing the greed-based approach, suggesting that whenever a rebellion is feasible, in financial and military terms, it will occur. Motivation then, whether it is greed or grievance, is indeterminate to explain conflict, or in any case subordinate to the feasibility of a conflict to happen, such as a power vacuum. In the same vein, scholars have argued that state weakness, expressed by factors like political instability, bureaucratic weakness and rough terrain (Fearon & Laitin 2003) and poor governance, in combination with corruption, failing rule of law and no property rights protection (Chayes 2015) are a particularly relevant predictor of violent conflict. Similarly, Gibson (2005) and Giraudy (2012) show that peripheral areas with poor infrastructure are likely to be “subnational undemocratic regimes.” Feasibility is also implicit in Gurr’s work, because of his emphasis on the necessary conditions for frustration to turn into rebellion.

The value of the opportunity-based approach is that it points to the structural conditions under which violence against religious minorities can develop. It seems indeed sensible that contexts of lawlessness and impunity can increase the risk for religious minorities, both because religious freedom is not enforced, and because any violence committed by illegitimate groups that take advantage of weak political institutions is not punished. For example, in *Faith That Endures* (2006), Ronald Boyd-MacMillan describes how the power vacuum caused by the fragmentation of the ruling Congress Party due to corruption scandals in India and the collapse of left-wing ideology after the fall of the Berlin Wall, was exploited by the extremist and sectarian Hindutva party, which in turn led to persecution of Christian and Muslim minorities.

Although it seems logical that state weakness increases the risk of conflict and, by extension, the vulnerability of religious minorities, the opposite is also possible. In a strong state, political institutions may be used to create “structural violence”, to use Johan Galtung’s concept (1969) which he defines as “avoidable impairment of fundamental human needs or, to put it in more general terms, the impairment of human life, which lowers the actual degree to which someone is able to meet their needs below that which would otherwise be possible.” In other words, structural violence is a form of violence where social structures or institutions, such as elitism, racism, sexism, etc. may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. This type of violence can cause harm for religious minorities, as is the case in authoritarian regimes, which I discussed in section 2.1.4.

A related concept developed by Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron that also underlines that strong states can restrict religious freedom is “symbolic violence.” (1970) Although this concept was developed initially to understand how social inequalities are reproduced, it also

applies to restrictions on religious freedom. Essentially, symbolic violence is the imposition of habits of thought and perception upon dominated groups within society who then take the social order imposed to be just. The dominated then take their subservient position to be ‘right’ within the social order. In other words, the dominated people collude in their own subordination. Symbolic violence is in some sense more powerful than physical violence in that it is indirect and embedded in different types of thought patterns, perceptions and actions of individuals, which in turn, imposes a sense of legitimacy of the social order.

To summarize, although the different theories about the determinants of ethno-religious conflict were developed in opposition to each other, they provide complementary explanations for the vulnerability of religious minorities. Both grievances and greed can play a role in interpreting the motivations of the actors that create vulnerability for religious minorities. Opportunity-based interpretations, related to state weakness (or on the contrary the use of the power of the state to regulate religion), emphasize the structural conditions that can increase (or decrease) the vulnerability of religious minorities. For these theories to be useful for my research, however, they need to be taken as complementary interpretations instead of seeking to single out one explanatory factor (Owen 2003; Achterhuis & Koning 2017). They must also be broadened beyond ethno-religious conflicts to apply to conflicts involving religious minorities that do not follow ethnic lines.

2.3 Coping with vulnerability: resilience

To offset the discussion about vulnerability in the previous two sections, I now discuss the concept of resilience, based on the premise that religious minorities can develop mechanisms to cope with vulnerability. I first look at the notion of resilience (2.3.1) before discussing a broad array of coping mechanisms religious minorities have at their disposal (2.3.2).

2.3.1 Resilience

Judith Butler (2016) warns against understanding vulnerability only as victimization and passivity, insisting that vulnerability cannot be disconnected from agency. As she argues, the mere act of opposing the conditions of one’s vulnerability, underlines how vulnerability can become a mobilizing force, and thus of resilience. Indeed, vulnerability is not necessarily the opposite of resistance but can play a role in practices of resistance. Vulnerability and ‘precarity’ are generally what lead people to mobilize and to protest against injustice. This protest may itself be risky, as we have seen, but it is often triggered by the original situation of vulnerability.

Following Judith Rodin in *The Resilience Dividend*, the concept of resilience can be defined as follows:

“Resilience is the capacity of any entity – an individual, a community, an organization, or a natural system – to prepare for disruptions, to recover from shocks and stresses, and to adapt and grow from a disruptive experience.”
(2014:116)

Applying this perspective to the vulnerability of religious minorities, this concept means that a resilient religious minority should have the capacity to do three things: (1) to prepare for threats, (2) to recover from them, and (3) to adapt and grow from the experience. Religious minorities

can be more or less resilient to risks, i.e. more or less successful in mitigating their impact. In the resilience assessments included in the case studies that are part of this research, I describe real ways in which the vulnerable religious minority I study can become more resilient – to develop the capacity to cope with human security threats –, in line with the second part of Judith Rodin’s definition which reads:

“As you build resilience, therefore, you become more able to prevent or mitigate stresses and shocks you can identify and better able to respond to those you can’t predict or avoid. You also develop greater capacity to bounce back from a crisis, learn from it, and achieve revitalization.” (ibid. 119)

2.3.2 *Coping mechanisms*

How can vulnerable religious minorities develop coping mechanisms and become resilient? *Under Caesar’s Sword*, a three-year research project of the University of Notre Dame and the Religious Freedom Project at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University highlights three typical strategies Christian communities adopt to respond to persecution: “Survival”, “Association”, and “Confrontation” (Philpott & Shah 2018). These three strategies are not mutually exclusive but can overlap to a great extent. Survival refers to the range of – creative – strategies of preservation of life while staying true to essential elements of church life, often in secret. Association is the active strategy of building networks, such as interdenominational partnerships, interreligious dialogue and international cooperation, to stand stronger against external threats. Confrontation is the often-risky strategy of openly challenging the persecution.

Within a human security framework, Glasius proposes four types of survival strategies people adopt when confronted with violent conflict: (a) avoidance, (b) compliance, (c) collective action and (d) taking up arms (2012:9-16). Avoidance comprises fleeing but can also include refraining from making statements that could be considered as ‘politically deviant.’ Compliance refers to the obedience to the demands of armed parties – this can be expanded to any actor causing human security threats –, including forced labor, the payment of charges or bribes, giving information, betraying others, or even sexual services. Collective action includes not only resistance but also other forms of collective resilience such as information sharing, the preservation of community facilities, informal gatherings or collective negotiation. Taking up arms refers to the direct confrontation of armed power, for example through the creation of self-defense militias.

These four types of survival strategies can take different forms when applied to religious minorities. In *Blessed Are the Organized*, Jeffrey Stout analyzes ways in which religious communities in the United States combat social injustice through organized collective action (2010). An illustration of the avoidance strategy is the ‘internal exit movement’ that formed under the East German dictatorship before the fall of the Berlin Wall, which was essentially composed of people, including Christians, who mentally withdrew from the regime and gathered in churches, private flats and reading clubs as private acts of protest (Grix 2000:93).

In a way, the avoidance and compliance strategies can be viewed as the opposites of the collective action strategy, although it is possible for people to engage in both strategies at different moments in time. This distinction is of particular relevance in understanding why religious minorities engage or not in some coping mechanisms in the context of Latin America.

Avoidance (or compliance) can be the result of fear or of a feeling that resistance is useless in given contexts, but it can also be the result of theological options that do not value any form of social engagement or collective action (Freston 2001, 2008; Petri 2012).

Indeed, when considering the role of religion in inspiring social engagement, two theological alternatives are possible: one that inscribes itself in a tradition of isolation and sometimes even rejection from the world, and one that connects with traditions of social engagement and an active role in civil society (Buijs, Dekker & Hooghe 2009; Philpott & Shah 2018). The differences between both religious traditions is particularly visible in the Protestant world, in which the Anabaptist tradition views the church as a “contrasting community”, an alternative to society with an inner focus, whereas the Calvinist tradition calls for an active contribution to social transformation through the participation in social initiatives and the denunciation of social injustice (Kennedy 2009; Hunter 2010). The active theological option can in turn be divided in a conservative and a transformative approach to society, a distinction that is particularly relevant to Latin America.

As I argued in the introduction of this research, Christianity in Latin America is very heterogeneous in terms of religious practice and behavior, which has implications for the adoption of coping mechanisms. Thus, whilst Wellman & Lombardi stress that religiously motivated actors can play a role in advancing human security (2012), it is important to recognize that this is only true for religious groups and individuals that adhere to a theology that promotes an active participation in society (Mwaura 2008).

Whereas collective action is essentially non-violent, taking up arms can be considered as an extreme, violent, form of collective action. Again, the engagement of religious people in armed resistance is to a large extent determined by their theological preferences, i.e. whether they adhere to pacifist traditions or on the contrary follow more militant religious teachings (Wellman 2012). In the Christian tradition, for example, the long tradition of ‘just war theory’, which developed with Augustine, coexists with ever-present pacifist traditions. Taking up arms, including counterinsurgency is not necessarily morally wrong when it serves the purpose of enforcing human security, provided it follows certain principles regarding the use of force (Salmon & Kaldor 2006; Glasius 2008). Regardless of the moral qualifications of armed resistance, taking up arms falls outside the scope of this research.

Glasius’ categorization of coping mechanisms can be expanded by some additional categories of coping mechanisms that are specific to religion, in line with the findings of the *Under Caesar’s Sword* project. The first element of religion that comes to mind is the spiritual endurance it provides, as religion is often a source of increased self-awareness, moral strength and hope in difficult times for its adherents, which is also the central point of Boyd-MacMillan’s *Faith That Endures* (2006). It is essentially an internal feature. Spiritual endurance is not limited to religious people, but actively religious people would have this almost by default.

In many religious traditions, vulnerability is viewed as something positive or beneficial, as a good attitude to have, and even as a virtue, indeed, as a source of resilience. A biblical concept that is close to vulnerability is *praus* (Greek), which can be translated as mildness, gentleness or meekness, and is viewed as a virtue (a ‘fruit of the spirit’). In connection with this theme, a theology of suffering has developed, highlighting the benefits of suffering and persecution because of its purifying effect (Lewis (2002 [1940], 2002 [1961]), Boyd-MacMillan 2006; Harries 2016).

Beyond Christianity, vulnerability is valued in other religions. For example, in Judaism, vulnerability is considered as something that “can lead you toward connecting to something greater than yourself, connecting to others and to the divine”, leading to resilience or *chosen* in Hebrew, understood as “to be inoculated, impermeable” (Mandell 2016). In Buddhism, the notion of *karuna*, which is generally translated as compassion, refers to “the wish that all beings are relieved of suffering” which is a direct result of the awareness of the interdependence of everything in nature. It follows that the vulnerable deserve special protection (Hongladarom 2011).

Many works of literature and fiction highlight that vulnerability and suffering, however difficult it may be, leads to character development, new insights, a deeper understanding of the world, and is key to realizing the human good. Examples hereof are the novels *The Power and The Glory*, by Graham Greene (2010 [1940]), *Silence* by Shūsaku Endō (1966), *Till We Have Faces* by C.S. Lewis (1956) as well as the film *The Mission* (1986). It is also a central theme in the work of Greek tragic playwrights, as described in Nussbaum’s *Fragility* (1986), and in the novels by Fyodor Dostoevsky (2018 [1866]). In social psychology vulnerability is often presented as a key quality of a successful, creative, innovative and resilient leader. Brené Brown’s TED talk, “The power of vulnerability”, which had over 35 million views, brought this theme to the core of leadership studies. Brené Brown’s book *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (2012) develops the same theme.

The acknowledgement of the ‘blessings in disguise’ of vulnerability and suffering has an important downside, because it gives the perpetrators of attacks against religious groups the possibility to justify their violence by alleging that they do it against themselves because they chose to be vulnerable. Nietzsche follows a similar line of thinking. In *The Anti-Christ* (1999 [1895]), he argues that religion, in particular Christianity which he refers to as “the religion of pity”, increases vulnerability: “Pity stands opposed to the tonic emotions which heighten our vitality: it has a depressing effect. We are deprived of strength when we feel pity. That loss of strength which suffering as such inflicts on life is still further increased and multiplied by pity. Pity makes suffering contagious.” (ibid. 172-173) This is, of course, a fallacy, because acknowledging the purifying effect of suffering does not mean that one voluntarily embraces suffering itself or even that suffering is a choice.

Religion itself can also be a source of resilience, however. In *On Human Nature*, Roger Scruton suggests that religion provides increased self-awareness. He contends that religious people have a practical advantage over non-religious people, in that they have “a ready supply of stories and doctrines that make sense of those truths [pertaining to the human condition].” (2017:46) The Christian tradition, for example, provides a narrative that explains the origin of evil (in Genesis) and the eschatological foretelling that Jesus’ followers would suffer tribulations (John 15:18-16:33).

Another type of coping mechanism that is related to religion can be the moral standing in society of religious people, such as the respect that religious ministers command or the superstitious belief that religious people benefit from supernatural protection. Furthermore, because religious groups gather in communities, solidarity among members of a religious community can also be a coping mechanism. An example of solidarity is the sharing of humanitarian supplies to mitigate the impact of human security threats. In a study about the rescue of Jews in The Netherlands during the Holocaust, Braun demonstrates that religious

minorities (Protestants in dominantly Catholic regions and Catholics in dominantly Protestant regions) are generally more inclined and better able to help other threatened minorities (2016). In a way, this finding connects with Butler's argument that vulnerability is an important resource for resistance: being a vulnerable religious minority encourages and enables it to reach out to help other minorities (or its own minority). (This does not mean, however, that religious people are by default drawn to engage injustice, nor that non-religious people are never drawn to do so).

In this research, I use the word 'solidarity' to refer to support systems that exist within religious communities. I use the concept of 'collective action' to refer to the engagement in political advocacy by members of a religious minority. Both solidarity and collective action can transcend the religious minority in question, as Hannah Arendt stresses in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (2006 [1963]) where she discusses the role non-Jews could have played to speak out for the Jews during World War II.

A final type of coping mechanism that is related to religion is Jürgen Habermas' interpretation of John Rawls' concept of "the use of public reason" in his article "Religion in the public sphere" (2006) which I refer to as 'social wisdom.' Habermas argues, among other things, that both religious and secular citizens need to recognize that they live in a plural context (a post-secular society), and that in the public sphere they need to be willing to listen to and learn from each other's arguments. Earlier Wolterstorff had insisted that every citizen has a right to express his own views, using the vocabulary of its preference, as long as normal decency standards are observed (Audi & Wolterstoff 1997; Buijs, Sunier & Versteeg 2013). Such an attitude, which Rawls has referred to as "duty of civility" requires of citizens to be capable of "self-reflection" and to make "an effort to learn and adapt" as part of "an ethics of citizenship" that avoids misunderstanding and resentment. Social wisdom thus presupposes notions like 'tolerance', 'respect', 'fairmindedness' and 'prudence.'

Although in his article Habermas (2006) is concerned with the issue of religious expression in the public sphere and not with resilience, social wisdom can be viewed as a coping mechanism. Indeed, religious minorities can decrease their vulnerability by avoiding words and actions that could be perceived as provocative (Casanova 2008; Philpott & Shah 2018). In missiology, concepts such as 'contextualization' and 'cultural sensitivity' stress this exact point (Engle 1983). The theological appropriation of Max Weber's distinction between *Gesinnungsethik* (ethics of conviction) and *Verantwortungsethik* (ethics of responsibility) by Thielicke, a Christian ethicist with general high standing among the more conservative-evangelical branches of Christianity, is also applicable here. The former concerns the noble ideals and convictions that one desires to realize, the latter considers what the possible negative consequences of those convictions and idealistic ideals could be (1969:512-515). As Buijs puts it, "one is enjoined to act concretely, wisely, in a limited manner; not to change the world, but to take one step, in line with concrete commandments (that includes the commandment not to kill)." (2013:34). (Considering social wisdom as a coping mechanism, an interesting question about the story of the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 6:8-8:11), is: could he have avoided his death if he had refrained from insulting the Sanhedrin?)

Of course, social wisdom is no guarantee that religious minorities will be safe from threats. Depending on the circumstances, a seemingly inoffensive act can be perceived as a provocation. This was the case of Ahok, Jakarta's former governor, who quoted from the Quran

in a positive sense but was subsequently accused of blasphemy because he was a Christian.³ Moreover, the lack of social wisdom can never be an excuse to cause them harm. Religious minorities certainly have a responsibility to avoid unnecessary provocations, but a lack of self-reflection can never be used as a justification for human rights abuses committed against them.

In sum, the relation between vulnerability and resilience is stressed by numerous authors but possesses interesting nuances in the case of religious minorities. This constitutes not only a justification for researching the resilience of religious minorities, but also confirms that it is possible to determine some degree of specificity in the vulnerability of religious minorities that is directly relatable to religion.

2.4 Synthesis: pieces to the puzzle of the vulnerability of religious minorities

In this chapter I have explored a number of interpretative models, from a wide range of disciplines, which offer complementary interpretations of the vulnerability of religious minorities. Taken together, they can be considered as pieces to the puzzle of the vulnerability of religious minorities; however, they also clog its observation.

Several theories stress the role of behavior inspired by religious convictions as an enhancing factor of the vulnerability of religious minorities. This applies to people with a strong commitment to justice, but also to people who display socially deviant behavior that is perceived to threaten social cohesion or some vested interest. In both sets of interpretations, the vulnerability of religious minorities can be seen as a direct consequence of their behavior. The role of religious identity, however, should not be dismissed, particularly when religious affiliation is manipulated to justify the social exclusion of religious minorities or when a visible religious minority becomes a scapegoat for frustrations. These models also suggest that it is possible to identify some degree of specificity in the vulnerability of religious minorities that is directly relatable to either their religious identity or their religious behavior.

The subtleties of religion's role in society can have important macro-level consequences. They can lead to civil conflicts, in which grievance-based and greed-based motivations, or a combination of them, can create vulnerability for religious minorities. Grievance-based motivations include not only frustrations over material conditions but also political ideologies that can be discriminatory to all religions or to minority religions. Greed-based motivations too are relevant to consider, as the vulnerability of religious minorities is often determined by economic and political incentives. Both can also lead to the placement of restrictions on the religious freedom of religious minorities, by the state or by the powers that be. The risks for religious minorities further increase under unfavorable circumstances, such as widespread impunity or on the contrary a political system that encourages religious violence.

Finally, religion is not only a source of vulnerability. The reviewed frameworks highlight that religious convictions can also be a source of resilience, underlining that vulnerable religious minorities should not be viewed only as victims but as actors with agency (Appleby 2000). This has ramifications at various levels: at the personal level, religious people tend to have an important degree of self-awareness and at the collective level, religion is a source of social capital. Among other things, this enables religious minorities to display solidarity. This, of course, is not to say that only religious people can be resilient nor that all religious minorities

³ "Ahok: Indonesia's religious tolerance on trial?", *Al Jazeera*, 09/05/2017.

have developed satisfactory coping mechanisms; it does mean, however, that the resilience of religious minorities presents a certain uniqueness.

The theories presented in this section have their limitations too in relation to this dissertation. These limitations are primarily related to focus in at least five areas. First, most interpretative models tend to place more emphasis on religious identity, thereby downplaying behavioral aspects of religion. The exclusive focus on religious identity might explain why literature on religious conflict (as well as religious freedom monitoring instruments, which I discuss further down) fail to observe the kind of religious freedom violations like the ones I encountered. Indeed, focusing on the behavioral dimension of religion makes it possible to identify subsets of religious groups based on forms of religious behavior, beyond their religious identification – which would be statistically meaningless in Christian-majority countries – and consequently to observe their vulnerability to suffer human rights abuses.

Second, the confounding of ethnicity and religion (implying the neglect of intra-ethnic conflict) is a common feature in conflict theory. The literature that looks at ‘ethno-religious conflict’ is mainly concerned with inter-ethnic or inter-religious conflicts, not with conflicts within ethnic groups – ‘minority-within-the-minority’ conflicts – like the case of the Nasa ethnic group in Colombia I referenced in the introduction and which I discuss in chapter 6.

Third, the focus on the state by some scholars implies a disregard for the subnational level, which entails the overlooking of local and regional empirical realities, including the position of vulnerable religious minorities in areas where the presence of the state can be much weaker, in line with O’Donnell (1993). It must be observed, however, that in recent years conflict studies have become increasingly sensitive to the limitations of methodological nationalism, a point I will come back to in section 3.2.1. Connected with the former, a fourth point is that most conflict studies have a restrictive understanding of religious freedom by considering only state regulation of religion, failing to appreciate the role of non-state actors with regards to religious freedom. For example, I did not find any references pertaining to the relation between organized crime and religion, which I discuss in chapter 5. This being said, some datasets, such as Minorities at Risk, certainly take non-state actors into consideration (specifically considering “Individual acts of harassment, no fatalities” and “Sporadic violent attacks by gangs or other small groups”) but does not establish a link with religion.

Finally, the concern of conflict theory with identifying the single most important explanatory factor of conflict – the single cause fallacy – instead of acknowledging that conflicts are multifactorial can be misleading. As Owen observes:

“It is my opinion that the literature [on the root causes of conflict] has gone astray. That fact that no one condition will necessarily lead to conflict, does not rule out the contributing role of each and says nothing to the implications of several conditions being present in one location. It is the aggregated effect of human insecurities that I feel may be the best possible indicator for potential conflict. Poverty in and of itself may not necessarily lead to conflict, but combined with political repression and a recent environmental disaster, may significantly increase the regional propensity for violence.” (2003:113).

In all, the presented interpretative models are useful to observe some aspects of the vulnerability of religious minorities, but they are, generalizing, insufficiently holistic. For these reasons, these models risk clogging the observation of the vulnerability of religious minorities.

Specifically, because of conceptual and methodological reasons, they only observe a limited number of human security threats to which religious minorities are vulnerable. My primary aim in this research is not to develop better explanations of the vulnerability of religious minorities – although some explanations may be given –, but rather to be able to observe this vulnerability more clearly. In order to properly observe the vulnerability of religious minorities, a more comprehensive framework is necessary. I come back to this important point in the next chapter.

