Exploring national identity and collective memory across cultures: comparison of Indonesia and France

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The present exploratory research compared how Indonesian and French participants defined national identity and the collective memories associated with their respective countries. This was examined in two studies using a mixed methods approach. Results show that Indonesian and French participants considered being born in the country as an important element in defining someone as French or Indonesian, respectively. Indonesian participants also mentioned being descendants of Indonesians as part of being Indonesian, in contrast to French participants who instead mentioned adherence to French ideology and values to be considered as French. Indonesian participants also recalled more positive past events related to their country (i.e., they have more positive collective memories) and showed more positive emotional attachment to their country, such as pride, than did the French. The French recalled memories that date further in the past compared to Indonesian participants. Discussion centers on the cultural dimensions (i.e., collectivist vs. individualistic) that have been shown to influence the importance of the ingroups, including nations as studied here, in individuals' self-perception, as proposed by Social Identity Theory.

KEYWORDS

Indonesia, France, national identity, collective memory, emotion

National identity is a term to describe individuals' sense of belonging and connection to their country and nation. National identity encompasses individuals' affective bond with their country and can be constructed as a manifestation of their affiliation with the state (Smith, 1992). It is often characterized by common cultural, historical, and political experiences and includes a sense of shared values, beliefs, and customs. National identity can also include a sense of pride in one's country, which may be reflected in national symbols, holidays, traditions, language, intergenerational history, etc. In a political context, national identity is important as it can promote national unity and maintain a stable society. National identity can also shape a country's international relations and reputation, as it can influence how a country presents itself to the world (Gilboa, 2008; Fukuyama, 2018). For these reasons, national identity is an important topic of study.

National identity is often associated with the concept of nationalism. However, nationalism differs from national identity, and the former is often seen as a possible "extension" of the latter. Nationalism is recognized as a manifestation of a certain type of national identity, reflecting tendencies that favor advancing pro-national movements.

Excessive nationalism can result in partiality toward one's national group and unkind attitudes toward other countries or their citizens (Vom Hau et al., 2023). The present exploratory research focuses exclusively on national identity, particularly from a psychological point of view. As cultures differ across countries, in particular East vs. West, this research includes a cross-cultural dimension by comparing two countries, namely Indonesia and France. Indonesia represents the so-called eastern culture country characterized by collectivism, in contrast to France, which is considered to be a western and culturally more individualistic country (see Hofstede, 1980).

Perceptions of national identity across different nations

Past studies have shown that how people conceptualize or think of national identities differs across countries (Hjermn, 1998). American participants indicated that being American means carrying out activities based on American culture and speaking American English as native speakers (Silver et al., 2021). Japanese consider a person to be Japanese when the person speaks Japanese and strongly identifies with the group (i.e., Japanese) or when the person perceives themselves as Japanese (i.e., as a member of the nation that is Japan) (Sasaki, 2004). Thus, participants of both countries identified speaking the language of the country as an important part of national identity. Indeed, language is often seen as an essential aspect of national identity, as observed in studies involving other countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia (Stokes, 2017). However, Japanese participants also mentioned identification with the group as important, in contrast to Americans, who instead mentioned the adoption of cultural values. This may suggest cultural influence regarding elements that citizens may consider as part of national identity (or that make one be regarded as a fellow national by their countrymen and women) that we can then expect to differ. Differences can also be due to other factors such as the history of the country (internal or external conflicts/wars, periods of glory, crises, etc.), the ideology predominant in the society (jus soli or jus sanguinis, ideologies such as multiculturalism), or the make-up of the country's people such as the presence of diverse ethnic groups or immigration or interactions with people from "outside" the country's borders.

The present research explored the cultural aspects of how national identity is defined, in particular, the comparison of collectivist vs. individualistic cultural orientations, from a social psychology perspective. We focused here on culture and identity theories to reveal general differences that could be refined in future studies by integrating factors specific to the country, such as its history, the diversity of the population (e.g., ethnic groups), or immigration in national identity. In social psychology, national identity can be examined through the lens of the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1986). According to this theory, individuals categorize themselves as part of a group from which they derive a sense of who they are. They see themselves as sharing the same characteristics, interests, etc., with other members of the (in)group and distinguish themselves from others who belong to outgroups. As the groups one belongs to are essential to one's identity and self-esteem, individuals are often driven to perceive their in-groups positively. This aligns with individuals' motivation to maintain a positive self-image and high self-esteem, an important catalyst that drives individuals' thinking and behaviors (Alicke et al., 2020). When social identity is salient, group members tend to use the identity as the mark to "draw" invisible boundaries between the positively seen in-group and the often seen as different and less favorable outgroups (Turner et al., 1987).

In Social Identity Theory, a national group or country is thus one of the social groups to which an individual belongs, conveying a potential identity. What distinguishes a national from other social identities is the unit of analysis. In national identity, the group being considered is the state to which the individuals belong (vs., for instance, ethnic or gender group). As Anderson (1983) stated, a nation is formed as an abstract connection where individuals within a country share a feeling of collective unity even though they do not have to interact directly (imagined community). National identity can be considered a way to ensure that all citizens feel valued and respected, contributing to greater social harmony, democratic governance, and a source of self-esteem for the people of the nation, who can take pride in their country's accomplishments and culture. This can be expressed through the national group's shared symbols and cognitive representations (Brewer and Gardner, 1996). The latter can be studied in terms of memories of events related to the country and shared by individuals sharing the same national identity (Hirst and Manier, 2008), which we studied in the present research. Collective memory is a term coined by a French sociologist, Halbwachs, who defined it as all things related to the past that are told and shared in communities. This sharing of memories will eventually lead to the development of shared feelings (e.g., we are similar) among individuals and create identity bonds (Gusevskaya and Plotnikova, 2020). Collective memory may not just be about how the past happened but also about society's history (Wertsch and Roediger, 2022; Smeekes et al., 2023). Thus, collective memories related to the country can contribute to constructing a collective or national narrative shared by those who identify as nationals of the country (Hammack, 2008).

Furthermore, collective memories have been proposed as markers of one's membership in a given social group. That is, people who share the same memories belong to the same group (Tavani et al., 2017). Collective memories thus allow the categorization of other individuals, i.e., those with the same memories, as belonging to one's group and differentiate them from others who do not (belong). Research showed that when individuals recognize and share collective events in a country, they classify themselves as part of that nation in-group (Wolin, 1989 in Misztal, 2010). The link between national identity and collective memory emphasizes that even though remembering involves individual cognitive processes, they are shared and collectively construed, making them "collective memories" and can be used to remember what the public considers the "truth" (Misztal, 2003, 2010). Indeed, past research has provided evidence for the critical role of recognized past events of a nation in the national identity of its people (Liu and Hilton, 2005; Topcu and Hirst, 2022). Based on the principles of Social Identity Theory, individuals seek to uphold favorably viewed social identities to preserve a sense of positive self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Turner et al., 1987). Related to one's nation, a positive national identity can be achieved through the recall of positive collective memories that could facilitate the manifestation

of favorable emotions (such as happiness and pride) associated with one's country. Negative memories, in contrast, could lead to more negative emotions. Given the individuals' motivation to maintain a positive social identity it is not surprising that past studies have shown that people are likely to engage in selective remembering. Studies have indeed shown that recalling positive memories led to more positive perceptions and emotions than recalling negative ones (Kensinger, 2009; Williams et al., 2022).

Culture and identities

An individual's self-esteem and sense of self may come from the groups to which they belong or social identity as well as from the unique characteristics/abilities that they perceive they possess or personal identity (see Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Stryker and Burke, 2000; Sedikides and Brewer, 2001). If both identities coexist within an individual, the significance attributed to either may vary. Immediate contexts have been shown to render one or the other identity salient (Kernis, 2005). Culture, on the other hand, is a chronic context that may render an identity (personal or collective) persistently accessible/salient (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Hofstede (1980) places countries and cultures along a continuum of collectivist-individualism. On the continuum, Indonesia is classified as more collectivistic, whereas France is individualistic (Hofstede, 1980; Minkov et al., 2017; Minkov and Kaasa, 2022). Existing data indicate a significant difference in the cultural orientations of Indonesia compared to France, with Indonesia scoring 14 and France scoring 71 on a 100-point collectivism to individualism scale (Hofstede, 1980). This confirms the difference in the cultural orientations of the two countries: Indonesia in the more collectivistic end of the continuum (with countries such as China and Japan, see Collectivist Countries 2024, n.d.), whereas France in the more individualistic end (with countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom).

People from collectivist groups emphasize to a greater extent their social affiliations than those from individualistic cultures (who tend to emphasize their unique personal attributes). This divergence potentially indicates a variance in the salience and importance of national identity—an embodiment of one's social identity—among individuals from the two countries. With their pronounced collectivism, Indonesians are expected to attribute greater importance (or significance) to their national identity than the more individualistic French. Furthermore, one could reasonably expect that the "markers" of national identity might lean more toward the collective for Indonesians (e.g., my parents are Indonesians) and more individual/personal for the French (e.g., I adhere to French values and ideas). These distinctions should be observed in how participants from these two countries define Indonesians and French.

Given the above, the cultural orientation and the weight of the (in)groups in one's sense of self might be associated with the emotions and motivations linked with national identity. Thus, we expected Indonesians to generate more favorable collective memories, defined and measured here as historical events considered pivotal by the populace for their nation's wellbeing (Minkov, 2011; Pertiwi and Ainsworth, 2021) than the French. Based on the same reasoning, we could also expect Indonesians to

attribute more positive emotions, such as pride, to their national identity, compared to the French.

To establish the necessary contextual description, Indonesia and France differ in several ways. Indonesia is an archipelago in Southeast Asia with a population of 270 million (OECD, 2023) and hundreds of ethnic groups (World Bank, 2023). France is a Western European country with a population of 67 million (OECD, 2023). Indonesia is also a relatively young country, as it gained its independence in 1945, compared to France, which officially came into existence as a Republic in 1789 following the Bastille Revolution. Importantly, Indonesia and France differ in cultural orientation, namely toward collectivism or individualism.

Present research

This research delves into the perceptions of national identity among individuals in Indonesia and France, two nations characterized by distinct cultural orientations, namely collectivism and individualism. This represents a first step in revealing general differences across countries that can be predicted by their dominant cultural orientation, to which specific characteristics of the country, such as its history, could be integrated to reveal more specific differences. Similarities across countries with similar cultural orientations (and differences between those with different orientations) can subsequently serve as a basis for further country-specific studies. Moreover, the study highlights the substantial discrepancy in the scholarly attention dedicated to the concept of national identity in these two countries. France has witnessed extensive research on the question of national identity, particularly in the context of immigration from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, shedding light on the intricate interplay between individuals' expectations and the tangible realities experienced in their daily lives (Simon, 2012). In contrast, exploration of national identity within the Indonesian context has been relatively limited. For instance, Priwati et al. (2021) examined the relationship between national identity and subordinate identity, namely ethnicity, bridged by the role of multiculturalism. Similarly, Hakim et al. (2015) delved into aspects of national identity, including its links to local-national history and local-national identity. This study thus addresses this research gap by examining the dynamics of national identity in Indonesia and France. Its primary objective is to gain valuable insights into the nuanced perspectives of individuals in these culturally distinct settings regarding their sense of national belonging.

We first examined how nationals of the two countries conceptualize national identity or what they think makes one a national of their country. We also examined how national identity might be linked to memories of events that the participants consider important to their country and their emotions toward their country. Two studies were conducted to address these questions.

Study 1

In this study, using a qualitative approach, we examined how French and Indonesian participants conceptualize national identity

as French or Indonesian to tease out similarities and differences between them. We also examined the collective memories the participants generated for their respective countries.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling via various social media platforms (WhatsApp and Instagram) and university emails. The inclusion criteria for participants were self-identified as Indonesian or French, residing in Indonesia or France, and between the ages of 18–65.

Data were taken in May–August 2022. Seven hundred and twenty-eight people in total participated in the study. We excluded 122 Indonesian participants who resided abroad during the data collection, giving a final sample of 606 participants: 426 Indonesians and 180 French participants (average age of participants: $M = 32$ years, $SD = 9.07$, and $M = 44$ years, $SD = 13.9$ for Indonesian and French, respectively). Among the Indonesian participants, 66.4% were female, 29.1% were male, and the remaining opted not to disclose their gender. Among French participants, 66.3% identified as female, 27.6% as male, and the rest chose not to provide this information.

Procedure

The study was conducted online using Qualtrics. A brief description of the study was given to the participants before they began: information about the research team, the aim of the research, how the data would be used, and their rights as participants. Participants were assured that all data were anonymous. Participants were then asked to sign the informed consent once they had understood the information and agreed to participate. The Indonesian participants responded to the questionnaire in Indonesian, whereas the French participants responded in French.

The online survey included two open-ended questions presented in a fixed order. All participants were asked to respond spontaneously after each question appeared on the screen. They were told that we were interested only in what they thought, i.e., their personal opinions and that there was no right or wrong answer. The first question they responded to was: According to you, what makes someone Indonesian (for Indonesian participants) or French (for French participants)? And the second: Think of up to ten significant historical/recent events that you think are important for the country (Indonesia for Indonesian participants and France for French participants). Participants were free to respond as completely as they wished or to leave the question blank. Once participants completed the survey, they received a debriefing document that elucidated the nature of the study, outlined the procedures for safeguarding data confidentiality, and underscored the study's adherence to the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) about human participant research.

TABLE 1 Categories of national identity across countries, ranked by frequency.

No.	Indonesian	%	French	%
1	Born in Indonesia	36.2	Born in France	34.5
2	Indonesian descendants	22.9	Have French nationality	18.6
3	Speak Indonesian	16.4	Internalize French value	17.9
4	Live in Indonesia	15.5	Respect the French law	15.2
5	Adopt Indonesian culture	9	French descendants	13.8

Results and discussion

Responses were categorized by two independent coders with knowledge of both Indonesia and France. Based on the responses to each question, we created thematic categories for questions (1) i.e., "What makes a person French/Indonesian?" and (2) i.e., "Events they consider important for the country." Participants' responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, chosen for its ability to accommodate complex and detailed data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The process followed the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun et al. (2019). These frameworks suggest six steps for qualitative data analysis: (1) the coders familiarize themselves with the data by reading the responses repeatedly and rewriting abbreviations or incomplete words to ensure a comprehensive understanding; (2) coders assign initial codes to responses using relevant keywords; (3) coders group the responses according to identified themes; (4) coders carefully review the themes to ensure accuracy; (5) name each theme; and (6) coders define each theme to maintain consistency among coders and minimize overlap. Finally, the responses were extracted into the top five categories, i.e., those that included the most responses, for Indonesian and French participants. Overall, Indonesian participants tended to give a higher number of responses to the questions ($Ms = 3$ and 9, for questions 1 and 2, respectively) than did the French participants ($Ms = 2$ and 4, for questions 1 and 2, respectively).

As seen in Table 1, Indonesian and French participants most frequently cited being born in the country as an element of national identity. This element has indeed been found in past studies across different sample countries (Kiely et al., 2001; Sasaki, 2004) including those of collectivist and individualistic cultures. What differentiates Indonesians from the French are the categories listed after that of "born in the country." For Indonesians, being of Indonesian descent and speaking Indonesian were the second and third-ranked categories. In contrast, French participants ranked having the French nationality second, followed by "adherence to French laws and values." These differences could suggest the relative importance of the group one is born into, i.e., being of Indonesian descent for Indonesian participants, absent among French participants who seemed to emphasize the "acquired" nature of national identity and an individual's choice or control in embracing the identity (e.g., embracing values associated with a social group). French participants consider legal and ideological

TABLE 2 Themes of collective memories, ranked by frequency.

No.	Indonesian	%	French	%
1	Independence day	32	World wars	33.8
2	Commemoration days	20.4	French revolution	21.7
3	Thirtieth of September movement (G30S)	19.3	Declaration of Rights in France	21.3
4	National awakening movement	18.5	Terrorist attacks in France	14
5	Presidential elections	9.8	France's victories in the World Cup	9.2

aspects as important in being French. This may mean that the group French nationals is seen as more permeable than the group Indonesian nationals. Interestingly, Indonesian citizens cannot legally have other citizenships simultaneously, whereas it is permitted for French citizens.

We next coded participants' responses to the collective memories question using the same coding scheme procedure. Table 2 presents the categories extracted for each sample group, ranked by percentage of total responses for each sample group. An example of the categorization for question 2: For the Indonesian sample, the category "Independence Day" was created that includes responses such as "The Proclamation of Independence," "17 August 1945" and "Indonesian Independence Day."

The independent coders categorized four events as positive memories for Indonesian: Independence Day; Commemoration days (days that celebrate national or local heroes such as *Hari Kartini* or Kartini day to celebrate women's emancipation in Indonesia led by Kartini, also *Hari Pahlawan* or Heroes day to celebrate those who fought for Indonesia's independence); the Presidential election; and *Gerakan Kebangkitan Nasional* or the National Awakening Movement to remember the collective efforts and notable figures that encouraged Indonesians to foster a spirit of unity against colonialism and strive for Indonesian independence, while *Gerakan 30 September* (G30S) or the Thirtieth of September movement was categorized as a negative memory. The *G30S* event refers to a *coup d'État* attempt that involved the abduction and assassination of six senior officers in the Indonesian Army in 1965. This incident has left a significant imprint on Indonesian history, politics, and society, enduring to the present day (Leksana, 2021).

The coders categorized three events as positive memories for the French, namely the French Revolution; Victory in World Cups; and the Declaration of Human Rights. The two other events, the World War and the terrorist attacks are coded as negative. Thus, more positive than negative events were listed by both groups. The favorable recollection of historical occurrences among these participants aligns with the outcomes of a study conducted by Yamashiro and Roediger (2019), showing the inclination to recall more positive collective memories related to the Americans.

As expected and in line with the cultural orientations of the two countries, a positive event was more frequently cited by the Indonesians, whom we expected to be more motivated to see their

group more positively, given the integration/importance of the in-groups in their self-perception (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). As can be seen in Table 2, Independence Day, as the first-ranked response, is celebrated in Indonesia each year with pride. For the French, for whom groups might be less salient or important in defining their self, citing a less positive event such as the world wars may not potentially threaten their self-perception (Markus and Kitayama, 1991).

Study 2

The second quantitative study aimed to confirm the elements of national identity generated by participants in study 1 using a different procedure, i.e., ranking of the importance of the elements, with a new sample sourced from the same population. These participants also evaluated the importance and valence of events from Study 1. Finally, we asked them to indicate the emotions they may feel (e.g., pride and shame) when they think of their national identity (i.e., being French or Indonesian).

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited via social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Participants, aged between 18–62, were Indonesian or French citizens and resided in their respective countries. Seven hundred and thirty-four Indonesians participated in the study. After applying inclusion criteria (i.e., Indonesian citizens living in Indonesia and meeting the age requirement), data from 666 participants were retained (66.4% women, 29.1% men, and 4.5% who did not mention their gender). The average age of the participants was 31 years (SD = 9.84). The data from Indonesian participants were collected during the month of March 2023.

For the French, 150 participants took part in the study. Fifty-two either did not finish the survey or did not meet the inclusion criteria, leaving a final sample of 98 participants (66.3% women, 27.6% men, and 6.1% did not mention their gender). The average age was 32 years (SD = 10.9). Data collection from French participants took place from March to May 2023.

Procedure

This study was conducted online using Qualtrics. Participants first read the purpose of the research and how the data would be used. They were then asked to indicate their consent if they agreed to participate.

Participants from Indonesia were presented with the questionnaire in Indonesian, while participants from France received the questionnaire in French. The equivalence of the Indonesian and French questionnaires was overseen by the research team and native speakers proficient in the respective languages, using back translation procedure. For the first task, participants were shown the five events generated by the participants (from the same country as them) in Study 1. For each event, they were to rate how negative/positive they thought the

TABLE 3 The valence scores for collective memory as rated by Indonesian and French participants, respectively.

No.	Indonesian	Valence score (M)	French	Valence score (M)
1	Independence day	6.49	The Declaration of Human Rights	6.49
2	National awakening movement	6.33	The Victory in the World Cup	5.33
3	Commemoration days	6.15	The French Revolution	4.95
4	Presidential elections	5.11	Terrorism attacks in France	1.36
5	Thirtieth of September movement *(G30S)*	3.14	World War	1.35

The higher the score, the more positive and the more important the events were judged, on a scale from 1 = Not at all important to 7 = Extremely important.

TABLE 4 Ratings of the importance of events by participants from Indonesia and France, respectively.

No	Indonesian	Importance score (M)	French	Importance score (M)
1	Independence day	6.67	The French revolution	6.46
2	National awakening movement	6.34	The declaration of human rights	6.43
3	Presidential elections	6.01	World war	6.04
4	Commemoration days	5.99	Terrorism attacks in France	5.74
5	Thirtieth of September movement (G30S)	4.54	The victory in the world cup	4.24

The higher the score, the more positive and the more important the events are perceived, on a scale from 1 = Not at all important to 7 = Extremely important.

event was on a 7-point rating scale ranging from extremely negative (1) to extremely positive (7). They also rated how important they thought each event was for their country, using a 7-point rating scale (1 = Not at all important to 7 = Extremely important).

Once they completed the event-rating tasks, participants were presented with the elements that could constitute their country's national identity (cf. study 1 above). They were to rank-order the importance of the elements to their country's national identity, in their opinion, from the most important (ranked 1) to the least (ranked 5).

The ranking task was followed by a questionnaire on emotions. Participants were to indicate to what extent they feel each of the emotions presented (e.g., pride, shame, joy) when they think of their country or national identity on a rating scale from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Extremely). Finally, all participants completed the demographic questions (age, sex, etc.). The complete explanation of the study provided to participants at the end of the survey.

Results and discussion

Ratings of past events

As seen in Table 3, we validated the observations gleaned from Study 1 for the valence of the events. Four events were rated positively, i.e., above the midpoint (=3.5) of the 7-point rating scale ($M = 6.02$ and $SD = 1.01$). Only one event was rated below the midpoint (which we can assume is at 3.5 on the 7-point rating scale used), $M = 3.14$ and $SD = 1.84$. For the French participants, three of the five events were rated as positive to extremely positive ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.20$), and two as very to extremely negative ($M = 1.36$, $SD = 0.82$).

For Indonesians, the lowest importance score was given to the event rated as negative (below the midpoint of the 7-point scale), namely the Thirtieth September movement *(G30S)* event. For the French, the events regarded as negative are the World War, during which France endured significant hardships, and the Terrorist

attacks on French soil. Indeed, the everyday lives of citizens have been permanently changed following these attacks (e.g., reinforced public security, enhanced public vigilance, increased restrictions/control, etc., see Shapiro and Suzan, 2003).

Table 4 indicates that Indonesian participants assigned the lowest importance score to *G30S*, an event that was also considered as the least positive. French participants attributed the lowest importance score to the World Cup victory, an event that was considered positive for their country. Both events, *G30S* for Indonesian participants, and France's World Cup victory among the French participants, have nonetheless sparked ongoing societal debates. The *G30S* issue remains a topic of discussion in Indonesia as described above and France's World Cup victory has led to discussions related to immigration and French national identity specifically related to the players that compose the French national teams (Thompson, 2015).

Ranking of elements of national identity

As seen in Table 5, the importance ranking of the elements for Indonesian national identity replicated the frequency ranking obtained in Study 1. Again, being born in Indonesia and being of Indonesian descent, characteristics one has no control over or is born into (vs. acquired) predominates in the idea of national identity for Indonesians. In contrast, the rankings (based on frequency in Study 1 and the ranking task in Study 2) revealed some changes for the French participants. If being born in France is still ranked high, it is not the highest ranked and was replaced by "having French nationality." Thus, despite the presence of elements over which one may not have control (being born in France), the French participants emphasized acquired elements (in this case, the legal aspect of being a citizen of France) that reflect some control and choice that individuals have. Being of French descent is ranked the lowest as ancestral lineage may not be considered to the same degree as in collectivist societies in order to belong to the national group. Instead, personal adherence or choice to adhere

TABLE 5 Importance ranking of elements that make up Indonesian or French national identity by Indonesian and French participants, respectively.

No.	Indonesian	French
1	Born in Indonesia	Have French nationality
2	Indonesian descents	Born in France
3	Adopt Indonesian culture	Respect the French law
4	Speak the Indonesian language	Internalize French value
5	Live in Indonesia	French descents

TABLE 6 Emotions felt when thinking about the country ranked for Indonesian and French participants (a higher number indicates higher intensity felt for the emotion).

No.	Indonesian	M	SD	French	M	SD
1	Proud	5.44	1.39	Worried	4.53	2.05
2	Joy	5.24	1.36	Satisfied	4.45	1.61
3	Happy	5.17	1.40	Proud	4.29	1.74
4	Satisfied	5.03	1.46	Happy	4.28	1.72
5	Honored	4.95	1.46	Angry	4.16	1.97
6	Enthusiastic	4.68	1.60	Honored	4.10	1.68
7	Disappointed	3.09	1.61	Disappointed	3.94	1.86
8	Worried	2.82	1.76	Enthusiastic	3.90	1.77
9	Angry	2.64	1.55	Joy	3.90	1.81
10	Jealous	2.55	1.69	Ashamed	2.78	1.94
11	Sad	2.52	1.65	Sad	2.78	1.91
12	Ashamed	2.30	1.51	Regret	2.58	1.57
13	Regret	2.21	1.43	Guilty	2.36	1.62
14	Guilty	1.96	1.32	Jealous	1.63	1.09

to French values is deemed to be relatively more important. This again may reflect the cultural orientations of the two countries, that is, collectivist Indonesia vs. the more individualistic France. Of note, most countries in the world adhere or partially adhere to the principle of jus-soli i.e., being born in the country as a basis for citizenship, which may also explain the prevalence of this element in studies on national identity across countries.

Emotions and national identity

The extent to which French and Indonesian participants said they would feel different emotions when they think of their country is presented in Table 6. In general, and as expected based on past studies, the participants indicated relatively more positive emotions about their country (see Silver et al., 2021).

Indonesian participants rated all positive emotions (i.e., pride, joy, satisfaction, honor, and enthusiasm) above the midpoint (=3.5) on the 7-point rating scale, when thinking about their country. In contrast, French participants, despite feeling satisfied, proud, happy, and honored, also indicated being worried and angry as

emotions that they are likely to feel (i.e., rated above the midpoint) when thinking about the country. Importantly, the two countries differed in the emotion that the participants associated most with their country: Pride for Indonesian participants ($M = 5.44$) and Worried for the French ($M = 4.53$). This could imply that Indonesians hold a more optimistic view regarding the state of their nation, whereas the French exhibit a more pessimistic outlook regarding the current and also future conditions of their country (Ionescu et al., 2023).

The above observation aligns with the expectation that emotions about groups to which one belongs, including national groups, are more positive among individuals from collectivist cultures than those from individualistic cultures. This finding is consistent with the results of a study carried out by Asante (2020) concerning favorable emotions toward their country in African setting. This may reflect, among others, a higher motivation among those from collectivistic cultures to perceive their group positively, which can have consequences on their self-esteem and self-image. This is one of many possible explanations but is of interest to social psychology, notably related to the theory of social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

The observation that pride differs significantly across the two countries ($Ms = 5.44$ & 4.29 and $SD = 1.39$ and 1.74 for Indonesian and French samples, respectively), $[t_{(762)} = -7.36, p < 0.001$, with an effect size of d $= -0.79]$ is important as it is the emotion frequently invoked (e.g., in popular media and political discourses) when national identity is discussed. Pride in one's country may indeed impact the citizens' happiness and wellbeing (e.g., self-esteem, sense of belonging; see Ha and Jang, 2015), which, in turn, may impact how the citizens think of and behave toward other members of the ingroup (e.g., for the cohesion and harmony of the group or the society) or outgroups (other nations). A possible explanation for Worried being ranked high among the emotions that French participants indicated as likely to feel when thinking about their country, could be related to current questions in French society pertaining to immigration and increased European integration (implying loss of autonomy). These questions are frequently addressed in terms of French identity (what it means to be French) in the media. In line with research by Ionescu et al. (2023), French people tend to feel dissatisfied with the current conditions of their country compared to the glorious French past.

It is also possible that the responses reflect what the participants are willing to indicate rather than what they really feel when thinking of their country. Cross-cultural studies showed that individuals from collectivist cultures are less likely to express negative emotions compared to those from individualistic cultures (Lim, 2016). As the goal of collectivistic individuals is to maintain harmony within the ingroup, the expression of negative emotions is contra-normative, unlike individuals from individualistic cultures who prioritize self-expression (vs. maintaining harmony) and personal rather than collective goals.

Participants indicated to what extent they thought they would feel the emotions when thinking about their country/national identity (from 1 = Not at all, to 7 = Extremely). Exploratory factor analyses performed on the emotions revealed two factors corresponding to positive and negative emotions factors. For Indonesian participants, Happy loaded the highest (0.88) on the first factor (i.e., positively valenced emotions), and Sad

TABLE 7 Correlations between collective memories and pride for Indonesian and French participants.

Collective memories	Pride	Collective memories	Pride
Independence day	0.34***	World war	−0.12
National awakening movements	0.33***	French revolution	−0.13
September 30th movement (G30S)	0.09*	Declaration of human rights	0.11
Commemoration days	0.30***	Terror attack	0.01
Presidential elections	0.35***	World cup victories	0.17

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$.

loaded the highest (0.82) on the second factor (negative emotions). Among the French, Happy also loaded the highest (0.90) on the first factor (positively valenced emotions factor), and Guilty loaded the highest (0.75) on the second factor (negative emotions).

We next performed a correlational analysis between the emotion ratings and the valence of events recalled. As per our Factor analyses, we computed the means for positive and negative emotions separately for Indonesian and for French participants. For Indonesian participants, the means were 5.09 and 2.52 for positive and negative emotions, respectively (Cronbach alphas = 0.90 for both positive and negative emotions). For the French participants, they were 4.16 and 3.10 for positive and negative emotions, respectively (Cronbach alphas = 0.91 and 0.82 for positive and negative emotions, respectively). The analyses revealed significant correlations between positive emotions and the valence score, $r = 0.42$ ($p < 0.001$), and between negative emotions and the valence score, $r = -0.24$ ($p < 0.001$), for Indonesian participants. For the French participants, there were no significant correlations between positive or negative emotions and the valence score ($r = -0.03$ and $r = 0.04$, respectively). A potential explanation could be that events that involved the group have more impact on the identity of collectivistic Indonesians, compared to the more individualistic French. Those from individualistic cultures might attempt to boost their self-image more by personal accomplishments or autobiographical, rather than collective memories.

Table 7 presents the correlations between the valence ratings of collective memories and the emotion of pride for French and Indonesian participants, respectively. We found that Indonesians' collective memories correlated significantly with pride ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$), in contrast to French participants', where none of the correlations was significant ($r = 0.07$, ns). This could also suggest that pride in one's country may not be as positively perceived in France as in Indonesia and may have been confounded with nationalism in the French context. In the present context of rising right-extremism in France (and historically in the larger European context, e.g., Germany during World War II), pride in one's country can easily be construed as nationalism that implies exclusion and racism.

General discussion

The present exploratory research examined the concept of national identity across countries/cultures, pointing out similarities and differences in its conceptualization and the associated cognitions, namely collective memories. Based on past studies in diverse disciplines (political psychology, sociology) and the theories of social identity in social psychology (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) and of cultural orientations (Hofstede, 1980), we expected differences between our French and Indonesian participants, in what they consider important elements that make up the national identity, in the valence of the collective memories they associate with the country/national identity, and finally in the emotions they feel when they think about their country. Social Identity Theory emphasizes the role of groups in individuals' self-perception and self-esteem. The cultural theory modulates the idea that the group's importance may vary along the cultural dimension of individualist-collectivist, with in-groups having a more prominent role in the self-conception of individuals from collectivistic cultures. This may motivate individuals from collectivistic cultures to retain more positive cognitions, such as collective memories concerning their national group. The emotions associated with the country should also differ, and this was indeed observed. Individuals from collectivistic cultures, such as Indonesians, indicated more positive emotions than those from the more individualistic French culture. The inclusion of cultural and Social Identity Theory, we believe, would allow the generalization of the findings to other countries that could be placed along the dimension of individualism-collectivism, which could later be completed by the specificities of the country. This could mean that strategies to increase national cohesion, for instance, could contain common elements for those identified as sharing similar cultural orientations.

Understanding how people from different cultures and countries think of their identity related to their country is essential for the society making up the country itself and the perception and relations between peoples from different nations. As for society, national identity may promote wellbeing through the sense of belonging that constitutes a fundamental human need (Baumeister and Leary, 1995), positive emotions such as pride, and cohesion among its people. The present studies have revealed similarities and differences across our samples on the markers of national identity. This implies that to promote cohesion, adapted or even different strategies may be needed. An example includes the recent COVID-19 pandemic that necessitates collective responses based on societal cohesion. As the World Health Organization (Liu, 2021) pointed out, countries falling on the collective dimension of the cultural continuum appeared to have more successfully managed the crises that necessitated solidarity among the members making up the society. In countries falling on the individualist end, such solidarity may have had to be promoted as the first step in contrast to collectivist countries in order to implement collective strategies to manage the crisis. In France, we observed that French President Emmanuel Macron used the phrase "We the French (Nous les français/française)" in his presidential addresses during the pandemic. This might be to induce a more collectivistic frame of mind and increase shared identity as people belonging to the same

nation among the citizens, essential to the collective efforts (mask-wearing, vaccination, etc.) to combat the pandemic. In contrast, this type of "induction" i.e., reminding people that they belong to the same nation may not be necessary as shared or collective identity is already in the forefront of the mind of the populace. In this context, promoting hygienic practices among the Indonesian population is accomplished by highlighting social norms and emphasizing collective benefits/protection. France, on the other hand, may emphasize individual benefits to promote the same practices. In a political context, national identity can promote national unity and pride, essential for maintaining a stable and functioning society. As a group, acknowledging the national identity can be considered a way to ensure that all citizens feel valued and respected, contributing to greater social harmony and democratic governance. Collective memories can be a means to achieve and/or increase the perception of belonging to the same group or shared identity (though they can also represent products of perceived shared identity). They can be formed formally (through education and history books) or through shared narratives and passed on between generations.

In addition to the explanation in terms of cultural differences on the collectivist-individualistic dimension, the findings could also be potentially further explained by an understanding of the country's conditions (Smith, 2004). An underlying reason for the positive feelings and pride among Indonesian respondents could also be attributed to the consistent display of their country's developmental potential over time, as indicated in the Ipsos (2018) report released in 2018 on Indonesia's positive development and social welfare, as well as Indonesia's prospects in the global economic landscape. Economic development has accelerated, including improvements to the financial sector, procurement of infrastructure that connects the islands of Indonesia as well as greater access to information and technology in the society. The impact of a country's economic progress on the local population is related to increasing communal welfare and certainty about the future. Proficient economic progress, characterized by the prospect of greater employment involvement, investment opportunities, and increased availability of commodities and facilities, can instill positive views among individuals regarding the prospects of the nation (European Economic Social Committee, 2016). Indonesian national identity appears to have become more positive, with recent events reflecting positively on the identity (e.g., corruption prosecution reporting, see Pertiwi and Ainsworth, 2021). As an older nation, France may be comparing itself to its past, which might seem glorious compared to the present, creating an upward comparison that can potentially have negative consequences on one's present self-evaluation. Studies conducted by Ionescu et al. (2023), cited earlier, also suggest that their French participants tend to see the present and the future of French society as uncertain and less positive than the past and. In contrast, the quickly developing Indonesia may experience a downward comparison when looking into the recent past and perceive an upward future trajectory.

National identity evolves with current events that take place in the country or elsewhere that potentially involve the country, which can impact how people imagine the future of their country (see Markus and Nurius, 1986). Here, we tried to show that past events or collective memories can be one source of emotions such as pride associated with national identity. However, current events and how people from the nation project themselves into the future may also be sources of emotions associated with national identity. Time travel can involve the comparison of the current with the past or current with the imagined future (e.g., collective possible self, see Markus and Nurius, 1986) that can lead to contrast or assimilation.

This research also further illustrates factors that can influence the recall of memories, in particular recall of collective memories. The valence of the memory has been shown to influence recall independently, with negative memories more likely to be remembered than positive (Bowen et al., 2018). Here, we observed that the motivation of the individuals might very well modulate this tendency. To satisfy their motivation (e.g., to maintain a positive self-perception), people may engage in selective recall of past events, remembering motivation-consistent events more than motivation-inconsistent events (see Sanitioso et al., 1990). Nations may highlight certain memories in the recent or distant past in order to bolster the positive image of their country and downplay those that potentially threaten the desired image. The same event may also be interpreted differently depending on how the state represents the history, i.e., through the narrative conveyed in the historical artifacts (Liu and Hilton, 2005).

The tendency to assimilate or to determine collective memories of current and imagined future events deserves to be studied further. Culture may again potentially play a role given that it influences the tendency to emphasize similarity or differences in comparison judgments, to take context into account when perceiving events, or the tendency to process information in a global/local or holistic/analytic manner (Ozer, 2019; Romano et al., 2021; Minkov and Kaasa, 2022).

Coda

To summarize, national identity may indeed carry common markers/elements across countries such as being born in the country, and speaking the national language (Stokes, 2017; Silver et al., 2021). But as shown here, there are also important differences based on the cultural orientations of the country such as the emotions attached to national identity and the importance of shared national memories to the identity. This can have wide-ranging implications that can include international politics and relations, attitudes toward immigrants or foreigners, and citizens' civic behaviors, etc. A recent example, evoked above, was the management of the COVID-19 pandemic that required citizens to put collective over personal goals and adhere to recommendations by authorities (government or health agencies such as WHO), as well as solidarity among countries for access to limited solutions such as vaccines.

The present research compared the national identity of two countries, one of which has not been studied much previously (i.e., Indonesia, despite being the fourth most populous country in the world) nor directly compared. The approach adopted Social Identity Theory as modulated by cultural orientation to gain insights into the concept of national identity and its significance for people from the collectivist Indonesians and the

more individualistic French cultures. Our findings could potentially be useful for studies involving other countries that share the same cultural orientation as the two studied here. Future studies are planned to include country-specific factors that could also influence the national identity of these two countries. The question of how ethnic identity relates to national identity is a question that needs to be addressed when studying Indonesian national identity. It is this diversity that probably led the government to actively promote a sense of unity via symbols, celebrations, etc. We used general theories to frame the present research that is exploratory, where national identity is treated as one of the possible social identities that an individual possesses. Future studies should also include theories that specifically address national identity [e.g., Anderson, 1983; Gellner (cited in O'Leary, 1997)]. Finally, the (perceived and real) impacts of globalization, including immigration (in France) and multiculturalism (in Indonesia and France) on national identity, should also be addressed in future studies.

A limitation of this research pertains to the unequal number of participants, with a more significant number of Indonesian participants than the French, primarily due to the challenges faced in recruiting the latter group. Moving forward, it is imperative to strive for a more equivalent representation of participants.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada. The studies were conducted following ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA) about human participant research. All participants have given their informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

Concept, analysis, original draft: ARP. Proofreading, concept, and review: RBS. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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