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Post-Conflict Democratization: A Comparative Case Study of Cambodia and Nigeria's Experiences

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Abstract

Religious conflicts occurred in various countries, from Nigeria's 1980 conflict between Islam and Christianity to Cambodia's religious conflict in 1970. This study examines how religion reconstructs

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democracy following civil wars in Cambodia and Nigeria. Cambodia emphasizes a spiritual approach for conflict-affected communities to eliminate future conflicts, making religion a collective spiritual tool. Nigeria emphasizes an institutionalized approach using mediation and interfaith dialogue, using religion as socio-political mediation. This comparative study examines religion's role in post-conflict democratic reconstruction in both countries. The research analyzes using Most Similar System Design (MSSD) two countries with systemic similarities, including religious-based civil conflict, influential religious actors, and democracy disruptions between 1970 and 2005. Despite similarities, Cambodia and Nigeria used different faith-based peacebuilding strategies. In Cambodia, Buddhist monk Maha Ghosananda adopted a spiritual approach, focusing on healing through rituals like the "Pilgrimage of Truth" to restore trust and values for reconstructing democracy. In Nigeria, religious leaders Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Pastor James Movel Wuye used an institutionalized approach, emphasizing mediation and interfaith dialogue for socio-political reconciliation. While Cambodia's approach yielded stronger personal reconciliation, Nigeria's strategy effectively reduced violence and polarization, establishing deliberative democracy. The study concludes that religious peacebuilding effectiveness depends on context, with the socio-political environment shaping strategies. Quantitative data from V-Dem shows religious actor interventions coincide with improved democratic indicators, highlighting faith-based peacebuilding's contribution to democratic reconstruction.

[Konflik agama terjadi di berbagai negara, mulai dari konflik tahun 1980 antara Islam dan Kristen di Nigeria hingga konflik agama di Kamboja pada tahun 1970. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana agama merekonstruksi demokrasi setelah perang saudara di Kamboja dan Nigeria. Kamboja menekankan pendekatan spiritual bagi komunitas yang terdampak konflik guna menghilangkan potensi konflik di masa depan, menjadikan agama sebagai alat spiritual kolektif. Nigeria menekankan pendekatan yang terinstitusionalisasi dengan menggunakan mediasi dan dialog antar agama, memosisikan agama sebagai mediasi sosial-politik. Studi komparatif ini meneliti peran agama dalam rekonstruksi demokrasi pasca-konflik di kedua negara. Riset ini menggunakan Most Similar System Design (MSSD) menganalisis dua negara dengan kesamaan sistemik, termasuk konflik sipil berbasis agama, aktor agama yang berpengaruh, serta gangguan demokrasi pada periode 1970-2005. Meskipun ada kesamaan, Kamboja dan Nigeria menggunakan strategi pembangunan perdamaian berbasis agama yang berbeda. Di Kamboja, biksu Buddha Maha Ghosananda mengadopsi pendekatan spiritual, berfokus pada penyembuhan melalui ritual seperti "Ziarah Kebenaran" untuk memulihkan kepercayaan dan nilai-nilai dalam merekonstruksi

demokrasi. Di Nigeria, pemimpin agama Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa dan Pastor James Movel Wuye menggunakan pendekatan yang terinstitusionalisasi, menekankan mediasi dan dialog antara agama untuk rekonsiliasi sosial-politik. Sementara pendekatan Kamboja menghasilkan rekonsiliasi personal yang lebih kuat, strategi Nigeria secara efektif mengurangi kekerasan dan polarisasi, serta membangun demokrasi deliberatif. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahwa efektivitas pembangunan perdamaian berbasis agama sangat dipengaruhi oleh konteksnya yakni lingkungan sosial-politik membentuk strategi yang digunakan. Data kuantitatif dari V-Dem menunjukkan intervensi aktor agama yang bertepatan dengan peningkatan indikator demokrasi, menyoroti kontribusi pembangunan perdamaian berbasis agama terhadap rekonstruksi demokrasi.]

Keywords: religious; conflict resolution; peace building; reconciliation; reintegration

Introduction

Conflicts often arise due to multiple aspects of the cause and various factors contributing to the outbreak of a conflict. One of the many causes and factors is the religious aspect, which often triggers conflicts at local, national, international, and global levels. Religious conflict encompasses various elements that contribute to its complexity, including ideology or morality, power, space or place, and group identity.

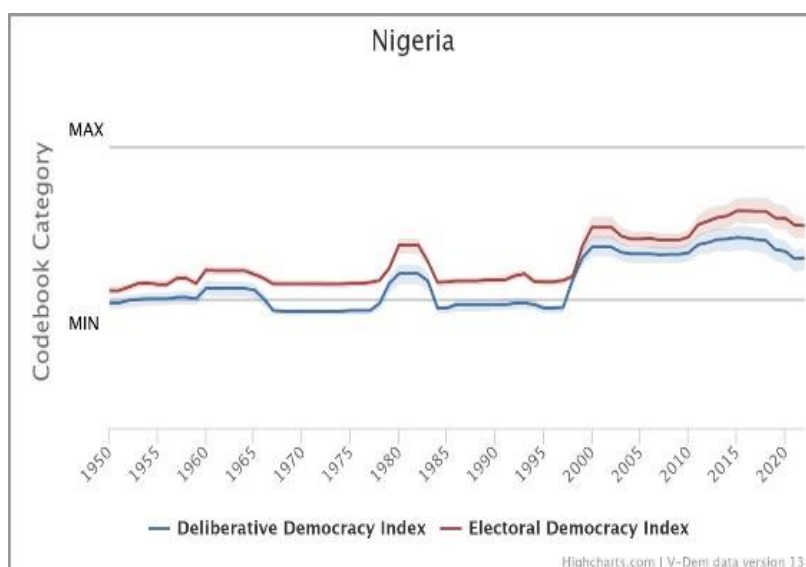
Many religious conflicts have occurred in various countries in the world starting from the Nigerian conflict in 1980 which involved two religious entities between Islam and Christianity, followed by the Cambodian religious conflict which was triggered in 1970 which involved two entities between the Khmer Rouge government and all religions in Cambodia with the aim of conflict to eliminate all teachings and ideologies in Cambodia.¹

Religious conflicts in Nigeria have been triggered since 1960, when religious issues became prominent, marked by the awareness of missionaries and religious leaders who had a zero-sum game principle

¹ Jeffrey Haynes, "Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building: The Role of Religion in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 47, no. 1 (2009): 52–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662040802659033>.

with the aim of winning the souls of each religion.² The high tension between the two religions continued until 1986 with the decision of the Nigerian government to secretly decide to join the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) to obtain financial assistance through economic assistance coming from OIC countries, because indeed the OIC is oriented to try to increase the superiority of OIC member countries in terms of diplomatic and political.

Figure 1 Deliberative & Electoral Democracy Index Nigeria



Source: V-Dem Data Version 13

Based on the data above, it can be seen that the democracy index declined significantly between 1980 and 1990, coinciding with the outbreak of violent religious conflicts between the two major religions, Islam and Christianity. It was found that there was an involvement of religious actors in the conflict that occurred, namely the existence of two religious leaders from Islam and Christianity who had a significant role in making conflict resolution efforts, namely Jamel Movele Fueye,

² Jeffrey Haynes, *Religion and Development* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2007), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230589568>.

a Christian pastor and Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa, a Muslim imam who initiated a Muslim (Islamic) and Christian dialog forum in response to the many victims who fell as a result of the conflict that occurred.³

The religious conflict in Cambodia became an interesting focus because there were significant differences between some of the parties involved in the religious conflict. If the previous conflict that occurred in Nigeria involved two religions, namely Islam and Christianity, the religious conflict that occurred in Cambodia involved two entities, namely the dictatorial government at that time led by the Khmer Rouge leadership and all religions in Cambodia at that time. The complexity of the conflict that occurred in the religious conflict in Cambodia has happened since 1970 where for five years after this the Khmer Rouge government had a strong effort to destroy all religions in Cambodia such as Buddhism and Theravada, as for the efforts made by the Khmer Rouge itself to destroy religion by destroying the three main fundamentalism in the native Cambodian society.⁴ The Khmer Rouge aimed to destroy the three fundamentalisms or foundations of Cambodian society, to create a new society and new individuals with the foundations of a society that suited the Khmer Rouge government. The three foundations of Cambodian society that the Khmer Rouge wanted to destroy included the three main ones.⁵

The first is the modern Western elite culture that remained after the French colonization of Cambodia from 1863 to 1953. The second is to destroy the source of Cambodian culture, namely Buddhism, because the monks or sangha have great social authority. This is considered to reduce the legitimacy of the Khmer Rouge government in regulating the social authority of Cambodian society. Third is the elimination of folk culture that is directly passed on to people who have reached the age of maturity, this culture contains interaction with spirits and the history of Cambodian society, this is seen differently by Pol Pot who considers that this culture is terrible and must be eliminated

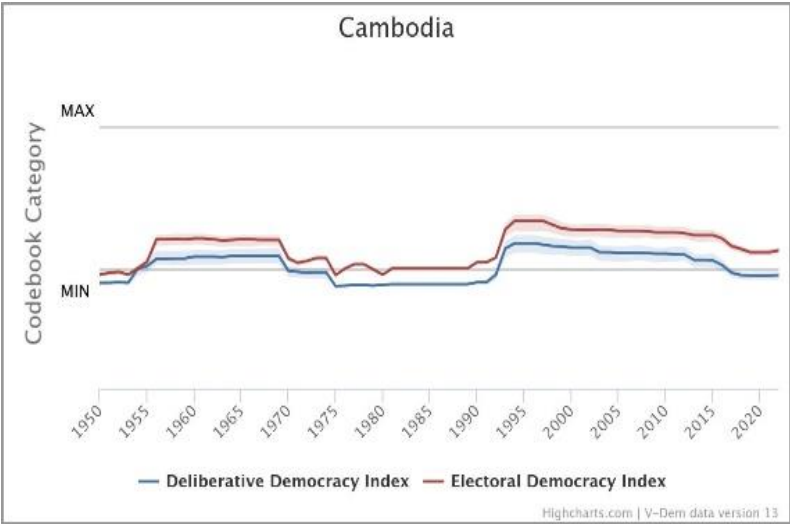
³ Jeffrey Haynes, "Religion and Democratisation: What Do We Now Know?," *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 2, no. 2 (May 2016): 267–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20566093.2016.1181385>.

⁴ Jeffrey Haynes, *Religious Transnational Actors and Soft Power* (Routledge, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315605142>.

⁵ Martin Stuart-Fox, *Buddhism and Politics in Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand*, 2006, https://martinstuartfox.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/buddhism_and_politics_in_southeast_asia.pdf.

immediately for the sake of a new Cambodia and can re-evolve into a developed country.

Figure 2 Deliberative & Electoral Democracy Index Cambodia



Source: V-Dem Data Version 13

Based on the data above, Cambodia has experienced several declining aspects of democracy since 1970, which coincided with the start of the conflict between the Khmer Rouge government and all religions in Cambodia.

In addition to what has been explained in the previous section, it can also be seen that there is a massive role of the Buddhist leader, Maha Ghosananda, who is one of the catalysts of the religious peace building process where he focuses on eliminating gaps from groups affected by conflict and reconciliation and conflict resolution efforts from groups that are divided from previous conflicts, Thus Maha Ghosananda's actions focused on three main aspects: conflict reconciliation, relocation, organizing social, economic, and political

structures, and reconstructing the fundamentalism of each Cambodian people who shifted to a materialist orientation.⁶

Religious peacebuilding is a discipline or theoretical basis with numerous contexts of discussion to explain and analyze social phenomena. To define and analyze the phenomenon, the author will draw on the theory of Religious Peacebuilding, developed by Scott Appleby and Atalia Omer. Religious Peacebuilding theory is a theory that explains how the role of religion in building peace in a conflict, which focuses on the context of conflict transformation and conflict reconciliation, can lead to a non-violent conflict transformation with an orientation to find the root causes of conflict for long-term peacebuilding efforts (sustain).⁷

Religious peacebuilding was decided to take the four steps of peacebuilding from Heynes which includes four steps of peacebuilding efforts, so that this can be taken into four variables to help analyze the phenomenon, namely Emotional & Spiritual support to war-affected communities, effective mobilization for their communities and others for peace, mediation between conflicting parties, and A conduit in pursuit of reconciliation, dialogue, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.⁸ A series of four variables above will be applied to a case study that discusses the sibling conflict in Nigeria and Cambodia, focusing on analysis using religious peacebuilding.

Existing scholarly discourse extensively addresses conflict resolution and peacebuilding, with foundational works such as Johan Galtung's "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," R. Scott Appleby's explorations into religion, violence, and reconciliation in "The Ambivalence of the Sacred Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation," and "The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding"

⁶ Ven Pov Sarun, *วารสารวิ ชาการพระพุ ทธศาสนาเขตลุมแม เน้ ำโขง ปที่ ๑2 ฉบับที่ ๑2 ประจำเตี ๑นกรกฎาคม-๑๑ นวาคม 2562* 43 Ven. Maha Ghosananda's Contributions to Social Well-Being in Cambodia (n.d.), <http://ojs.mbu.ac.th/index.php/bmrj>.

⁷ Charles Kwuelum, "Navigating the Complexities of Inter-Religious Peacebuilding: Implications for Theory and Practice," *Religions* 15, no. 10 (October 2024): 1201, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15101201>.

⁸ Bouta Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana Mohammed Abu-Nimer, Tsjeard S. 2005. "Faith-Based Peace-Building: Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim and Multi-Faith Actors." <http://hdl.handle.net/1961/auislandora:31693>.

co-authored with Atalia Omer.⁹ J.J. Haynes further contributes by detailing steps for religious peacebuilding in various contexts, including Nigeria and Cambodia.¹⁰ While these works provide robust theoretical and conceptual frameworks for understanding religious peacebuilding and its impact on conflict transformation, a comparative study is still needed that examines explicitly the active and dominant role of religious actors and their peacebuilding efforts in the reconstruction of democracy following protracted civil wars.

On both sides of the conflict between Nigeria and Cambodia, which have two distinct conflict contexts, there are differences in the form of conflict actors at war between 1970 and 2005. Therefore, this research aims to fill the analytical gap in the differences between the two countries by analyzing how faith-based peacebuilding is operationalized through the steps or variables provided by J.J. Haynes as a solution for resolution, reconstruction, and reintegration, with the ultimate goal of democratic reconstruction.¹¹ Based on the observed phenomena and the identified research gap, this study's central question is: "How does religion play a role in the reconstruction of democracy after civil wars in Cambodia and Nigeria?"

The hypothesis guiding this research posits that religion plays an active and dominant role in the peacebuilding efforts concerning religious conflicts in Nigeria and Cambodia, offering solutions for conflict resolution. This is achieved through the four key steps of peacebuilding: providing emotional and spiritual support to war-affected communities; effective mobilization for peace within their communities and among others; mediation between conflicting parties; and serving as a conduit for reconciliation, dialogue, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.¹² It is hypothesized that religion's active role and participation will lead to sustainable peace between the

⁹ Rashied Omar, *The Oxford Handbook of RELIGION, CONFLICT, AND PEACEBUILDING* (n.d.), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358519171>.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Haynes, "Islamist Parties and Political Normalization in the Muslim World," *Democratization* 22, no. 1 (January 2015): 201–2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2014.977264>.

¹¹ Ben Kiernan, "Introduction: Conflict in Cambodia, 1945–2002," *Critical Asian Studies* 34, no. 4 (December 2002): 483–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1467271022000035893>.

¹² Rashied Omar, *The Oxford Handbook of RELIGION, CONFLICT, AND PEACEBUILDING* (n.d.), <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358519171>.

warring parties in Nigeria and Cambodia. This research examines how religious actors have taken on faith-based peacebuilding roles in post-conflict democratic reconstruction efforts in Cambodia and Nigeria.

Methods

This research employs a comparative political approach, utilizing a comparative case study design consistent with a multiple case study model, to analyze the role of religion through religious actors in post-conflict peacebuilding and democratic reconstruction. The analysis employed a cross-sectional method, comparing various aspects based on listed variables. The comparative political method is used to examine a single political condition, political system, or type of political system using a cross-sectional model, with case study comparisons between countries.¹³ Lipjhart explains that there are several models of the comparative political method, including theory-confirming, which explains that this type of research aims to test theories with an orientation to strengthen a theory in a given problem.¹⁴ In contrast, cross-case analysis systematically compares findings across Nigeria and Cambodia to identify broader patterns, consistencies, and variations in the observed phenomena.

This research uses data as the basis for the authors analysis. The data obtained are from sources related to the phenomenon under study, namely the role of religion in religious peacebuilding, which aligns with the four main variables that form the basis for analyzing the phenomenon. The data collection methods used in this research are data analysis and statistical analysis, which serve as the basis for the author's data collection and analysis. Data analysis, as one aspect of data collection, provides in-depth and detailed insights into the phenomenon being studied. Statistical analysis, the second part of the data collection method, involves numerical data, specifically the statistical data used in this research. This statistical analysis serves as a tool to assist in testing

¹³ Daniele Caramani, ed., *Comparative Politics*, Sixth edition (Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), <https://global.oup.com/ushe/product/comparative-politics-9780192846051?cc=id&lang=en&>.

¹⁴ Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and Comparative Method," *JSTOR*, no. 3 (September 1971), <http://www.jstor.org/about/term.html>.

hypotheses and making generalizations from the collected data analysis results.¹⁵

Based on the explanation, the relevant data analysis method to be applied by the research object involves a comparative analysis between countries, specifically Nigeria and Cambodia, using both qualitative and quantitative data. This results in a series of data analysis methods consisting of three steps: (1) data collection, (2) within-case data analysis, and (3) interpretation of results.¹⁶

Data collection is the initial step in data analysis, which involves gathering appropriate data related to the phenomenon being studied. The data collected will utilize two types of data collection: data analysis and statistical analysis, as explained in the previous section. The first involves analyzing data through documents, official reports, and all forms of documents, including agreements, that are related and empirical in nature. These documents will serve as the basis for the analysis in the following section. The second is within-case data analysis, which involves analyzing how the case or phenomenon under study interacts with each predetermined variable. This enables the analysis of how each variable affects the phenomenon under study.¹⁷

The initial stage of the analysis will utilize data analysis as a basis for examining the interaction between each variable and the phenomenon. After analyzing the interaction of each variable with the phenomenon, data from statistical analysis will be used to identify trends and determine how these trends develop after each variable interacts with the phenomenon under study.¹⁸ For statistical analysis, the democracy index data will be used after each variable interacts with the phenomenon. This statistical analysis will then be used to test hypotheses about the phenomenon, based on the results of the

¹⁵ Harold G. Coward and Gordon S. Smith, eds., *Religion and Peacebuilding*, SUNY Series in Religious Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004).

¹⁶ Katrien Hertog, *The Complex Reality of Religious Peacebuilding: Conceptual Contributions and Critical Analysis* (Lexington Books, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.5771/9780739139516>.

¹⁷ Lioness Ayres, Karen Kavanaugh, and Kathleen A. Knafl, "Within-Case and Across-Case Approaches to Qualitative Data Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 13, no. 6 (July 2003): 871–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732303013006008>.

¹⁸ "Within-Case Qualitative Analysis," in *Managing Employee Well-Being and Resilience for Innovation*, by Vidya S. Athota and Ashish Malik (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 95–174, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-06188-3_5.

interaction between each variable and the phenomenon, supported by statistical data obtained through the analysis.¹⁹

The last stage is the interpretation of the results, which includes the interpretation of the results of the analysis carried out in the previous stage, which is then continued by comparing the results of the study of each country in one chart to see the differences or similarities obtained in the data analysis process in each country.

Table 1. Operationalization of Concept

Concept	Variable	Operationalization
Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building: The Role of Religion (Haynes, 2009)	Emotional & Spiritual support to war-affected communities	Analyzing the role of religion through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Altering Behaviours 2. Healing of trauma 3. Contributing to more effective dissemination of ideas 4. Challenging traditional structures
	Effective mobilisation for 'their communities and others for peace	Analyzing the role of religion through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drafting committed people 2. Reaching out to government
	Mediation 'between conflicting parties	Mediation efforts undertaken by religious actors between conflicting parties

¹⁹ Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie and Rebecca K. Weinbaum, "Mapping Miles and Huberman's Within-Case and Cross-Case Analysis Methods onto the Literature Review Process," *Journal of Educational Issues* 2, no. 1 (May 2016): 265, <https://doi.org/10.5296/jei.v2i1.9217>.

	A conduit in pursuit of 'reconciliation, dialogue, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration	Analyzing the role of religion through : <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Encouraging Reconciliation, Interfaith dialogue2. Disarmament, demilitarization, & reintegration3. Connecting international faith based network
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Results

In Cambodia, in the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge genocide, the peacebuilding process emphasized emotional and spiritual support. Maha Ghosananda, through the “Pilgrimage of Truth,” focused on collective trauma healing and teaching metta (loving-kindness) to combat the cycle of revenge and violence.²⁰ These efforts mobilized society both locally and internationally, with Ghosananda playing a globally recognized spiritual and symbolic leadership role, vertically bringing peace issues from the local level to the UN. Mediation in Cambodia was more indirect and spiritual, focusing on collective forgiveness rather than direct meetings between victims and perpetrators. The reconciliation was value and spirituality based, laying the foundation for long-term peace, even though formal disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs were absent due to the nature of the conflict, which primarily involved state actors and civilian victims.²¹

Meanwhile, in Nigeria, which experienced intense inter-communal conflict, peacebuilding was more oriented towards practical mediation and reintegration. Religious figures, such as Ashafa and Wuye from the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), provided emotional and spiritual support through dialogues and workshops to foster trust and understanding. They successfully mobilized interfaith leaders, activists, and youth through peace training and education, operating

²⁰ John A. Marston and Elizabeth Guthrie, *History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia* (University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvv02z>.

²¹ Rui Sarmento and Vera Costa, *Comparative Approaches to Using R and Python for Statistical Data Analysis* (IGI Global, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-68318-016-6>.

horizontally across communities.²² In Nigeria, mediation efforts have traditionally adopted a structured and dialogical approach, often facilitated by religious leaders who serve as trusted intermediaries between disputing groups.

These initiatives are frequently supported by both governmental bodies and international organizations, lending them institutional legitimacy and broader reach. In contrast, reconciliation strategies have tended to emphasize pragmatic social reintegration, particularly through interfaith education and community-based training programs. These efforts aim to foster mutual understanding and rebuild trust, particularly among individuals who have been previously involved in extremist activities. Notably, such reintegration has occurred in the absence of formal Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) frameworks, highlighting the adaptive and context-specific nature of Nigeria's peacebuilding mechanisms.

A comparative analysis of Cambodia and Nigeria illustrates that the success of faith-based peacebuilding is deeply contingent upon the specific historical and socio-political context of each conflict. In Cambodia, where the trauma of state-sponsored genocide left profound psychological and spiritual scars, reconciliation efforts have leaned toward a spiritual-transcendental model. This approach emphasizes inner healing, moral restoration, and Buddhist-inspired practices aimed at addressing collective suffering. In contrast, Nigeria's experience with inter-communal violence and religious extremism has necessitated a more pragmatic strategy.

Here, faith-based actors have engaged in socio-political mediation and community reintegration, focusing on dialogue, education, and trust-building to mend fractured relationships and prevent further radicalization. Nevertheless, both cases demonstrate that the intervention of religious actors played a significant role in democratic reconstruction, contributing to substantial peace, whether through collective reconciliation in Cambodia or peace agreements in Nigeria, even if challenges persist in achieving personal reconciliation.

²² Bala Adamu and Ibrahim Musa, "An Analysis of Ethno-Religious Conflict in Kaduna State," *KASHERE JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS* 3, no. 1 (2025), <https://journals.fukashere.edu.ng/index.php/kjpir/article/view/429>.

Identification of Religious Actors

In religious peacebuilding, identifying credible religious actors is crucial, and this can be seen through three determining factors: a focus on institutionalized actors, faith-based actors, and faith-based peacebuilding actors. In Cambodia, after the Khmer Rouge conflict, Maha Ghosananda was a key actor; his credentials stemmed from his institutionalization within the Dhammayietra Buddhist tradition, which focused on “Pilgrimages of Truth,” as well as official recognition from King Sihanouk with the title “Samdech Preah” (leader of faith-based peace).²³ Ghosananda conducted religious peacebuilding practices using Buddhist teachings and actively demonstrated his commitment by returning to Cambodia to aid victims and refugees. He earned trust as a third party in the conflict with no personal agenda beyond alleviating suffering and addressing the conflict’s impact on victims.

Meanwhile, in the case of the Nigerian civil conflict, there were two religious actors, a Muslim and a Christian, who were also parties to the conflict: Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Reverend James Movel Wuye. The first factor is how these religious actors were institutionalized within religious groups or denominations; Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa was institutionalized within the Saudi Salafi tradition, and James Movel Wuye was affiliated with the Kaduna School of Theology and obtained a Master of Theology from West Africa Christian University.²⁴ The second factor focuses on faith-based actors: Imam Ashafa and James Movel conducted a series of religious peacebuilding practices using the principles and teachings of Islam and Christianity, which were explicitly focused on conflict transformation. The third factor is faith-based peacebuilding actors, which differentiate between faith-based actors who engage in religious peacebuilding and those who do not. In this case study, many indicators of the third factor were demonstrated by both religious leaders, such as mediation and observation.

Both Cambodia and Nigeria demonstrate that effective religious actors in peacebuilding have clear institutional foundations or

²³ Carlson and Appleby, “The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation,” *Journal of Law and Religion*, n.d.

²⁴ Emmanuel Peter Ogbaki, “Conflicts In Southern Kaduna: Causes And Strategies For Resolution,” in *JORAS* (2017), 7:12–28, <https://www.acjoi.org/index.php/joras/article/view/2004>.

affiliations, implement their religious teachings in peace practices, and actively show commitment to mitigating conflict impacts. However, their credentials and approaches may differ, from formal recognition to direct involvement.

Emotional & Spiritual Support to War-Affected Communities

“Emotional & Spiritual Support to War-Affected Communities” can be explained as the role of religion in providing emotional and spiritual support to communities affected by conflict. Bouta explains that religious leaders and organizations often offer emotional support to conflict-affected groups, which is demonstrated through efforts to heal trauma from the conflict. Bouta had explains about instrumentation in first variable, *Altering behaviours, Healing of trauma, Contributing to more effective dissemination of ideas, dan Challenging traditional structures*.

After the Khmer conflict that occurred in Cambodia, Maha Ghosananda as a religion-based peacebuilding actor decided to carry out a “pilgrimage of truth” to help victims affected by the conflict, especially in the emotional aspect, Maha Ghosananda and the monks had the motto “we must walk where the troubles are” so that Ghosananda carried out a pilgrimage of truth by using the metta concept as a tool to facilitate the emotional needs of victims or affected groups. Maha Ghosananda assumed that revenge for the conflict that occurred would only repeat the same cycle, so that Maha Ghosananda analogized it as ‘shooting people with compassion.’²⁵ These efforts focused on restoring collective inner wounds and the spiritual culture devastated by the Khmer Rouge regime.

In Nigeria, emotional and spiritual support was also provided through efforts to heal trauma and change negative behaviors, especially among youth. Muslim and Christian dialogue forums initiated by Jamel Movel Fueye and Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and workshops organized by MCDF and the U.S. Institute of Peace aimed to build trust and reduce tension among conflicting communities.

²⁵ Ben Kiernan, “Introduction: Conflict in Cambodia, 1945-2002,” *Critical Asian Studies* 34, no. 4 (December 2002): 483–95, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1467271022000035893>.

Effective Mobilisation for Their Communities and Others for Peace

Effective Mobilization for Their Communities and Others for Peace further explains how effective mobilization efforts can be used to promote peace among communities and other actors. The second stage is supported by two key instruments: drafting committed people from a vast pool due to their widespread presence in society and broad community base, and reaching out to the government. The second stage will focus on how faith-based peacebuilding actors mobilize other actors to realize peacebuilding.

In addition to carrying out the truth pilgrimage, which successfully mobilized monks not only from Cambodia and, remarkably, not only focused on monks within Cambodia, Maha Ghosananda also received an award from the UN as an actor in faith-based peacebuilding. Maha Ghosananda successfully mobilized the masses not only within Cambodia but also from the local to the global (vertical) levels.

The mobilization that occurred in Nigeria took place structurally, through an educational approach, and then through an interfaith forum, the Interfaith Mediation Center (IMC), initiated by Ashafa and Wuye. They successfully mobilized religious leaders, activists, and even the younger generation through the forum initiated by Ashafa and Wuye.²⁶ Although its geographical scope was limited to northern Nigeria, its impact was felt in reducing sectarian tensions. Mobilization in Nigeria was more horizontal (inter-communal) and focused on institutional capacity.²⁷

Mediation Between Conflicting Parties

Mediation 'Between Conflicting Parties' continues the previous two stages that discuss emotional support and mobilization of religious actors for peace. This third stage will discuss the role of mediation as one of the main instruments in peacebuilding efforts through religious aspects. Mediation is one of the main instruments in religious

²⁶ I. Abdulrahman, "Management of Religious Conflict In Nigeria: The Form Of Government Intervention.," *JSTOR* 9 (2001), <https://doi.org/DOI:10.4314/iefep.v9i3.23633>.

²⁷ Tsjeard S. Bouta Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Faith-Based Peace-Building: Mapping and Analysis of Christian, Muslim and Multi-Faith Actors* (2005), <http://hdl.handle.net/1961/auislandora:31693>.

peacebuilding because it is by the three dimensions of conflict transformation according to Appleby who says that the conflict transformation process is an effort to replace violent conflict with non-violent means to resolve disputes which are then explained in three dimensions of conflict transformation, namely, conflict management, conflict resolution, and structural reform.²⁸

Nigeria's experience underscores the importance of structured, faith-based mediation in contexts of intense interreligious conflict. The violent clashes between Muslim and Christian communities, particularly in regions such as Kaduna and Jos, have prompted the emergence of religious leaders as frontline mediators. Notably, figures like Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye have played pivotal roles in facilitating dialogue and de-escalating tensions between opposing factions. Their efforts gained traction following the establishment of interfaith forums, which provided a platform for sustained engagement and reconciliation. These initiatives were further legitimized through the backing of local governments and international organizations, highlighting the critical role of institutional support in enhancing the credibility and impact of grassroots peacebuilding.

In Cambodia, there were no formal mediations or direct meetings between survivors and former Khmer Rouge members. Instead, Maha Ghosananda used indirect mediation through a spiritual approach focused on collective forgiveness and peace symbolism as a form of healing beyond verbal mediation.

A Conduit in Pursuit of Reconciliation, Dialogue, and DDR

"A Conduit in Pursuit of Reconciliation, Dialogue, and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration" can be interpreted as an effort to provide access to realize reconciliation, dialogue, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. As explained by Appleby, in terms of implementations of religious bodies, the mobilization crisis mode explains how a religious organization contributes to reconciliation, dialogue, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts. One example of a mobilization crisis mode is the "resistance church" event or resistance church movement initiated by religious leaders and Roman Catholic church members to end

²⁸ Roland Czada, *Religions and World Peace*, ed. Roland Czada, Thomas Held, and Markus Weingardt (Nomos, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783845238890>.

communist rule in the region, which the Soviet communist government sponsored.²⁹ This last stage will be assisted and operationalized into two instruments or indicators: Encouraging Reconciliation, Interfaith Dialogue, Disarmament, Demilitarization, and Reintegration, and Connecting international faith-based networks.

Cambodia holds tremendous significance in values-based and spiritual reconciliation, with Maha Ghosananda as the initiator and a key figure in providing the foundation for peace through spiritual reconciliation, emphasizing forgiveness as the cornerstone of the future. However, the process of Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) was not explicitly applied because the nature of the conflict primarily involved state actors and civilian victims, rather than non-state armed factions

Nigeria demonstrated superiority in practical reconciliation and social reintegration. Although there was no formal DDR program, the IMC served as a bridge to support the reintegration of former extremists and build inter-party dialogue through training, peace campaigns, and interfaith education. Nigeria was more explicit in policy-based reintegration, while Cambodia relied on value and spirituality-based reconciliation.

Discussion

Comparing Results: Emotional & Spiritual Support to War-Affected Communities

In the Cambodian context, the internal conflict characterized by the Khmer Rouge regime caused deep collective trauma, not only physically, but also psychologically and spiritually. In the post-conflict phase, Buddhist religious figures such as Maha Ghosananda played an important role in healing social wounds through a spirituality-based approach. Activities such as the Pilgrimage of Truth became a collective means for people to process their trauma through rituals, prayers, and the values of compassion (*metta*). This spiritual support

²⁹ Abdulrahman, I., "Management of Religious Conflict In Nigeria: The Form Of Government Intervention.," *Jstor* 9 (2001), <https://doi.org/DOI:10.4314/ifep.v9i3.23633>.

creates an emotionally safe space for survivors to come to terms with the past.³⁰

In Nigeria, by contrast, spiritual approaches are more hidden and do not explicitly focus on peacebuilding. Figures such as Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Reverend James Wuye focus more on social and political conflict resolution than psychological and emotional healing. While Islamic and Christian religious values are used in peace narratives, there is no organized form of spiritual support for victims of violence as there is in Cambodia. Thus, this phenomenon suggests that Cambodia applies a more personalized and transcendental support model, whereas Nigeria focuses on socio-communal stabilization.³¹ In this regard, Cambodia demonstrates greater efficacy in cultivating a peacebuilding foundation rooted in inner healing and spiritual restoration, while Nigeria emphasizes the reconstruction of social relationships and the establishment of structured dialogue mechanisms

Comparing Result Effective Mobilisation

Mobilization efforts in Cambodia and Nigeria reveal distinct yet impactful strategies shaped by religious leadership and contextual needs. In Cambodia, Maha Ghosananda exemplified transnational moral mobilization by uniting communities through spiritually charged initiatives such as cross-village peace pilgrimages and participation in United Nations forums. His status as a revered Buddhist monk amplified his influence, enabling him to galvanize both local and international audiences around a message of nonviolence and reconciliation. This underscores the capacity of religious symbolism and moral authority to transcend borders and foster collective healing.

In contrast, Nigeria's mobilization was more structurally embedded and educationally driven. The Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), co-founded by Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Pastor James Wuye, focused on training interfaith leaders, youth, and activists in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. While its geographic reach was primarily concentrated in northern Nigeria, the IMC's initiatives

³⁰ Jeffrey Haynes, "God on Our Side. Religion in International Affairs, by Shireen T. Hunter," *Democratization* 25, no. 3 (April 2018): 571–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2016.1268124>.

³¹ Marston, John A., and Elizabeth. Guthrie. 2004. *History, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements in Cambodia*. University of Hawai'i Press. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvvn02z>.

significantly contributed to reducing sectarian tensions and promoting sustainable dialogue. This approach highlights the effectiveness of grassroots mobilization through institutional frameworks and capacity-building efforts tailored to local realities.³²

The main difference lies in mobilization: Cambodia built a mobilization based on spiritual and symbolic values that crossed national borders. Nigeria built a mobilization based on institutional capacity and networking between communities that was more practical and participatory. Both were successful in mobilizing their communities. However, Cambodia demonstrated a more vertical (local to global) mobilization approach, while Nigeria developed horizontal (intra-community) mobilization.

Comparing Result Mediation Between Conflicting Parties

Nigeria excels quantitatively and structurally in mediation. Conflicts between Muslim and Christian groups in Nigeria often involve open violence. In this context, religious leaders mediate directly between the warring groups. Ashafa and Wuye established a dialogue forum, established a system through various approaches to foster peace between the conflicting parties, and actively acted as peacemakers in the conflicts in Kaduna and Jos.³³

In Cambodia, there is no formal mediation between victims and perpetrators of violence as in the Nigerian context. There were no direct meetings between survivors and former Khmer Rouge members. Instead, Maha Ghosananda used indirect mediation through a collective spiritual approach. The focus is on collective forgiveness and peace symbolism as a form of healing beyond verbal mediation.

The implications of this comparison show that the form of conflict influences mediation strategies. Nigeria, which faces inter-community conflict, requires direct socio-political mediation. Cambodia, facing structural trauma due to genocide, requires spiritual

³² Bartoli, "The Role of Religion Is the Role of Its Actors," *New Routes: A Journal of Peace Research and Acti* 10 (2009), <https://shu.elsevierpure.com/en/publications/the-role-of-religion-is-the-role-of-its-actors>.

³³ "A Moment of Opportunity?: The Promise of Religious Peacebuilding in an Era of Religious and Ethnic Conflict," in *Religion and Peacebuilding*, by David Little and Scott Appleby (SUNY Press, 2012), 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780791485859-002>.

and symbolic mediation.³⁴ Nigeria excels in formal and interactive mediation, while Cambodia emphasizes symbolism and collective spirituality as a means of reconciliation.

Faith-Based Peacebuilding in Cambodia and Nigeria

Cambodia and Nigeria each offer distinct strengths in advancing reconciliation and reintegration, shaped by their unique historical and cultural contexts. In Cambodia, Maha Ghosananda played a pivotal role in laying the spiritual groundwork for national healing. His emphasis on forgiveness as a moral imperative—famously encapsulated in his belief that “there is no future without forgiveness”—helped foster a collective consciousness rooted in compassion and nonviolence.³⁵ Through Buddhist-inspired rituals and peace walks, he cultivated a form of reconciliation that prioritized inner transformation and communal harmony over formal institutional processes. However, the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) process has not been significantly implemented and explicitly demonstrated, given the nature of the conflict in Cambodia, which involved more government actors and civilian victims than non-state armed factions.³⁶

In contrast, Nigeria contends with persistent challenges posed by armed groups and a high incidence of overt violence, often exacerbated by the presence of religious militias. Within this volatile context, the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) functions as a critical platform for fostering interfaith dialogue and supporting the reintegration of individuals from opposing factions.³⁷ Although Nigeria lacks a formal Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program, the IMC has adopted alternative reintegrative strategies.

³⁴ Nukhet Ahu Sandal, “Religious Actors as Epistemic Communities in Conflict Transformation: The Cases of South Africa and Northern Ireland,” *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 3 (July 2011): 929–49, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0260210510001592>.

³⁵ Paolo Salvatore Nicosia, “Faith-Based Peacebuilding: Insights from the Three Main Monotheisms,” *ATHENS JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES* 4, no. 1 (December 2016): 7–24, <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajss.4-1-1>.

³⁶ Fidelis Isomkwo Aboh et al., “A Review of Traditional Methods of Conflict Resolution from a Nigerian-African-Perspective,” *Journal La Sociale* 4, no. 4 (November 2023): 193–200, <https://doi.org/10.37899/journal-la-sociale.v4i4.878>.

³⁷ Mohsen Ghanbari and Shah Ali, “Faith-Based Peacebuilding through Intercultural Dialogue,” *Kom : Casopis Za Religijske Nauke* 7, no. 3 (2018): 69–87, <https://doi.org/10.5937/kom1803069g>.

These include peace education, interfaith training, and community-based campaigns aimed at reducing sectarian tensions and promoting coexistence.³⁸

Cambodia excels in value reconciliation; Nigeria excels in practical reconciliation and social reintegration. These differences represent different local needs: Cambodia focuses on collective inner transformation, while Nigeria focuses on normalizing social relations and preventing cycles of violence. Nigeria is more explicit in the policy-based aspects of reintegration, while Cambodia relies on value-based reconciliation and spirituality.

Comparative Pattern Based on Comparative Politics

Based on Daniel Caramani's patterned comparison approach, this research shows that the effectiveness and forms of faith-based peacebuilding in Cambodia and Nigeria follow patterns that are strongly influenced by the character of the conflict, the relationship between religion and the state, the legitimacy of religious actors, and post-conflict social needs. In Cambodia, which experienced vertical violence in the form of genocide by the state (Khmer Rouge), peacebuilding was carried out through a spiritual-transcendental approach led by Maha Ghosananda, a Buddhist religious figure with high moral and symbolic legitimacy.

Through activities such as the Pilgrimage of Truth and the teaching of loving-kindness (metta), Ghosananda focused the role of religion on healing the collective inner wounds of the people without involvement in direct mediation or DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration) programs, as there were no non-state armed factions to demobilize.³⁹ Peacebuilding in Cambodia became a form of spiritual reflection geared towards the moral purification of the nation's post-totalitarian regime. In Nigeria, by contrast, the conflict was horizontal, between Muslim and Christian communities, against a backdrop of political competition and religious identity initiatives led

³⁸ Timothy M. Shaw, "A Problematic Power: The Debate about Nigerian Foreign Policy in the 1980s," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 12, no. 2 (June 1983): 127–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298830120020501>.

³⁹ "Religious Peacebuilding," in *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, 3rd ed., by Atalia Omer and Joram Tarusarira (London: Routledge, 2023), 423–39, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003247265-34>.

by Imam Muhammad Ashafa and Reverend James Wuye.⁴⁰ Drawing legitimacy from their personal histories as former adversaries and direct participants in sectarian violence, both leaders have transformed their experiences into a powerful narrative of reconciliation and moral authority. Through the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC), they facilitate interfaith dialogue, peace education, and the reintegration of individuals who have been formerly involved in extremist activities. Although Nigeria lacks a formal Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) framework, the IMC's locally adapted approach functions as an informal DDR mechanism. By leveraging pre-established forums and culturally sensitive training programs, it fosters mutual understanding and social reintegration among conflicting parties.⁴¹

This pattern suggests that the vertical conflict in Cambodia led to symbolic, more personal, and transcendental-religious approaches to peacebuilding. In contrast, the horizontal conflict in Nigeria fostered dialogical, participatory, societal, and institutional approaches. Thus, according to Caramani's framework, the role of religion in peacebuilding is not universal but is primarily determined by the socio-political structural context, the relationship between the state and civil society, and the forms of violence faced by each country.⁴²

Through Daniel Caramani's patterned comparison approach, it can be concluded that:

1. Cambodia adopts the moral-spiritual model of faith-based peacebuilding, which is suitable for the context of state trauma and vertical conflict (state vs. citizen).
2. Nigeria adopts the institutional-dialogic model, which is more appropriate for horizontal inter-community conflicts.

⁴⁰ Thania Paffenholz, "International Peacebuilding Goes Local: Analysing Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory and Its Ambivalent Encounter with 20 Years of Practice," *Peacebuilding* 2, no. 1 (January 2014): 11–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.783257>.

⁴¹ Farouk Salami and Gbenemene Kpae, "EXAMINATION OF TRADITIONAL NIGERIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISM AND MODERN LEGAL SYSTEM OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION," *Journal of Advance Research in Social Science and Humanities (ISSN:2208-2387)* 9, no. 8 (August 2023): 25–34, <https://doi.org/10.53555/nssh.v9i8.1731>.

⁴² Todd Landman, *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics: An Introduction*, 3rd ed (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2008).

This polarization shows that although both countries face religious-based conflicts, practical peacebuilding approaches are contextual and primarily determined by the nature of the conflict, social structure, and local religious culture. This comparative study uses the Most Similar System Design (MSSD) approach. This approach analyzes two countries with many structural similarities, such as a background of religious-based conflict, a long period of conflict (1970-2005), and the impact of conflict on the collapse of democracy, to see variations in the role of religion in post-conflict democratic reconstruction.

Cambodia and Nigeria show similarities in the aspect that religious-based civil conflicts led to national disintegration and democratic breakdown. The emergence of religious actors who played an important role in the peace and reconciliation process. The involvement of religious communities in bridging communities divided by civil war.

However, from these two systemically similar cases, there are striking differences (independent variables) in the forms and strategies of religious peacebuilding used, which have different impacts on the process of democratic reconstruction:

1. Cambodia: Maha Ghosananda played the role of religion with a strategy of emotional and spiritual support and grassroots mobilization through Buddhist rituals (pilgrimage of truth). Religion was a cultural and spiritual instrument to restore national identity, heal collective wounds, and create social harmony. This approach was critical in the wake of the destruction of social values by the anti-religious Khmer Rouge regime. The role of religion in Cambodia helped the reconstruction of democracy by building a strong moral and spiritual foundation in the post-conflict society.
2. Nigeria: Two interfaith religious leaders (Imam Muhammad Nurayn and Pastor James Movel) played the role of religion through mediation and interfaith dialogue forums. This approach was more politically and socially oriented because the conflict involved two major religions vying for political dominance. The primary strategy was to create interfaith dialogue that reduced violence and built bridges of communication between communities. Thus, this shows that in

Nigeria, religion plays the role of mediator and political resolution actor in the reconstruction of democracy.

By examining two structurally similar systems that employ different roles for religion in the post-conflict process, it can be concluded that the varying strategies and orientations of religion's role in democratic reconstruction are primarily determined by the nature of religious actors and the type of conflict. Religion has a high flexibility of function, both as a spiritual tool (in Cambodia) and a socio-political mediation tool (in Nigeria), both of which are proven to support the transition to a more inclusive and sustainable democracy.

Table 2. Result of Comparing

Variable	Nigeria	Cambodia
Emotional & Spiritual support to war-affected communities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Altering Behaviours 2. Healing of trauma 3. Contributing to more effective dissemination of ideas 4. Challenging traditional structures <p>Nigeria shows a level of effectiveness that is inversely proportional to Cambodia, where Nigerian religious actors show no effectiveness in the first variable.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Altering Behaviours 2. Healing of trauma 3. Contributing to more effective dissemination of ideas 4. Challenging traditional structures <p>Cambodia showed higher levels of effectiveness</p>
Effective mobilisation for their communities and others for peace	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drafting committed people 2. Reaching out to government <p>Nigeria has shown some success in mobilizing the masses but at the</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drafting committed people 2. Reaching out to government <p>Cambodia demonstrated superior effectiveness compared</p>

	horizontal (intra-community) level.	to Nigeria because Cambodia succeeded in mobilizing the masses at the vertical level (local-global).
Mediation 'between conflicting parties	<p>Religious actors carry out mediation efforts on the parties involved in the conflict.</p> <p>Nigeria demonstrates effectiveness, namely Nigeria is superior in the aspects of formal and interactive mediation.</p>	<p>Religious actors carry out mediation efforts on the parties involved in the conflict.</p> <p>Cambodia did not show significant effectiveness on this variable because Cambodia emphasized symbolism and collective spirituality as a means of reconciliation.</p>
A conduit in pursuit of 'reconciliation, dialogue, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encouraging Reconciliation, Interfaith dialogue 2. Disarmament, demilitarization, & reintegration 3. Connecting international faith based network <p>Nigeria demonstrated superior effectiveness due to Nigeria's policy-based and systematic reintegration efforts.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encouraging Reconciliation, Interfaith dialogue 2. Disarmament, demilitarization, & reintegration 3. Connecting international faith based network <p>Cambodia has no significance on this variable because Cambodia relies on collective spiritual-based reintegration.</p>

Conclusion	The results of the analysis show that Nigeria uses a religion-based institutional-dialogic model for post-conflict reconciliation and reintegration.	The results of the analysis show that Cambodia uses a religion-based moral-spiritual model for post-conflict reconciliation and reintegration.
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Conclusion

This study uses the Most Similar System Design (MSSD) approach by comparing two countries, Cambodia and Nigeria. These countries have systemic similarities in the form of religious-based civil conflict, the role of religious actors, and severe disruptions to democracy in the 1970-2005 period. However, the different strategies for the role of religion in the democratic reconstruction process resulted in different variants of contributions to the improvement of post-conflict democratic systems.

The worst period for democracy in Cambodia is seen in the sharp decline of deliberative and electoral democracy indices between 1975 and 1990, which coincided with the reign of the Khmer Rouge that systematically erased all religious and democratic institutions. However, the surge in the democracy index after 1992-1993 empirically corresponds to: 1) The return of Maha Ghosananda and the implementation of the pilgrimage of truth (Dhammayietra); 2) Buddhist-based spiritual and social healing efforts to heal the collective wounds of society; 3) Mobilization of international support, such as the United Nations (UNTAC), provides space for religious actors.

The role of religion in the Cambodian context contributes to the substantial reconstruction of democracy by rebuilding social trust and spiritual values, which are its deliberative foundations. V-Dem data shows that Nigeria also experienced a decline in the democracy index in the period 1980-1995, when sectarian conflict between Muslims and Christians peaked and caused thousands of casualties. However, a significant improvement occurred after 1995, when: 1) Two religious leaders, Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and James Movel Wuye, started an interfaith dialogue forum; 2) The primary strategy was mediation and

advocacy for interfaith reconciliation; 3) The focus was building political and social communication spaces between previously hostile religious groups. Although Nigeria's approach was not as strong as Cambodia's in terms of spiritual healing, the role of religion as a socio-political mediator effectively reduced polarization and helped create the basis for a new democratic consensus.

The results of faith-based peacebuilding efforts in the two countries are different. Cambodia emphasizes a spiritual and emotional approach for communities affected by the conflict to eliminate the pattern of conflict that occurred afterwards. It can be said that Cambodia made religion a means of collective spiritual tools. At the same time, Nigeria emphasizes an institutionalized and policy-based approach using mediation and interfaith dialogue as a means of reconciliation, so it can be said that religion is used as a means of socio-political mediation.

The final results of the faith-based peacebuilding process in both countries, namely Cambodia, have significant results, as shown by the fact that all parties have reconciled with the conflict that occurred, so the possibility of conflict is minimal. In contrast to Nigeria, the results of the peace agreement with several peace clauses were agreed upon, but this can be said to be a time bomb due to the absence of parties who have made personal peace in the conflict that occurred, it can be concluded that several parties have not made peace but are forced to make peace with the agreed peace agreement.

The role of religion in reconstructing democracy is highly dependent on the strategy used and the socio-political context surrounding it. In Cambodia, a spiritual approach based on local culture promoted social reconstruction and substantive democracy, while in Nigeria, a mediated approach of interfaith dialogue helped reduce violence and build the foundations of deliberative democracy. V-Dem's data quantitatively reinforces this analysis by showing that interventions by religious actors precede or coincide with spikes in the democracy index, which is a strong indicator that religious peacebuilding is not merely symbolic but contributes significantly to democratic reconstruction.

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