

Seeking a way out of the dark

An interdisciplinary research on the reconciliation process after the Cambodian genocide of 1975-1979



Juliette van Leuven, Laure Andriessse and Evi Rozendal

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An interdisciplinary research on the reconciliation process after the Cambodian genocide of 1975-1979

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‘Cambodia has risen from the ashes, but the embers still smolder’
- David A. Ablin and Marlowe Hood (1987, xv)

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Acknowledgments

In front of you lies the product of an interdisciplinary research done by Juliette van Leuven, Laure Andriessse and Evi Rozendal. With this thesis we will complete our bachelor study *Liberal Arts & Sciences*. This research has examined how the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process from 1979 till the present can be explained in different levels of analysis. This topic is at the interface of different disciplines, among which International Relations (IR), Cultural Anthropology (CA), and Cognitive and Neurobiological Psychology (CNP).

In existing research documents concerning Cambodian reconciliation process, different disciplines are applied separately, not at all or not sufficiently taking into consideration how other disciplines can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the researched subject. With this thesis we hope, and believe that by ‘combining forces’ and integrating our knowledge, we provided new insights that could contribute to a better understanding of the reconciliation process in Cambodia.

While writing our thesis, we were lucky to have the support of several persons, to whom we would like to express our deep thankfulness. First, we would like to thank Dennis Kerckhoffs, the interdisciplinary coordinator who has guided us through the whole process of writing this thesis. We would also like to thank our disciplinary supervisors Lotje van Uhm (IR), Kees Koonings (CA), and David Terburg (CNP) for their guidance. Their critical feedback not only contributed to better disciplinary chapters, but also lifted the entire interdisciplinary research to a higher level.

Abstract

Various scholars have expressed their concern about the Cambodian reconciliation process after the Cambodian genocide between 1975 and 1979. According to them, this process seems to move with such slow pace. Even though this thesis argues that reconciliation should not be seen as an isolated act or event and that there is a certain danger in talking about reconciliation in terms of strict sequences, our literature research pointed to several challenges that the Cambodian reconciliation process is facing. This thesis examines how the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process from 1979 till the present, can be explained in different levels of analysis (macro, meso and micro). In this interdisciplinary research, we integrated the valuable insights of the disciplines International Relations, Cultural Anthropology, and Cognitive and Neurobiological Psychology in order to answer the research question. This more comprehensive understanding explains that the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process can partly be explained by means of two main factors: the dynamics of trauma, which is a contributing force for reconciliation, and the significant friction between the Cambodian model and 'other' models of reconciliation. Subsequently, to make reconciliation discourses more effective, we argue that there should be paid more attention to the different models and perceptions concerning the implementation of reconciliation practices. In addition, reconciliation is never a theoretical matter, but always happens in a specific context. Each case must be addressed on its own terms, recognizing the contextual particularities of a society.

Acronyms

CA – Cultural Anthropology

CG – Common Ground

CNP – Cognitive and Neurobiological Psychology

CPP – Cambodian People’s Party

ECCC – Extraordinary Chamber in the Courts of Cambodia

International IDEA – The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IR – International Relations

KR – Khmer Rouge

MCU – More Comprehensive Understanding

PFC – Prefrontal Cortex

PPA – Paris Peace Agreements

PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

R2P – Responsibility to Protect

SAM – Situationally Accessible Memory

UN – United Nations

UNTAC – United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

VAM – Verbal Accessible Memory

Introduction

When the Khmer Rouge (KR) seized power in Cambodia on 17 April 1975, Cambodia was sealed off from the world. The years of the KR regime were defined by a policy of genocide and urbicide to create a form of agrarian socialism founded on communist ideals.² The regime's policy led to forced relocation of the population from urban centres to the countryside, as well as to forced labour, deportation, torture, and starvation.³ The estimated death rate was 1.7 million people; almost a quarter of the Cambodian population at that time.⁴ Religious groups, several ethnic minorities, intellectuals and people suspected of connections with the former government or with foreign governments, were the main target of the KR regime. It has been more than 35 years since the Vietnamese army invaded Cambodia in January 1979, which marked the end of the KR regime.⁵

Cambodia has turned over the page of its darkest history, however, the traumatic atrocities committed during that period have left deep wounds.⁶ The catastrophe of the KR regime disrupted every aspect of daily life. The unprecedented extent of destruction, which manifested itself on the individual, social, cultural, economic and political domain of society, caused Cambodian people, communities and institutions to 'reinvent' and rebuild their lives, culture and country from scratch. This process of reconstruction, which includes the search for truth, forgiveness and healing, underlies the broader concept of reconciliation. Reconciliation can be considered as an inevitable and crucial component of post-violence reconstruction and since there is nothing simple about such processes, providing more

² A. Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Abingdon & New York 2017) 394-395; 400-403; Definition of genocide: genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group; definition urbicide: The destruction of urban areas and the extermination and/or expulsions of their populations, as a genocidal strategy, in A. Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 18; 400. For further reading about this subject we would like to refer to *Genocide a More Comprehensive Understanding* (2017) by Adam Jones.

³ E. Bockers, N. Stamme and C. Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', *Torture* 21 (2011) 2, 71-83, 74.

⁴ B. Kiernan, 'The Cambodian Genocide, 1975-1979' (2004), <https://www.niod.nl/sites/niod.nl/files/Cambodian%20genocide.pdf> (November 8, 2017) 86.

⁵ *Ibidem*

⁶ Kiernan, 'The Cambodian Genocide, 1975-1979', 2004.

information on the subject is of great importance. In addition, reconciliation is a complex and multi-faceted term, and there is little agreement on its definition.⁷

However, there do exist definitions that try to cover the multifaceted nature of the concept. An example of this is the definition of reconciliation as defined by The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA); an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. In the handbook *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict* they defined reconciliation as follows:

As a backward-looking operation, reconciliation brings about the personal healing of survivors, the reparation of past injustices, the building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between individuals and communities, and the acceptance by the former parties to a conflict of a common vision and understanding of the past. In its forward-looking dimension, reconciliation means enabling victims and perpetrators to get on with life and, at the level of society, the establishment of a civilized political dialogue and an adequate sharing of power.⁸

Since this thesis includes various disciplinary perspectives on the Cambodian reconciliation process, and the above definition is conceptualized by a multidisciplinary research entity in the field of post-conflict issues; the International IDEA, we have chosen to use this definition as a starting point for this thesis. We immediately emphasize that the above definition should not be understood in a deterministic manner because the *process* of reconciliation should always be considered as a long, unpredictable and difficult one. As the IDEA state in the handbook there is no 'handy roadmap' or simple prescription of reconciliation.⁹ Since every conflict has a unique origin and is played out within different cultures and political systems, every reconciliation process should be distinguished from one another.¹⁰

In addition to this aspect of contextuality, the complexity of the concept of reconciliation is also referable to its multi-layered character. Reconciliation expresses itself on the macro level – political reconciliation –, discussing the need of creating a climate in which conflicting parties

⁷ Bloomfield, D., T. Barnes and L. Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook* (Stockholm 2003) PDF e-book <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/Reconciliation-After-Violent-Conflict-A-Handbook-Full-English-PDF.pdf>.

⁸ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 19.

⁹ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 4.

¹⁰ E. Daly and J. Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground* (Pennsylvania 2007).

can resolve their differences through nonviolent means; a political climate where former enemies may continue to disagree, but nevertheless interact and communicate on the basis of a shared normative framework and mutual recognition.¹¹ Furthermore, reconciliation occurs at the meso level – collective reconciliation –, referring to the local communities. It regards the aspect of how a society torn apart by internal conflict can mend its social and cultural fabric; how local communities mourn massive violent deaths, reconstruct large social gaps, and restore faith in peaceful social coexistence.¹² Moreover, reconciliation takes place at the micro level – individual reconciliation – at which individuals attempt to forgive each other and learn how to deal with their own past experience after traumatic events.¹³

Even though scholars acknowledge the contextuality and the multi-layered character of reconciliation processes, there is a great scientific debate about what is the most effective vehicle for reconciling a society with its traumatic past.¹⁴ The Cambodian reconciliation process is a very strong example of this debate. Various scholars have expressed their concern about the Cambodian reconciliation process, which, according to them, seems to move 'with such slow pace'.¹⁵ They argue that due to the lack of a developed mental healthcare system, continual corruption, widespread poverty and various cultural issues, the reconciliation process is not progressing as 'fast' as it could be.¹⁶ Even though we argue that reconciliation should not be seen as an isolated act or event and that there is a certain danger in talking about reconciliation in terms of strict sequences, our literature research pointed to several challenges

¹¹ S, Gloppen, 'Roads to Reconciliation: A Conceptual Framework', In: E. Skaar, S. Gloppen, A. Suhrke, *Roads to Reconciliation* (United States of America 2005) 17-50.

¹² Gloppen, 'Roads to Reconciliation: A Conceptual Framework', 17-50; C. Etcheson, 'The Limits of Reconciliation in Cambodia's Communes', In: E. Skaar, S. Gloppen, A. Suhrke, *Roads to Reconciliation* (United States of America 2005) 201-224.

¹³ Gloppen, 'Roads to Reconciliation: A Conceptual Framework', 17-50.

¹⁴ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 2003; Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 71-83; Daly and Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*, 2007; Gloppen, 'Roads to Reconciliation: A Conceptual Framework', 17-50; A. Murrell, 'Reconciliation and Healing of a Nation' *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 17 (2001) 2, 146-150.

¹⁵ I. Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', *Transcultural Psychiatry* 52 (2015) 4, 543-560; Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 71-83; L. McGrew, 'Pathways to Reconciliation in Cambodia', *A Journal of Social Justice* 23 (2011) 4, 414-521; A. Murrell, 'Reconciliation and Healing of a Nation' *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 17 (2001) 2, 146-150.

¹⁶ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 543-560; Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 71-83; L. McGrew, 'Pathways to Reconciliation in Cambodia', *A Journal of Social Justice* 23 (2011) 4, 414-521; Murrell, 'Reconciliation and Healing of a Nation', 146-150.

that the Cambodian reconciliation process is facing. Therefore, this research examines how the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process from 1979 till the present, can be explained in different levels of analysis. In this interdisciplinary research, we use the disciplines International Relations (IR), Cultural Anthropology (CA), and Cognitive and Neurobiological Psychology (CNP).

To justify the interdisciplinary approach of this thesis we have tested the four criteria, defined by Repko and Szostak, that any interdisciplinary research needs to meet.¹⁷ First, the problem must be complex. As examined above, the concept of reconciliation is a highly complex one partly due to its multi-faceted and multi-layered character. Because the different levels of reconciliation all focus on different phenomena and require different research methods, the research needs insights from more than one discipline, which is the second criterium. Moreover, since no single discipline has been able to address the problem comprehensively there are more disciplines necessary; the third criterium. The fourth criterium states that the research needs to be at the interfaces of the disciplines, which means that disciplines share a point of common interest in the problem.¹⁸ In this case all disciplines share their interest in the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process and try to make a valuable contribution to the problem.

In chapter one, IR provides valuable insights from a macro viewpoint concerning the peacekeeping intervention United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). When discussing the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process from an IR viewpoint, it appears UNTAC has had great influence on reconciling the Cambodian parties.¹⁹ IR examines how UNTAC, which was active from March 1992 until September 1993, impacted Cambodian reconciliation process. Discussing the dynamics of the reconciliation process on a macro level provides a context which makes the analysis of the meso level better understandable.

In chapter two, CA provides insights with regard to the main research question from a meso perspective. Massive trauma affects people as much on the physical and mental level as on the social and cultural level, and therefore generates collective dynamics of reconciliation.²⁰ By

¹⁷ A.F. Repko and R. Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research; Process and Theory* (Los Angeles 2017) 339-343.

¹⁸ Repko and Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research; Process and Theory*, 93-96.

¹⁹ J. Dobbins et al, The US and UN Roles in Nation-Building, In: T. Woodhouse, H. Miall, O. Ramsbotham, C. Mitchell (eds.), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge & Malden 2015) 307-315; A. Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 2017.

²⁰ P. Sztompka, 'Cultural Trauma: The other Face of Social Change', *European Journal of Social Theory* 3 (2000) 4, 449-466.

demonstrating matrices of local experiences, understandings and cultural resources CA examines which cultural mechanisms shape the reconciliation process of Cambodian society after its traumatic history of the KR genocide. The meso analysis sketches the cultural context in which the individual moves and therefore makes the micro analysis more coherent.

In chapter three, CNP provides insights from a micro-viewpoint by explaining how the atrocities of the KR regime have traumatized the Cambodian individuals. CNP will set out the cognitive mechanisms underlying Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the psychological consequences and social dysfunctions it causes. An extensive explanation of the cognitive process of traumatic memories will offer insights about how PTSD affects the Cambodian reconciliation process. However, many other disciplines could be valuable and contributing in answering our research question, for example insights of Religious Studies, Social Sciences, Economics or Law.

After discussing the insights of these disciplines, the common ground (CG) will be created in chapter four. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate and distinguish differences and similarities between the disciplinary insights by means of integration techniques.²¹ The CG allows us to form a more comprehensive understanding (MCU) which provides an interdisciplinary analysis of how the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process from 1979 till the present can be explained.²² At last, the conclusion and discussion of our research are addressed.

²¹ Repko and Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research; Process and Theory*, 2017.

²² Ibidem

Chapter 1 – The Impact of the International Community on the Cambodian Reconciliation Process

Various authors, such as Daly et al. and Gloppen et al., consider strategies as reforms, with amnesty and amnesia being, in general, valuable reconciliation instruments.² However, according to Bockers et al., to reconcile a post conflict country one could made use of retributive justice, restorative justice, reparations, sites and practices of remembrance, education measures and therapeutic measures.²³ In a scientific article, Bockers et al. elaborated on these aspects of reconciliation, specifically focusing on Cambodia, and giving the reader a concrete overview and a more comprehensive understanding of how reconciliation works in Cambodia. Good examples of the reconciliation process in Cambodia are given, such as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal and the Documentation Centre of Cambodia.²⁴ Remarkably, the participation of UNTAC did not get any attention. UNTAC was a peacekeeping operation which was carried out in Cambodia by the United Nations from 1992-1993. It was considered ‘the single most ambitious field operation in [UN] history [up] to that point’.²⁵ In addition, it was the first time the UN became responsible for helping govern a state in transition from conflict, to peace and democracy.²⁶ Before delving into the role of UNTAC in the Cambodian reconciliation, it is important to discuss the relationship between democracy and reconciliation as ‘politics and reconciliation are separate but interdependent processes’.²⁷

Nowadays, violent conflict emerges as an intra-state conflict instead of violence between separate states.²⁸ The resolution to intra-state conflicts generally requires structures that are designed through a negotiation process. To deal with these differences peacefully; the structures are almost always democratic.²⁹ Democracy is a system for managing differences (of opinion,

²³ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, ‘Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer, 71-83.

²⁴ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, ‘Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime’, 71-83.

²⁵ Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 412-413; Daly and Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*, 2007.

²⁶ J. Dobbins et al., ‘The US and UN Roles in Nation-Building’, In: T. Woodhouse, H. Miall, O. Ramsbotham, C. Mitchell (eds.), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge & Malden 2015) 307-315.

²⁷ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 12.

²⁸ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 10-11.

²⁹ *Ibidem*

belief, ideology, culture etc.) without recourse to violence.³⁰ There will still be some diversity, but there is a ‘common agreement to participate in the democracy’.³¹ Noticeably, democracy is not a panacea and fails sometimes, but it succeeds more often than the alternatives.³²

A functioning democracy is partially built on a set of working relationships between the groups involved’.³³ Good democracy requires cooperative and fair relations to implement the structures of democracy.³⁴ It is at this part where reconciliation comes in.³⁵ Reconciliation readdresses relationships between former enemies to create cooperative and fair relations, whereby the democratic structures provide management for the future concerning their differences on a minimally cooperative basis.³⁶ Addressing relationships does not simply apply to the politicians and the deal-makers who are engaged in the compromise but also between communities and citizens.³⁷ Through reconciliation among people a minimally cohesive society is established which is necessary for a democracy to function.³⁸ In a sense, reconciliation underpins democracy by developing the working relationships necessary for its successful implementation. Otherwise, democracy also underpins reconciliation: reconciliation needs the foundations of economic justice, of political and social power-sharing, and so on. Democracy and reconciliation are thus intertwined and interdependent.³⁹

Focusing on the case in Cambodia, UNTAC was engaged by redressing the relationships between the four parties. The involvement of UNTAC by reconciling Cambodia appears in UNTAC’s mandate, ‘*Desiring* to contribute [...] the promotion of national reconciliation [...] through free and fair elections.’⁴⁰ The Security Council of the UN was convinced that holding

³⁰ Ibidem

³¹ Daly and Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*, 19.

³² Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 10-11.

³³ Ibidem

³⁴ Ibidem

³⁵ Ibidem; As was argued in the introduction ‘reconciliation’ is: ‘As a backward-looking operation, reconciliation brings about the personal healing of survivors, the reparation of past injustices, the building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between individuals and communities, and the acceptance by the former parties to a conflict of a common vision and understanding of the past. In its forward-looking dimension, reconciliation means enabling victims and perpetrators to get on with life and, at the level of society, the establishment of a civilized political dialogue and an adequate sharing of power’, In: Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), ‘*Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*’, 19.

³⁶ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 10-11.

³⁷ Ibidem

³⁸ Daly and Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*, 19.

³⁹ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 10-11.

⁴⁰ UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 745 (1992) [Cambodia]*, 28 February 1992, S/RES/745 (1992), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f1600.html> [accessed 13 November 2017].

free and fair elections was an essential tool to produce a just and lasting settlement to the Cambodian conflict, which contributes to regional and international peace and security.⁴¹ This goal was purely focused on politics.⁴² Reconciling the Cambodian people at that time was mostly equated with ‘the cessation of hostilities and the return of refugees’.⁴³ So, UNTAC seems part of the reconciliation process and therefore it is significant to discuss the mission in greater depth when analysing Cambodian reconciliation process. Especially from an IR viewpoint. Originally, IR studied how power is distributed and used among states that constructed the international system. Nowadays IR focuses on the growth of “international ‘regimes’: norms, rules and patterns of conduct’, for example the UN.⁴⁴

The UN and its peacekeeping operation UNTAC, particularly the redressing of the relationships of the political parties, are central in this chapter. Since UNTAC was part of reconciling Cambodia, one may wonder which kind of factors (emerged at UNTAC) can partly explain why the reconciliation process of Cambodia has such complex dynamics. Therefore, in line with the main research question, this chapter researches how the peacekeeping operation UNTAC which was active from 1992-1993 impacted the Cambodian reconciliation process, explained from an IR viewpoint. Firstly, this chapter discusses the historiography of peace interventions in which the concept of ‘liberal peace’ is conceptualized. Secondly, it provides a political historical context from 1979-1992. Finally, the chapter looks at the case in Cambodia, and the ways in which the international community has interfered with the politics of Cambodia during its reconciliation process.

Historiography of peace interventions

It is important to discuss the historiography of liberal peace interventions since these interventions are very complex; there is no one formula to organize peace interventions because each post-atrocity situation is different.⁴⁵ Consequently, there are divergent opinions concerning peace interventions. It is essential to discuss these opinions before one can form a well-balanced

⁴¹ Ibidem

⁴² Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 50.

⁴³ Ibidem

⁴⁴ Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, 602.

⁴⁵ S. Straus, ‘The Atrocity Prevention Community: States and Beyond’, In: S. Straus, *Fundamentals of Genocide and Mass Atrocity Prevention* (Washington D.C 2016) 183-184.

vision about UNTAC. Paris has provided a well-written overview about the ways in which liberal peace interventions are interpreted. This chapter uses Paris' overview as the basic assumption for this section.

In response to global policy problems, such as genocide and mass atrocities, states have created international organizations, for instance the UN. The UN could be seen as the primary institution designed to manage and solve such problems.⁴⁶ It has adopted the United Nations Genocide Convention and has been the chief arena in which the 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) concept has been developed.⁴⁷ R2P holds that 'when a sovereign state fails to prevent atrocities to its own people, foreign governments led by the UN have the right to intervene and stop them'.⁴⁸ However, this concept is criticized by Mandani, who argued that 'the legal normalization of certain types of violence (such as Western counterinsurgency efforts)' is permitted, while arbitrarily 'criminalizing the violence of other states as "genocide"'.⁴⁹ These Western counterinsurgency efforts are launched in post conflict countries and have become known as 'peacebuilding' operations.⁵⁰ The aim of peacebuilding, according to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, was 'to create the conditions necessary for a sustainable peace in war-torn societies' – that is, a peace that would endure long after the departure of the peacebuilders themselves.⁵¹

Proponents of peacebuilding, such as Paris, Rummel, Muravchi and Diamond, believe that democratization and marketization would establish peace in post conflict countries.⁵² This is the 'liberal peace thesis'; or 'the notion that democratic forms of government are more peaceful – both in their internal politics and in their international relations – than other forms of government'.⁵³ This resulted in various post-Cold War international interventions by various states and international actors, such as UNTAC.⁵⁴ It is a dominant form of internationally supported peace interventions; in that way, these interventions are justified by using 'liberal

⁴⁶ Straus, 'The Atrocity Prevention Community: States and Beyond', 174.

⁴⁷ Ibidem

⁴⁸ R.J. Jackson, *Global Politics in the 21st Century* (New York 2013) 320.

⁴⁹ M. Mamdani, 'Responsibility to Protect or Right to Punish?', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4 (2010) 1, 53-67.

⁵⁰ R. Paris, 'Introduction', In: R. Paris (ed.), *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict* (London 2004) 2.

⁵¹ Ibidem

⁵² Paris, 'The Liberal Peace Thesis', 41; 44.

⁵³ Paris, 'The Liberal Peace Thesis', 41.

⁵⁴ R. Mac Ginty, 'Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-down and Bottom-up Peace', In: T. Woodhouse, H. Miall, O. Ramsbotham and C. Mitchell (eds.), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge & Malden 2015) 318.

rhetoric'.⁵⁵ However, the challenge is to establish liberal peace without endangering peace that 'the liberalization process is supposed to consolidate'.⁵⁶

According to the opponents, liberal peacebuilding has created weak states and institutions that are dependent upon foreign support and subject to contests over both power-sharing and corruption.⁵⁷ Particularly the liberal peacebuilding operation of Cambodia is criticized. Liberal peacebuilding in Cambodia has failed in many of its key aims so far. Consequently, peace in Cambodia was more 'virtual' than 'liberal' as the result of international efforts.⁵⁸ In addition, Selby argues that 'the liberal peace-building literature misrepresents the content and causes of Cambodia's war-to-peace transition, mistakenly viewing it as an inherently liberalisation-oriented process.'⁵⁹ Liberal peace-building discourse overstates the liberalism of contemporary peace interventions, and understates the enduring importance of strategy, states and geopolitics in the making of peace.⁶⁰

Historical overview of UNTAC

To provide understanding concerning UNTAC's role in the Cambodian reconciliation process, it is important to understand the context in which UNTAC was established. In December 1978, the Vietnamese Army invaded Cambodia, drove out the Khmer Rouge (KR) and occupied it until 1989. A Vietnamese-sponsored regime – the party known as the Cambodian People's Party (CCP) – was established, but most of the international community did not acknowledge the new government because of 'a mistrust of further socialist experimentation, along with deep-seated historical suspicion of Vietnamese intentions towards Cambodia'.⁶¹ Instead the international community legitimized the exiled regime of Pol Pot.⁶² This cold war conflict continued during the 1980s, as Cambodia's four parties were fighting for the power to govern the country.⁶³ These

⁵⁵ Mac Ginty, 'Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-down and Bottom-up Peace', 317.

⁵⁶ Paris, 'Introduction', 7.

⁵⁷ O.P. Richmond and J. Franks, 'Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia', *Security Dialogue* 38 (2007) 1, 30.

⁵⁸ Richmond and Franks, 'Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia', 27.

⁵⁹ J. Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', *Conflict, Security & Development* 13 (2013) 1, 60.

⁶⁰ Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', 58-59.

⁶¹ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 49-50; B. Kiernan, 'The Cambodian Genocide, 1975-1979' (2004), <https://www.niod.nl/sites/niod.nl/files/Cambodian%20genocide.pdf> (8 November 2017) 86.

⁶² Kiernan, 'The Cambodian Genocide', 86.

⁶³ M. Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', *International Peacekeeping* 12 (2005) 2, 205-221.

parties consisted of CPP, FUNINPEC party, the Khmer Rouge, and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front.⁶⁴ As the cold war had almost come to an end, international support for all four warring parties dried up.⁶⁵ Moreover, in the early 1990s, the public pressure on Western governments increased and finally the genocide was officially acknowledged in an international arena for the first time.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the idea of a political settlement was more desirable than a conflict between all the parties, which cleared the way for a politicized peace process.⁶⁷ Since not only the Cambodian parties needed to agree but also all the international players who were involved, the political stakes raised very high.⁶⁸

The Paris Peace Agreements (PPA) of October 1991 were meant to end the Cambodian conflict and UNTAC stepped in to 'oversee the implementation of the PPA' and to promote national reconciliation.⁶⁹ Reconciliation, at that time, was considered synonymous with the involvement of the four parties in a free and fair election' in May 1993 which UNTAC would organize.⁷⁰ By proposing elections as the solution to the conflict, the PPA had ensured that reconciliation was closely linked with a political contest that no party was prepared to lose.⁷¹

On March 15, 1992, UNTAC officially became operational but it did not take long before it had several setbacks.⁷² The KR refused to demobilize its forces, as required by the PPA. Consequently, the demobilization efforts of UNTAC were abandoned and UNTAC focused on the goal of 'ensuring a peaceful environment for free and fair elections'.⁷³ However, the security situation in Cambodia became worse because of the political violence before the elections. This resulted in deteriorated tensions among the four parties. Yet, the elections continued, and during the voting days there was some peace.⁷⁴

⁶⁴ Richmond and Franks, 'Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia', 31.

⁶⁵ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 49.

⁶⁶ Kiernan, 'The Cambodian Genocide', 87.

⁶⁷ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 50.

⁶⁸ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 49-50.

⁶⁹ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 50; R. Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', In: R. Paris (ed.), *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict* (London 2004) 82; UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 745 (1992) [Cambodia]*, 28 February 1992, S/RES/745 (1992), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3b00f1600.html> [accessed 13 November 2017].

⁷⁰ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 50.

⁷¹ Ibidem; for detailed information about the UNTAC Mission, I recommend the following website: 'United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia' at <http://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/past/untac.htm>.

⁷² Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 83.

⁷³ Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 84.

⁷⁴ Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 84-86.

By the end of 1993 a new government was formed between Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC and Hun Sen's CPP. A new relationship as partners in a governing coalition could be built.⁷⁵ It seemed that Cambodia entered a new period of 'political stability'.⁷⁶ Consequently, the UN Security Council declared the operation as 'successful' and commanded the withdrawal of UNTAC.⁷⁷ Cambodia was more at peace at that time than it had been the past decades. The KR was still 'an active insurgency', but it was weakened.⁷⁸ Moreover, the relationships between the leaders of the coalition parties were tense but peaceful.⁷⁹

Contrary to the UN statement, the situation in Cambodia was not stable. The departure of UNTAC and 'the precarious power-sharing arrangement set the course for the inevitable overthrow of the democratic process four years later', according to UNTAC's military commander.⁸⁰ Despite the power sharing agreement with FUNCINPEC the CPP dominated the post-election government.⁸¹ Furthermore, Hun Sen was unwilling to collaborate with Ranariddh.⁸² The new elections of 1998 led to a further degradation in relations between Cambodia's two co-prime ministers.⁸³ By early 1996 the ongoing rivalry and distrust between FUNCINPEC and the CPP resulted in political violence and in July 1997 it once again reignited the fights between the parties.⁸⁴ Moreover, the elections were delayed after a CPP-led coup. Power and violence, rather than the voting ballot remained 'the primary way that political actors pursued their political goals.'⁸⁵ The CPP, as a dominant party, has kept its position ever since.⁸⁶ In short, the Cambodian parties were not completely reconciled.

⁷⁵ Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 87.

⁷⁶ Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 86.

⁷⁷ United Nations, UN Security Council, *Statement of the President of the Security Council Concerning the Successful Completion of the Mandate of UNTAC (1993)*, 5 October 1993, S/26531 (1993), available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/26531 [accessed 13 November 2017].

⁷⁸ Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 86.

⁷⁹ Ibidem

⁸⁰ Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 87.

⁸¹ J. Öjendal and S. Ou, 'From Friction to Hybridity in Cambodia: 20 Years of Unfinished Peacebuilding', *Peacebuilding* 1 (2013) 3, 373.

⁸² Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 86.

⁸³ Ibidem

⁸⁴ Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 86-87.

⁸⁵ Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', 213.

⁸⁶ Öjendal, and Ou, 'From Friction to Hybridity in Cambodia: 20 Years of Unfinished Peacebuilding', 373.

UNTAC's impact on the reconciliation process of the Cambodian parties

Power in Cambodia, traditionally and contemporarily, has been of an absolutist nature, with little tolerance of opposition.⁸⁷ UNTAC's intention to bring the four parties together and create a power-sharing government via democratic elections was partially unsuccessful due to these strong political traditions of power and violence that are inherent in Cambodian society.⁸⁸ In addition, due to UNTAC's failure to properly instigate the political, social and economic structural changes that were required for a liberal peace, the dictatorial nature of the underlying political Cambodian system did not break.⁸⁹ Indeed, since UNTAC did not fundamentally modify the strong political traditions, power and violence had the upper hand and the politics of Cambodia were marked by distrust and lack of cooperation among leaders.⁹⁰ There are several reasons which could explain this. It is essential to emphasize there could be more factors than the ones discussed in this chapter which have contributed to the reconciliation process of the Cambodian parties. However, since this thesis is limited in volume, this section has focused on two factors which had an especially large impact on redressing the relationships between the Cambodian parties.

One of the reasons is related to the geopolitics of UNTAC. The Cambodian genocide and its aftermath was largely driven by Cold War relations which superpowers were preoccupied with in that period.⁹¹ UNTAC, as well as the PPA, were both rooted in geopolitics. Surely, UNTAC was based on liberal peace-building principles since the agreement 'set out a detailed plan for transforming Cambodia into a peaceful liberal democracy', and reflected 'the Wilsonian assumption that transforming the Cambodian state into a liberal democracy that would facilitate the transition from civil war to lasting peace'.⁹² Nevertheless, Selby argues,

⁸⁷ Richmond and Franks, 'Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia', 35.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*

⁸⁹ Richmond and Franks, 'Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia', 34.

⁹⁰ Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', 97.

⁹¹ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huysse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 49-50.

⁹² Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', 66.

The fundamental problem with this narrative is that the 1991 Paris settlement was rooted primarily in geopolitics, and only secondarily in Wilsonian principles. Just as the war in Cambodia was rooted in geopolitics, so was this also true of the peace.⁹³

So, the entire peace process in Cambodia was structured by the refusal of the international community to recognize the Vietnamese-installed regime as the legitimate Phnom Penh.⁹⁴ Since the KR were driven out, Cambodia had recovered in the socio-economic sphere in an 'impressive' and 'remarkable' way. It was not a 'failed state', 'incapable of governing itself', and in need of 'saving' by a UN-led international community.⁹⁵ On the contrary, the government had large-scale domestic military and political control, but as a result of the limited international recognition the UN intervened in Cambodia to establish a democracy.⁹⁶ The democratic elections were not an instrument of democratisation, but they served as mechanisms of delay, ongoing war, and above all international legitimation and exit.⁹⁷ According to Gottesman, 'UNTAC came to Cambodia because multiparty elections were the only way for Vietnam, China, the Soviet Union, and the West to end a draining international conflict'.⁹⁸

Indeed, the political violence emerged as a consequence of an unsuccessful reconciliation process between the four parties. This could be related to the geopolitics in which UNTAC was rooted. The liberal character of establishing a democracy through fair and free elections by UNTAC did not maintain. For example, not a single one of the key principles of the PPA which were required for the elections was met. The principle of creating a 'neutral political environment' for the elections was not achieved since political violence emerged.⁹⁹ If UNTAC focused mainly on fighting an international conflict, one could argue that there was not enough attention paid to addressing the relationships between the Cambodian parties, which was necessary for establishing a democracy.

⁹³ Ibidem

⁹⁴ Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', 77.

⁹⁵ Helman, G. and S. Ratner, 'Saving Failed States', *Foreign Policy* 89 (1992), 14; B. Kiernan, 'Introduction', In: B. Kiernan (ed.), *Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia: The Khmer Rouge, the United Nations and the International Community* (New Haven 1993) 18.

⁹⁶ Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', 68.

⁹⁷ Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', 70.

⁹⁸ E. Gottesman, *Cambodia After the Khmer Rouge: Inside the Politics of Nation Building* (New Haven 2003) 350.

⁹⁹ Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', 70.

Another argument which could explain the unsuccessful reconciliation is related to UNTAC's legitimacy, the reason of a society to be 'supportive of, and obedient to', peacekeepers which are interfering in its country.¹⁰⁰ UNTAC's legitimacy is derived from a social contract,

Where a society will consider the peacekeepers' use of force and authority legitimate because the peacekeepers are there for a purpose that is beneficial: to provide security so that order and peace may be restored.¹⁰¹

It is important to point out that not all members of a society support such a social contract.¹⁰² However, to remain legitimate the peacekeepers need to fulfill those social contracts.¹⁰³ Legitimacy is also derived from the ability and willingness of the peacekeeping force to defend themselves with the minimum necessary forces.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, in the case Cambodia, it appears that particularly the social contracts with the parties had an impact on the Cambodian reconciliation.

In the eyes of the parties, as well as the Cambodian citizens, UNTAC's foundation of legitimacy were derived from the PPA.¹⁰⁵ The terms of the PPA, for example, an election in a neutral political environment and the resulting peace, was more profitable for some parties than others. UNTAC's foundation of legitimacy concerning some parties was therefore unstable. Consequently, UNTAC had to deal with several social contracts, one for each party.¹⁰⁶ The balancing act between these multiple social contracts was necessary for the UNTAC to be legitimate. However, UNTAC failed to fulfill these social contracts for several reasons.¹⁰⁷ First, UNTAC was seen as a partial actor since it could not prevent the Cambodian government from exploiting an unfair advantage. Secondly, the KR itself withdrew their consent for UNTAC and

¹⁰⁰ Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', 206.

¹⁰¹ Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', 207.

¹⁰² Ibidem

¹⁰³ Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', 207-208.

¹⁰⁴ T. Findlay, *Cambodia the Legacy and Lessons of UNTAC* (Oxford: 1995) 132.

¹⁰⁵ Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', 209.

¹⁰⁶ Ibidem

¹⁰⁷ Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', 208.

its support for the peace process.¹⁰⁸ Thirdly, UNTAC failed to deal with the KR; UNTAC was unable to disarm the KR. Fourth, UNTAC was unable to provide a secure and neutral political environment.¹⁰⁹ Finally, UNTAC could not prevent government-sponsored political violence against the other parties.¹¹⁰ Consequently, the parties lost confidence that a ‘democratic approach to peace, reconciliation and politics’, was practicable in Cambodia, which led to UNTAC’s loss of legitimacy.¹¹¹ This meant an end to the possibility that the parties would internalize peace and politics through a democratic approach.¹¹² Indeed, without the commitment of the parties to a democratic approach, they would continue to fight, and democracy never take root.¹¹³ So, the reconciliation for the parties was unsuccessful. Consequently, ‘a political system that was (and is) different from previous authoritarianism, and from the expected liberal system’ was established whereby the strong political traditions of power and violence took the overhand.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the reconciliation process of Cambodia from an IR viewpoint. It appears that peacekeeping operations such as UNTAC could have had a great influence on this process. UNTAC wanted to establish a democracy in Cambodia, which required the four Cambodian parties to reconcile. UNTAC tried to address the relationships between the four Cambodian parties to create cooperation and fair relations. These relations are important to implement the structures of democracy.¹¹⁵ However, as the strong political traditions of power and violence of Cambodia emerged during the 1993 elections and its aftermath, they were not cooperative, and lacked fair relations. In short, the reconciliation of the Cambodian parties was unsuccessful.

The underlying cause of the deterioration in relations could be found in the strong political traditions of power and violence which are inherent in the Cambodian society. UNTAC

¹⁰⁸ Mersiades, ‘Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia’, 210; Paris, ‘Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted’, 79-96.

¹⁰⁹ Mersiades, ‘Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia’, 212; Paris, ‘Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted’, 79-96.

¹¹⁰ Mersiades, ‘Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia’, 2005; Paris, ‘Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted’, 79-96.

¹¹¹ Mersiades, ‘Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia’, 213.

¹¹² *Ibidem*

¹¹³ Daly and Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*, 19.

¹¹⁴ Öjendal and Ou, ‘From Friction to Hybridity in Cambodia: 20 Years of Unfinished Peacebuilding’, 373; Richmond and Franks, ‘Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia’, 35.

¹¹⁵ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huysse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook*, 10-11.

was not able to instigate the political, social and economic structural changes to break with these strong traditions.¹¹⁶ What could explain UNTAC's inability? As was argued, this question is partly related to the Cold War relations in which UNTAC was rooted.¹¹⁷ The whole peace process was structured by the international community which did not acknowledge the Vietnamese-installed regime as legitimate.¹¹⁸ The focus was on the international conflict, consequently the elections were not based on democratic principles.¹¹⁹ In addition, UNTAC's failure to fulfill the social contracts with the Cambodian parties resulted in deteriorated relations between the parties. The failure caused reduced perceptions, which in turn led to the loss of UNTAC's legitimacy. Consequently, UNTAC was unable to bring the parties together because of disbelief in peace and politics with a democratic approach.¹²⁰

UNTAC's attempt to reconcile the Cambodian parties was unsuccessful but it definitely has had a great influence on the reconciliation of the Cambodian parties. Of course, more factors can be related to the reconciliation failure. However, UNTAC was an influential operation since it took control over Cambodia. Therefore, it is interesting to examine how UNTAC impacted the Cambodian reconciliation process.

¹¹⁶ Richmond and Franks, 'Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia', 34.

¹¹⁷ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 49-50.

¹¹⁸ Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', 77.

¹¹⁹ Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', 70.

¹²⁰ Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', 213.

Chapter 2 - Cultural Mechanisms Shaping the Cambodian Reconciliation Process

In the most simple and broad understanding of the concept, reconciliation can be considered as a process of healing trauma; as a way to mourn massive violent deaths, mend large social gaps, and restore faith in peaceful social coexistence.¹²¹ Besides the high prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety symptoms on the individual level, dynamics of trauma also have collective dimensions, because massive trauma affects people as much on the physical and mental level as on the social and cultural level.¹²² However, a fair bit of literature on the concept of reconciliation I have read for this research, does not pay a lot of attention to the importance of fully understanding trauma as a contributing force for reconciliation. In, for example, the leading works in the field of reconciliation; *Roads to Reconciliation, Reconciliation After Violent Conflict* and *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*, the word 'trauma' is hardly mentioned, let alone analysed in relation to reconciliation.¹²³ By emphasizing and discussing the relationship of these two concepts this chapter tries to contribute to the closing of this literary gap.

However, there is an intense scholarly debate in academic circles as to what is the most effective vehicle for reconciling a nation with its traumatic past.¹²⁴ As we stated in the introduction reconciliation should not be considered as an isolated act or event, but as a difficult, long and unpredictable process at different kinds of levels.¹²⁵ This contrasts with the more 'mainstream' perception of scholars who have more structured ideas of how a format of a particular reconciliation process 'should look like' and therefore tend to make statements about the speed of such processes.¹²⁶ For example, the various scholars that expressed their concerns

¹²¹ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 77.

¹²² Sztompka, 'Cultural Trauma: The other Face of Social Change', 449-466.

¹²³ Gloppen, 'Roads to Reconciliation: A Conceptual Framework', 2005 Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook* (Stockholm 2003) PDF e-book <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/Reconciliation-After-Violent-Conflict-A-Handbook-Full-English-PDF.pdf>; Daly and Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*, 2007.

¹²⁴ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 2003; A. Murrell, 'Reconciliation and Healing of a Nation' *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 17 (2001) 2, 146-150.

¹²⁵ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 4.

¹²⁶ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 543-560; Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 71-83;

about Cambodian reconciliation process, which according to them, seems to move at such a slow pace.¹²⁷ However, this chapter argues that each particular case must be addressed on its own terms, recognizing the cultural particularities of a society.¹²⁸

So how can reconciliation at the meso level be brought about? Common strategies to deal with the problem of past atrocities are trials, purges, truth commissions, restitution, reforms, amnesty and amnesia.¹²⁹ Because the relationship between reconciliation and these different measures employed to achieve this aim are ambiguous and disputed, it is important to discuss the process of reconciliation from a cultural perspective. After all, each society, as a complex adaptive system, generates different responses to a traumatic past. By demonstrating cultural dynamics, rituals and symbolism, this chapter may help to explain the course that the reconciliation process of the Cambodian genocide is taking. The aim is not to provide a 'blueprint' on which the entire reconciliation process can be explained, but expose a constructivist understanding of culture in order to consider cultural dynamics as strategic, dynamic and hybrid concepts; as the changeable and unambiguous results of ongoing processes of social interaction and definition.¹³⁰

Since the cultural approach forms the framework of this chapter, a short theoretical outline including an elaboration of the concepts cultural trauma and reconciliation will be discussed. Subsequently the different levels at which community reconciliation takes place are examined, distinguishing between the community level and the national level. The cultural aspects of these mechanisms, that certainly also have social and political aspects, are powered by wider cultural 'repertoires', among which religion. Given that at least 90 percent of Cambodian society adhere to the national religion; Buddhism, and therefore Khmer identity is deeply

McGrew, 'Pathways to Reconciliation in Cambodia', 414-521; Murrell, 'Reconciliation and Healing of a Nation', 146-150.

¹²⁷ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', *Transcultural Psychiatry* 52 (2015) 4, 543-560; Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 71-83; McGrew, 'Pathways to Reconciliation in Cambodia', 414-521; Murrell, 'Reconciliation and Healing of a Nation', 146-150.

¹²⁸ V. Chea, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Politics, Culture and Religion', In: Bloomfield, Barnes and Huysse (eds.) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook* (Stockholm 2003) PDF e-book <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pbso/pdf/Reconciliation-After-Violent-Conflict-A-Handbook-Full-English-PDF.pdf>, 19.

¹²⁹ Daly and Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*, 2007; Gloppen, 'Roads to Reconciliation: A Conceptual Framework', 17-50.

¹³⁰ S. Franklin, 'Science as Culture, Cultures of Science', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995), 163-184.

connected with Khmer-Buddhism, this paper's main *leitmotif* follows the Buddhist perceptions and practices concerning acts of reconciliation.¹³¹

Cultural trauma and reconciliation

Alexander et al. state that 'cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectively feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.'¹³² In that sense a cultural trauma should be considered as more than the sum of individual suffering, in fact, people who are effected by traumatic experiences not always suffer from an individual trauma, but still can experience a cultural trauma.¹³³ Massive trauma ruptures social bonds, destroys group identities, undermines the sense of community, and entails cultural disorientations when taken-for-granted meanings become obsolete¹³⁴, which is in line with the definition of Sztompka who defines a cultural trauma as 'the culturally defined and interpreted shock to the cultural tissue of society.'¹³⁵

Cambodia has turned over the page of its darkest history, but the traumatic atrocities committed during that period have left deep wounds.¹³⁶ The catastrophe of this period disrupted every aspect of daily life. Monks were defrocked, cities emptied, and villages replaced. Ritual life was halted, Buddhism denied, and family life disrupted.¹³⁷ On the social level, the Khmer Rouge (KR) regime produced a tremendous shock and disbelief, widespread fear, anxiety, terror, vulnerability and extensive collective mourning.¹³⁸ Having to endure this, has caused the Cambodian people, groups and communities to 'reinvent' and rebuild their entire lives and culture. This (re)building of non-violent relationships between communities; a part of the definition of reconciliation as found in the main introduction, can be seen as a process of healing

¹³¹ E. Zucker, 'Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72 (2013) 4, 795.

¹³² Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser and Stompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (California 2004)

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¹³³ Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser and Stompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 27.

¹³⁴ Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser and Stompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 29.

¹³⁵ Sztompka, 'Cultural Trauma: The other Face of Social Change', 449.

¹³⁶ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 543.

¹³⁷ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 541.

¹³⁸ A. Hinton, 'Terror and Trauma in the Cambodian Genocide', In: L.J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson, M. Barad, *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives* (Cambridge 2009) 433.

traumas.¹³⁹ This notion of reconciliation reveals a structure of great cross-cultural significance; after all healing cultural trauma is something that every post-conflict society is trying to achieve.

Currently most discussions and policies concerning Cambodian reconciliation from the atrocities of the KR regime focus on the KR Tribunal (also called the Extraordinary Chamber in the Courts of Cambodia: ECCC); a court established to bring to trial the few main perpetrators of the KR for alleged violations of international law and serious crimes perpetrated during the Cambodian genocide.¹⁴⁰ And even though the tribunal is considered as an important need for survivors of violence in making steps towards achieving justice and rebuild trust, a tribunal is only one part of a comprehensive process of reconciliation.¹⁴¹ The next paragraph will describe how Cambodian communities still use their traditional ideas and healing methods to 'get together' again and bring relief to the stress being experienced at community level.

Reconciliation at community level; the importance of bottom-up practices

Many Cambodians who suffered during the KR regime continued to hold a grudge against the people who caused them this suffering, and given the phenomenon that in Cambodia victims and perpetrators of the atrocities committed during that time live side by side, these feelings of anger are present in everyday life.¹⁴² Hinton has described the central role played in Cambodian culture by the desire of revenge (*Kum*).¹⁴³ According to him Cambodian society is strongly motivated by wanting to be 'higher than' others, and therefore they would strive to defeat-and thus rise above-their enemy by reciprocate with something even worse than the original offense, because they want to win and not to be ashamed before others.¹⁴⁴ This cultural characteristic sometimes gives rise to long-standing feelings of hatred and it is not surprising that such emotions should have been evoked by the massive trauma Cambodians endured during the KR regime.¹⁴⁵ However, this Cambodian cultural model does not guide Cambodian behaviour in a deterministic manner,

¹³⁹ C. Etcheson, 'The Limits of Reconciliation in Cambodia's Communes', In: E. Skaar, S. Gloppen, A. Suhrke, *Roads to Reconciliation* (United States of America 2005) 202.

¹⁴⁰ Zucker, 'Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', 794.

¹⁴¹ Zucker, 'Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', 796.

¹⁴² A. Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', *American Ethnologist* 25 (1998) 3, 353.

¹⁴³ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 352.

¹⁴⁴ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 357.

¹⁴⁵ Etcheson, 'The Limits of Reconciliation in Cambodia's Communes', 206.

because when a person acts, he or she has a variety of available alternatives of taking revenge.¹⁴⁶ The next paragraphs discuss different alternatives to the cultural model of revenge and discourses of reconciliation; alternatives that invoke Buddhist norms of how to deal with a traumatic past.

Etcheson, who explored views about reconciliation among Cambodian communes, states that despite the lingering pain and an ongoing desire for revenge and retribution, most people in rural areas do manage to coexist with one another on a day-to-day basis.¹⁴⁷ Ordinary social interactions, such as engaging in commerce, worshipping at temple, teaching at schools and debating public policy, that occur among villagers already caused peaceful coexistence in Cambodian communities.¹⁴⁸ Religious ideologies have significant influence on these kinds of community reconciliation practices. Many Cambodians have returned to the faith that had been so brutally attacked under the KR regime in order to 'calm their minds' and reconcile with the past, their enemies and communities.¹⁴⁹ Buddhist norms of emotion control, forgiveness, reconciliation and compassion: concepts that underlie the core of Buddhist religion, provide alternative pathways for finding community reconciliation and place the desire for revenge in perspective. In this case the notion of *Kum* is still present, but people may not actually act accordingly this cultural model.¹⁵⁰ Agger explored Buddhist rituals and techniques of meditation, and stated that they may enhance feelings of security and wellbeing, which in Buddhism depends upon training the mind and heart, and thus help survivors cope with enduring distress.¹⁵¹

The Cambodian, Buddhist coping strategies stand in contrast with longstanding therapeutic models, which hold that it is only through talking or taking appropriate medication that a person may work through feelings of anger, anxiety or grief.¹⁵² In Cambodia people who show signs of continued upset, go see a traditional healer, a fortune teller or a monk; each of

¹⁴⁶ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 368.

¹⁴⁷ Etcheson, 'The Limits of Reconciliation in Cambodia's Communes', 212.

¹⁴⁸ Etcheson, 'The Limits of Reconciliation in Cambodia's Communes', 215.

¹⁴⁹ Zucker, 'Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', 2013; Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 71-83; J. Ledgerwood, 'Buddhist ritual and the reordering of social relations in Cambodia', *South East Asia Research* 20 (2012) 2, 191-205.

¹⁵⁰ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 353.

¹⁵¹ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 544.

¹⁵² Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 545.

whom has culturally specific means of helping a person deal with a 'troubled heart'.¹⁵³ These types of healing rituals not only reduce suffering on the individual level but also the chances of causing suffering for others by performing wrong actions, such as taking revenge.¹⁵⁴ In that case, meditation, going to a traditional healer or performing rituals, ultimately would contribute to the reconstruction of community relationships and restoration of social cohesion.¹⁵⁵ In addition, because Buddhist life does not end with biological death, because of belief that the spirit is not extinguished upon death, but instead transfers into another life, many Cambodians may take comfort in the notion that the form of future rebirth is determined by actions in the present; karma. Karmic justice does offer the concept that eventually perpetrators will suffer the consequences of their actions, and it makes victims think twice about their own actions of revenge, because it would influence their own future rebirth in a negative way.¹⁵⁶

Traditional healers, spirit mediums, meditation and the notion of karma, compassion and forgiveness, are central to the understanding of community reconciliation of Cambodian society and all emphasize restorative ways of justice and reconciliation.¹⁵⁷ Restorative justice attempts to draw upon the strengths of both perpetrators and victims, as well as communities, rather than focusing upon their 'bad deeds'.¹⁵⁸ While denouncing criminal behaviour and intolerance, restorative justice emphasizes the need to treat perpetrators with respect and to reintegrate them into the larger community in ways that can lead to legitimate behaviour.¹⁵⁹ Given that the ECCC is minimalist and more symbolic in nature, because it only prosecuted a few senior responsible members of the KR and let many other perpetrators unpunished, people may rely on community initiatives that contain restorative ways of justice, given that they are more effective in trying to accomplish reconciliation in more practical and tangible ways. However, the rural population

¹⁵³ Hinton, 'Terror and Trauma in the Cambodian Genocide', In: L.J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson, M. Barad, *Understanding Trauma: Integrating Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives* (Cambridge 2009) 441.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*

¹⁵⁵ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 549.

¹⁵⁶ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 1998; Ledgerwood, 'Buddhist ritual and the reordering of social relations in Cambodia', 2012; Zucker, 'Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', 2013.

¹⁵⁷ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 2015; Ledgerwood, 'Buddhist ritual and the reordering of social relations in Cambodia', 2012; Zucker, 'Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', 2013.

¹⁵⁸ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 73.

¹⁵⁹ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 77.

overwhelmingly believes that an efficient operating trial of the senior KR leadership would contribute to the consolidation of reconciliation and justice.¹⁶⁰

When talking about reconciliation at the community level not only the reconstruction of community bonds in order to achieve social cohesion is of great relevance, but also the way in which particular reconciliation initiatives arise from community levels, without any reference at all to retributive justice being done.¹⁶¹ Especially in Cambodia, which has a long and painful history of repression of cultural expression, ethnic intolerance and discrimination and therefore feelings of identity, belonging and trust in institutions are highly undermined, it is really important to find vehicles for addressing reconciliation issues in a manner that meet the foundations of Khmer culture.¹⁶² Relying on ideals derived from elsewhere, instead of paying attention to the delicate and vulnerable matrix of local experiences, understandings and cultural resources, may not contribute to the restoration of community relationships.

It is, however, not only at the community level that processes of reconciliation take place. It is also at the national level, the level where government plays a role, that initiatives, of a more top-down character, have been taken to deal with Cambodia's troubled past.

Creating a 'shared' memory; top-down reconciliation practices

Trauma and memory are intimately connected phenomena because trauma consists of overwhelming memories that impress themselves on an individual, but also on groups through repetition compulsion.¹⁶³ Social implications of massive trauma can give rise to a collective traumatic memory and a traumatized society.¹⁶⁴ The ways that people evoke a traumatic past and organize experiences into meaningful and relevant stories are processes that are of great importance in the reconstruction of social relations and restoration of social cohesion. Collective traumatic remembrances, which should not be seen as the sum total of individual memory but as a groups shared an 'agreed' version of past events, may serve as vehicles for reconciliation and are mostly reproduced through commemorations, monuments, testimonial narratives,

¹⁶⁰ Etcheson, 'The Limits of Reconciliation in Cambodia's Communes', 221.

¹⁶¹ Daly and Sarkin, *Reconciliation in Divided Societies: Finding Common Ground*, 79.

¹⁶² Zucker, 'Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', 798.

¹⁶³ Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser and Stompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 2004.

¹⁶⁴ A. Robben, 'How Traumatized Societies Remember: The Aftermath of Argentina's Dirty War', *Cultural Critique* 59 (2005), 120-164.

historical studies and even bodily practices.¹⁶⁵

The discussion on collective memory in societies looking back to past atrocities; an object of great scholarly interest¹⁶⁶, is closely tied to the larger field of reconciliation. In Cambodia, these processes of national remembering are powered by key platforms such as the ECCC and the Documentation Center of Cambodia.¹⁶⁷ However, the ways those government institutions choose to remember (or forget), are often not in line with how, or what a community wants to remember, as Lesley explained; memorial sites often seem to be used to bolster the legitimacy of the regimes currently in power.¹⁶⁸ Since 1979, genocide in Cambodia has been selectively memorialized in the country, with two memorials receiving official commemoration: the Museum of Genocide Crimes and the Killing Fields.¹⁶⁹ And even though these memorials serve as symbolic sites where Cambodians can grieve and commemorate the deceased, and in doing so can come together in remembering cultural trauma and loss, it is important to be aware of how memories and memorials can become political resources. In the case of the Killing Fields, which consists of around one hundred exhumed mass graves, many still displaying fragments of bone and cloth embedded in the ground, local spiritual beliefs and customs of citizen visitors are extremely challenged.¹⁷⁰ The display of human remains conflicts with local Buddhist beliefs that stipulate remains must be cremated in order for the cycle of reincarnation to begin. They also believe that the spirits, especially those who died a violent or 'unnatural' death and whose bodies were not ritually handled, may continue to linger on earth, causing misfortune for the surviving relatives.¹⁷¹ Because of this ideology many Cambodians consider the Killing fields as a dangerous place and refuse to visit the memorial.¹⁷²

Apart from the Killing Fields there are other national memorial sites which are directed

¹⁶⁵ F. Ferrándiz and A. Robben, *Necropolitics: Mass Graves and Exhumations in the Age of Human Rights* (Pennsylvania 2005), 13.

¹⁶⁶ Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser and Stompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 2004; J. Assmann and J. Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique* 110 (1995) 65. 125-133; S. Radstone, 'What Place Is This? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies', *Parallax* 17(2011) 4, 109-123; P. Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (New York 2007).

¹⁶⁷ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 79.

¹⁶⁸ E. Lesley, 'Death on Display: Bones and Bodies in Cambodia and Rwanda', In: F. Ferrándiz and A. Robben, *Necropolitics: Mass Graves and Exhumations in the Age of Human Rights* (Pennsylvania 2015) 215.

¹⁶⁹ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 79.

¹⁷⁰ Lesley, 'Death on Display: Bones and Bodies in Cambodia and Rwanda', 213.

¹⁷¹ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 540.

¹⁷² Lesley, 'Death on Display: Bones and Bodies in Cambodia and Rwanda', 230.

toward social healing, peace and reconciliation. While the first two; the 'festival of the dead' and the so called *Dhammayietra* have already been existing long before the KR massacre, the third one, the 'National Day of Hatred' has been introduced by the government after the genocide.¹⁷³

The most spectacular event of social healing and community cohesion is the annual 'festival of the dead'; *Phchum Ben*, during which ritual merit-making for the restless souls of the dead continues for a full two weeks.¹⁷⁴ Ledgerwood's study of Phchum Ben shows how this ritual is '...an act of mourning, a demonstrative activity expressing grief, and a process to restore the disrupted social relations between the living and the deceased ancestors...'¹⁷⁵ This religious festival demonstrates that in Buddhism the dead are treated as an extension of the moral community of the living, and that attending to their wellbeing is integral to the wellbeing of the living. In Buddhism, the holistic understanding and treatment of the body (rituals involve the body, the mental conditions and the community) can accomplish social reintegration of perpetrators and reconciliation with community. So, performing rituals according to the correct and proper Buddhist tradition is very important; not being able to accomplish the rituals can be a very upsetting and traumatic experience, which can barricade acts of reconciliation.¹⁷⁶

The second important national initiative of peace and reconciliation that draws on core Buddhist norms, values and teachings is the *Dhammayietra*; an annual 45-day peace walk of some 650 kilometres involving both monks and lay people.¹⁷⁷ The purpose of the march, which began in 1922 and nowadays takes place every year, was not only an effort to build links between people divided by the years of conflict, but also teaching and ritual expression of compassion. Villagers along the way of the *Dhammayietra* not only saw it as symbolic of the revival of Buddhism and Buddhist monks, but also as an important and continuing contribution to the possibility of the country developing a post-conflict harmony and shared sense of purpose and direction.¹⁷⁸

The third one is the so called National Day of Hatred; a day declared by Cambodian

¹⁷³ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 78.

¹⁷⁴ Ledgerwood, 'Buddhist ritual and the reordering of social relations in Cambodia', 191.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibidem*

¹⁷⁶ Chea, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Politics, Culture and Religion', 2003; Etcheson, 'The Limits of Reconciliation in Cambodia's Communes', 206; Ledgerwood, 'Buddhist ritual and the reordering of social relations in Cambodia', 2012.

¹⁷⁷ Chea, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Politics, Culture and Religion', 51.

¹⁷⁸ Chea, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Politics, Culture and Religion', 52.

government in 1984 to commemorate the crimes and the victims of the KR regime and to give people an opportunity to express their anger; something that is less esteemed in a Buddhist oriented society.¹⁷⁹ In Buddhism, displaying anger means loss of face and is thus desirable to avoid.¹⁸⁰ However, expressing anger can be a useful therapeutic tool for dealing with, and ultimately remembering a painful past. Since the Day of Hatred provides a culturally accepted space for Cambodians to collectively express their anger and pain at the crimes of the KR regime, many Cambodians consider it as an important event.¹⁸¹ Opponents claim that it is pointless to call out a national day to collectively express feelings, arguing that the lingering and profound pain, and desire for revenge are feelings that will never fade away, certainly not by means of such remembrance days.¹⁸²

The friction between individual and collective memory is a complex discussion because there is never simply one memory, nor is there only one way to remember. Commemoration sites and practices, such as the Day of Hatred, the festival of the dead and the Killing Fields, are on the one hand considered as a shared history, allowing people to exchange narratives about sorrows, and thus enhance feelings of national identity. On the other hand, they are perceived by many Cambodians as a tool to create, erase, or reinvent an official, stipulated, collective memory and thereby justify present forms of social representation and political presence. In addition, many Cambodians consider these top-down shaped commemoration sites as a 'duty to remember' the most painful parts of their life.¹⁸³

Conclusion

In Cambodia, most community initiatives concerning acts of reconciliation are built upon restorative Buddhist ideologies. Buddhism offers multiple discourses through which suffering

¹⁷⁹ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 78.

¹⁸⁰ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 255.

¹⁸¹ Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 78.

¹⁸² Bockers, Stamme and Knaevelsrud, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia: Thirty Years After the Terror of the Khmer Rouge Regime', 79.

¹⁸³ Lesley, 'Death on Display: Bones and Bodies in Cambodia and Rwanda', 222.

can be dealt with, communities reconciled and the traumatic past be made less invasive.¹⁸⁴ Although it is widely shared by, and mediates the understanding of many Cambodians, Buddhism also provides an alternative recipe for the cultural model of revenge; *Kum*.¹⁸⁵

However, many academics perceive Buddhism as a doctrine of acceptance, as a barricade to social change and processes of sustainable reconciliation.¹⁸⁶ This chapter demonstrated a non-compatibility in the meeting of two different rationalities. Namely, the significant friction between community practices of reconciliation (bottom-up), in which Buddhist ideologies have significant influence, and the more 'common', regulated discourses of reconciliation (top-down). In Cambodia we see that most national or 'politicised' manners of reconciliation, such as the ECCC and the several memorial sites that receive official commemoration and actually narrate history in selective and controlled ways, not really contribute to the reconstruction of community relationships, but rather make appeals to Cambodian cultural aesthetics and symbolism.¹⁸⁷ The initiatives set up by the government, which are top-down in nature, have the risk of serving political purposes others than reconstructing community bonds in order to achieve social cohesion.¹⁸⁸ However, national initiatives of reconciliation do not necessarily have governmental roots, but also can arise from the community and religious level.

By demonstrating matrices of local experiences, understandings and cultural mechanisms, which play a central role in Cambodian discourses on reconciliation, this chapter substantiates that reconciliation is to a high extent, a culturally constructed process. It argues that cultural dimensions are essential in creating meaningful and effective interventions that can encourage the Cambodian reconciliation process. Since cultural trauma is a contributing force for reconciliation, both journeys; the journey of trauma healing and the journey of reconciliation, are intertwined. This journey is really a difficult and painful journey in many ways, but it is the engine that enables victims to become survivors and divided societies to transform themselves into communities where people work together and live productive, hopeful lives.

¹⁸⁴ Agger, 'Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia', 2015; Ledgerwood, 'Buddhist ritual and the reordering of social relations in Cambodia', 2012; Zucker, 'Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', 2013.

¹⁸⁵ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 253.

¹⁸⁶ Zucker, 'Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal', 2013.

¹⁸⁷ Lesley, 'Death on Display: Bones and Bodies in Cambodia and Rwanda', 213.

¹⁸⁸ Lesley, 'Death on Display: Bones and Bodies in Cambodia and Rwanda', 215.

Chapter 3 – PTSD in Cambodia

Earlier has been stated how the reconciliation process of Cambodia since the Khmer Rouge is considered complex by several researchers.¹⁸⁹ This chapter will explain how the trauma is experienced and dealt with by the individual and how this forms a difficulty in Cambodian reconciliation process. The interdisciplinary character of this thesis requires a clear conceptualization of trauma and reconciliation from the cognitive psychological view. Individual trauma occurs because of exposure to a distressing event and an overwhelming amount of stress, beyond the individual's control.¹⁹⁰ It exceeds the personal ability to cope with the abnormal event and the emotions involved. The wide concept of reconciliation, as defined in the introduction, can be narrowed down to the psychological healing process, allowing the individual to cope with the traumatic experience without interference from the trauma in the daily social life.¹⁹¹ Changes in cognitive processing and storage of the memories effectuate this healing process. Reconciliation, in this section, is to a lesser extent defined as a process, but carries the main goal to restore personal relationships of the survivors and perpetrators and the recovery of the individual's mental health.

To achieve a holistic analysis of the complexity of the reconciliation process in Cambodia, it is of high importance to take along the role of the individual on the micro-level. This chapter attempts to achieve a deeper understanding of the complex process of reconciliation in Cambodia by taking a closer look into the effects of the traumatic experiences on the individual. The Khmer Rouge had led to high levels of stress in the individual. This section explains how the internal cognitive processes and the behavioural responses, due to the individual's trauma, and the related consequences for the mental health influence the reconciliation process in Cambodia. The interdisciplinary body of Cognitive and Neurobiological Psychology as a discipline offers insights from the psychological approach on the one hand and

¹⁸⁹ Murrel, 'Reconciliation and Healing of a Nation', *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 146-160; Hinton, 'Terror and Trauma in the Cambodian Genocide', 33-50.; C. Grant, 'Finding New Ground: Maintaining and Transforming Traditional Music', In; S. Springer and K. Brickell, *The Handbook of Contemporary Cambodia* (New York 2017) 432-442.

¹⁹⁰ American Psychological Association 'Recovering emotionally from disaster' (version August 2017) <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx> (November 16th, 2017).

¹⁹¹ D. A. Samson, S. Alessandra and T. O. Monica, 'Psychological Healing in Reconciliation', *International Journal of School and Cognitive Psychology* 2 (2015) 4, 1-3.

the biological approach from the other hand. At the crossroad of the different assumptions, the cognitive neuroscience provides an integrative view on the relation between traumatic events and the resulting behaviour. Focusing on the individual in the dynamic social environment, Cognitive and Neurobiological Psychology offers a valuable addition to build a bridge to the other disciplines used.

The cognitive processing of traumatic experiences

Researches into the massacres in Rwanda and The Holocaust have proved how genocides and other similar violent periods in time have traumatizing effects on the population and the individual.¹⁹² In Cambodia an estimated 53.4% of the population suffers from psychiatric disorders, with several anxiety disorders (40.0%) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (28.4%) most frequently diagnosed.¹⁹³ This section will make use of the classification in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition (DSM-V) of persistent PTSD.¹⁹⁴ In PTSD, the memory of a traumatic event is perceived as a fearful threat, evoking

¹⁹² I. Levav, 'The Aftermath of the European and Rwandan Genocides', In: J. Lindert and I. Levav, *Violence and Mental Health: Its Manifold Faces* (Waltham 2015) 303-340.

¹⁹³ C. Steindert, P. J. Bumke, R. L. Hollekamp, A. Larish, F. Leichsenring, H. Matthess, S. Sek, U. Sodeman, M. Stingl, T. Ret, H. Vojtová, W. Wöller and J. Kruse, 'Resource activation for treating post-traumatic stress disorder, co-morbid symptoms and impaired functioning: a randomized controlled trial in Cambodia', *Psychological Medicine* 47 (2017) 3, 553-564; J. T. de Jong, I. H. Komproe and M. van Ommeren, 'Common mental disorders in postconflict settings', *Lancet* 361 (2003) 9375, 2128-2130.

¹⁹⁴ American Psychiatric Association, '*Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 5th edition*'. Arlington: American Psychiatric Publishing (2013), 143-149; The DSM-V states the following criteria for Posttraumatic stress disorder in adults, adolescents and children older than six years:

- A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways: [...]
- B. Presence of one (or more) of the following intrusions symptoms associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event occurred: [...]
- C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidence by one or both following: [...]
- D. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by two or more of the following: [...]
- E. Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by two (or more) of the following: [...]
- F. Duration of the disturbance (criteria B, C, D, and E) is more than 1 month.
- G. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning
- H. The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effect of a substance (e.g., medication, alcohol) or another medical condition.

emotional and physiological responses.¹⁹⁵ Hence, the key problem is the storage, or consolidation, of the memories of emotional events and fearful situations. Due to this, the painful memories of the traumatic event occur involuntary and cause a constant level of personal distress, which affects the functioning in daily life activities.

Brewin stated that persistent PTSD can be explained by the dual-representation theory. The dual-representation model distinguishes ‘verbal accessible memory’ (VAM) and ‘situationally accessible memory’ (SAM), both part of the autobiographical memory system.¹⁹⁶ Verbally accessible memory can be called to the mind intentionally, whereas the retrieval of situationally accessible memory happens unintentionally. Autobiographical memory is an umbrella term for all memories about the self and holds memories of personal experiences in the long-term memory system (LTM) in the brain. The LTM has an unlimited capacity and holds information over a longer time span. Factual knowledge, practical skills and memories about personal episodic events and semantic knowledge of personal experiences are stored in the LTM. The memories of the traumatic event are encoded in the autobiographical long term memory system, integrated in context, associated with a time and a place. Those memories are consciously retrievable and mostly triggered by associated cues in the environment. Autobiographical memory is linked to the VAM, which serves strategic and controlled processes for the retrieval of the memories.¹⁹⁷ Yet, traumatic experiences produce high levels of stress in the individual, which affects how the memories are consolidated in the memory system. These, highly emotional, memories are defined as the SAM in the dual-representation theory. Due to the high emotional arousal the event is remembered by small, specific elements of the situation. The considerable memory for detail can occur in the context of amnesia for other aspects of the situation. The traumatic event is not stored as a coherent, ordered episode in a context as other autobiographical memories are, but mostly remembered by the sensory elements perceived at that time. Sensory cues, merely associated with parts of the event, trigger involuntary retrieval. Controlled retrieval is ruled out. SAM is highly detailed when it occurs as a flashback.

¹⁹⁵ A. Ehlers and D. M. Clark, ‘A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder’, *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 38 (2000) 4, 319-345.; American Psychiatric Association, ‘*Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 5th edition*’, 143-149.

¹⁹⁶ C. Brewin, ‘A cognitive neuroscience account of posttraumatic stress disorder and its treatment’, *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 39 (2001) 4, 373-393.

¹⁹⁷ J. E. LeDoux, ‘*Emotion Circuits in the Brain*’, *Annual Review of Neuroscience*, 23 (2000) 1, 155-184.; Brewin, ‘A cognitive neuroscience account of posttraumatic stress disorder and its treatment’, 373-393.

Flashbacks are involuntary and intrusive retrievals of the traumatic event, triggered by diminutive, resembling stimuli from the traumatic history. The small, sensory aspects are overemphasized in the memories of the patients.¹⁹⁸ The sensory cues are associated with the negative, highly distressed emotional state during the event. Patients with persistent PTSD describe flashbacks as extremely vivid, clear and experienced as if in the present. Frequently occurring flashbacks lead to a constant level of distress and might be accompanied by a more general state of continuously anxiety.

Thus, the consolidation of traumatic memories is affected by the emotional arousal during the event. This leads to over consolidation of situational sensory elements and amnesia for other aspects of the event. The memories are not incorporated in a frame of time and location and are not linked to the VAM. Patients with persistent PTSD have difficulties remembering the trauma as a coherent whole in a sequence of events with a clear beginning and end. The consolidation of the traumatic event in the SAM prevents integration of the memory in the autobiographical memory.

Different brain areas and cognitive processes underlie the consolidation of memories and the processing of emotions. LeDoux proposed a widely supported model explaining the emotional brain for fear and threatening stimuli and the resulting behavioural responses.¹⁹⁹ Three main brain structures are concerned with the processing of emotional events; the prefrontal cortex (PFC), the amygdala and the hippocampus. The amygdala could be referred to as the alarm system of the brain. Exposure to a fearful or dangerous stimulus evokes a direct response, preparing the individual to survive and act immediately. The PFC is responsible for the development of consciousness, self-awareness and the planning of actions. Social decision making and correcting inappropriate responses are controlled in the PFC as well.²⁰⁰ The PFC enables the brain to adapt to new information and submit a correct response to a (social) situation.²⁰¹ The hippocampus is strongly connected to the PFC and the amygdala. The hippocampus is involved in the consolidation of personal and emotional memories in the long-

¹⁹⁸ Brewin, 'A cognitive neuroscience account of posttraumatic stress disorder and its treatment', 373-393.; Ehlers and Clark, 'A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder', 319-345.

¹⁹⁹ J. E. LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain* (New York 1996).

²⁰⁰ P. Tovote, J. P. Fadok and A. Lüthi, 'Neuronal circuits for fear and anxiety', *Nature Reviews. Neuroscience*, 16 (2015) 6, 317-331.

²⁰¹ D. S. Levine, S. J. Leven and P. S. Prueitt, 'Integration, Disintegration, and the Frontal Lobes', In; D. S. Levine (ed.), *Motivation, emotion, and goal direction in neural networks* (New York 2014) 301-336.

term memory system and the placement of the emotions, roughly processed by the amygdala, in an organized context.²⁰² The connection between the PFC and the hippocampus enables the brain to learn new information, compare this with prior emotional experiences and update the stored emotional memories with later experienced situations.²⁰³

A fearful stimulus or situation activates the amygdala and evokes a direct survival response.²⁰⁴ The resulting behavioural response is solely based on the sensory stimulus in the observed outside world. Regarding the dual-representation theory, the traumatic event is stored in the ‘situationally accessible memory’. Every situational detail, resembling the traumatic event evokes the same survival response as it did during the event. This is called the lower-order route for processing fearful stimuli. The lower-order route does not include the hippocampus and PFC.²⁰⁵ The sensory details are over consolidated and easily retrievable by resembling stimuli. The perceived stimulus is directly projected to the amygdala. Because the exclusion of the hippocampus and PFC in the lower-order route, the memory of the trauma and the associated environmental cues will not be updated with the present, harmless exposure to the resembling cue. Verbally accessible memories in the autobiographical memory are processed by the higher-order network, including the amygdala, hippocampus and PFC. The observed stimulus is compared to former memories and emotions by the hippocampus. In healthy individuals, this activates the PFC to regulate the initiated response and evoke socially compatible behaviour. However, in PTSD, the memories are not consolidated in a context in the autobiographical long-term memory system, but remembered by the sensory details only. Trauma memories and flashbacks are fragmented and disorganized, and the retrieval is triggered by small, sensory stimuli, such as a sound, smell or similar object perceived in the trauma.²⁰⁶ The storage of the trauma in the SAM memory system, instead of the VAM memory system causes the

²⁰² J. E. LeDoux, ‘Rethinking the Emotional Brain’, *Neuron*, 73 (2012) 4, 653-676.

²⁰³ C. Cain and R. Sullivan, ‘Amygdala contributions to fear and safety conditioning: insights into PTSD from an animal model across development’, In: J. D. Bremner (ed.), *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: From Neurobiology to Treatment* (New York 2016) 81-104.

²⁰⁴ LeDoux, ‘Emotion Circuits in the Brain’, 155-184; B. Roozendaal and J. L. McGaugh, ‘Memory Modulation’, *Behavioural Neuroscience*, 125 (2011) 6, 797-824.

²⁰⁵ C. J. Merz, B. M. Elzinga, and L. Schwabe, ‘Stress, fear, and memory in healthy individuals’, In: J. D. Bremner (eds.), *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: From Neurobiology to Treatment* (New York 2016) 159-178.

²⁰⁶ Ehlers and Clark, ‘A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder’, 319-345; R. Steil and A. Ehlers, ‘Dysfunctional meaning of posttraumatic intrusions in chronic PTSD’, *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 38 (2000) 6, 537-558.

flashbacks.²⁰⁷ The inability to recall the traumatic event with the sensory cues integrated in time and place maintains the occurrence of flashbacks. Whereas the PFC and the hippocampus enable the individual to adapt to new situations and consolidate the traumatic event in the VAM, the high emotional aroused state during the event results in cognitive processing via the lower-order route. The observed sensory details are directly associated with the traumatic event and the negative emotions.

Behavioural consequences of PTSD in Cambodia

During the trauma, and even in a short period after, symptoms of PTSD are part of the normal processing of the event. In the aftermath of genocide, feelings of anger, revenge, sadness or fear are normal. When the symptoms persist of over three months, PTSD may be diagnosed.²⁰⁸ Persistent PTSD occurs when the trauma is processed in such way it leads to a sense of serious current threat, mostly remembered by the emotions and associated sensory details. Research has linked the maintenance of PTSD to the nature of the trauma and the way it is processed by the high-order route, including the PFC and hippocampus and integrated in the autobiographical memory. However, another aspect to take into consideration is the development of maladaptive beliefs about the self and the world.²⁰⁹ Ehlers and Clark argued in their paper, proposing a cognitive model of maintenance of PTSD, the importance of the way the individual itself appraised and interpreted the trauma, the sequelae and her personal attitudes towards the trauma and the sequelae. Negative appraisals of the emotions during the trauma, or the way the individual acted may increase the negative self-image or perception of the world.²¹⁰ The negative judgments of the self and the external world generate strong emotions, such as guilt, anger, shame and anxiety. The emotions are corresponding with the symptoms found in major depression disorder or other mental disorders commonly found in combination with PTSD.²¹¹ The negative thoughts, depressed feelings and flashbacks lead to a constant feeling of personal

²⁰⁷ L. A. Zoellner and J. N. Bittenger, 'On the Uniqueness of Trauma Memories in PTSD', In: G. M. Rosen (ed.), *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: Issues and Controversies* (New York 2004) 147-160.

²⁰⁸ American Psychiatric Association, 'Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 143-149.

²⁰⁹ N. C. Hunt, *Personal Narrative and Social Discourse. Memory, War, and Trauma* (Cambridge 2000) 114-126; G. Becker, Y. Beyene and P. Ken, 'Memory, Trauma, Embodied Distress: The Management of Disruption in the Stories of Cambodians in Exile', *Ethos*, 28 (2000) 3, 320-345.

²¹⁰ Ehlers and Clark, 'A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder', 319-345.

²¹¹ American Psychiatric Association, 'Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 143-149.

distress. How the individual perceived the trauma and her personal emotions influence the way the traumatic event is dealt with. Development of persistent PTSD and other mental health issues affects the restoration of personal relationships, and thereby impede the reconciliation process. Patients make intentional efforts to suppress these emotions and flashbacks, motivating them to develop behavioural strategies to control these thoughts.²¹²

A frequently found strategy to control the flashbacks is cognitive avoidance behaviour. Patients avoid to think or talk about the trauma and suppress their feelings. Suppression, however, poorly secures the patients from intrusive, involuntary thoughts. Due to the poor integration of the trauma in the episodic, verbally retrievable memory, memories of the traumatic event tend to come back with small perceptual triggers.²¹³ The over-emphasized sensory details of the event are simpler and deeper consolidated than the broader, complete and organized view of the trauma.²¹⁴ The flashbacks and continuous feeling of personal distress confirm the way the individual remembers the trauma, even though it is not the truth. This prevents the patient to incorporate the trauma memories and emotions in the episodic memory, maintaining the PTSD, and so affect the process of reconciliation. Rumination about the event and one's actions and feelings, leads to questioning their own capability to live a normal and healthy life.²¹⁵ Rumination and pondering an event and the self are main symptoms of PTSD and major depressive disorder.

Mental health issues and the behavioural coping strategies, developed to deal with the sequelae of the trauma have negative consequences in the social and economic behaviour of the patient. Lots of PTSD patients have problems in attachment, affection and maintaining relationships.²¹⁶ These problems in social life withhold the patients from restoration of the personal relationships and influence the occupational life of the patients as well.²¹⁷ These

²¹² L. S. Elwood, K. S. Hahn, B. O. Olatunji and N. L. Williams, 'Cognitive vulnerabilities to the development of PTSD: A review of four vulnerabilities and the proposal of an integrative vulnerability model', *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29 (2009) 1, 87-100.

²¹³ Brewin, 'A cognitive neuroscience account of posttraumatic stress disorder and its treatment', 373-393

²¹⁴ Merz, 'Stress, fear, and memory in healthy individuals', 159-178.

²¹⁵ Ehlers and Clark, 'A cognitive model of posttraumatic stress disorder', 319-345.

²¹⁶ Elwood, 'Cognitive vulnerabilities to the development of PTSD: A review of four vulnerabilities and the proposal of an integrative vulnerability model', 87-100; R. A. Mowatt and J. Bennet, 'War Narratives; Veteran Stories, PTSD Effects, and Therapeutic Fly-Fishing', *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, 45 (2011) 4, 286-308.

²¹⁷ P. Rodriguez, D. W. Holowka and B. P. Marx, 'Assessment of posttraumatic stress disorder-related functional impairment: A review', *JRRD*, 49 (2012) 5, 649-666.; M. Holowka, 'Assessing PTSD-related functional impairments and quality of life', in: J. G. Beck and D. M. Sloan (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Traumatic Stress Disorders* (Oxford 2012) 314-330.

consequences leave their footprints in the Cambodian family life and domestic environment.²¹⁸ The depression and feelings of personal distress of the PTSD patients define the relationships between family members and friends. In Cambodia, people feel ashamed about their PTSD symptoms and their personal distress is not well expressed. Feelings of shame and the fear of judgment by family and friends develops loneliness and lack of security.²¹⁹ This creates a gap between themselves and their close ones. Traumatized parents are not able to provide a secure, emotional supporting environment for their children. Children of the survivors of the Khmer Rouge develop a higher risk of social dysfunctional behaviour. Households, incapable of expressing emotion and affection, make offspring more susceptible to mental health issues. Social dysfunction and the emotional distance results in the perpetuation of their own mental health disorder.²²⁰

The personal healing process is defined as a single part of the complex concept of reconciliation process. The maladaptive coping strategies and the lack of expression of the distress and negative feelings about the trauma prevent the individual to recover from PTSD. PTSD patients, especially in Cambodia, find it difficult to express their feelings. The poor attachment and absence of confrontation with and conversations about the trauma memories prevent the contextualization of the trauma in their life story. However, by reciting the event in a narrative, the painful memory is placed in a timeframe. The patient creates a chronologically schema, incorporating the fearful emotions and the sensory details in an organized story. The associative connections between the sensory triggers and the negative emotions will be reduced and prevent constantly retrieving the trauma. The narrative enables transfer of the traumatic event and the sensory triggers to the VAM system. The traumatic event will be remembered as a life event, consolidated in the autobiographical memory system. Although, the memory of the traumatic history still gives raise to negative emotions, it can be voluntary and controlled retrieved. In the European and American cultures, treatments of PTSD mostly concern shaping a

²¹⁸ R. E. Williamson, D. E. Reed, R. E. Wickham and N. P. Field, 'The mediational role of posttraumatic stress in the relationship between domestic violence exposure and peer victimization: a Cambodian sample', *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, (2017), 1-11.

²¹⁹ N. P. Field, 'Intergenerational transmission of trauma stemming from the Khmer Rouge Regime: an attachment perspective', In; B. V. Schaack, D. Reicherter, Y. Chhang and A Talbott (eds.), *Cambodia's Hidden Scars: Trauma psychology in the wake of the Khmer Rouge, An edited volume on Cambodia's mental health* (Phnom Penh 2011) 20-89.

²²⁰ N. C. Hunt, *Personal Narrative and Social Discourse. Memory, War, and Trauma* (Cambridge 2010) 114-126.

coherent narrative, placing the painful memory in context. However, reciting stories is unusual in the Cambodian tradition, which writes off the core element of the western treatment possibilities. Therapists must consider the universal and cultural aspects of coping with traumatic memory and take the social and cultural reasons why individuals form narratives into account. Appropriate PTSD treatments are important to improve the reconciliation process. The personal healing enables the restoration of social relationships and the social functioning of the patients.

Conclusion

PTSD derives from the way the memories of the traumatic event are consolidated in the long-term memory system. The traumatic event activates the amygdala, which initiates a direct response to protect the individual from the threatening, traumatic event. By excluding the hippocampus and the PFC, the memory will be integrated in a context, compared to earlier events and the behavioural response will be regulated. The memory is stored in the SAM system, where it is accessible for retrieval by small sensory triggers. This causes flashbacks; involuntary, uncontrollable, and intrusive retrieval of traumatic memories and painful emotions. The negative emotions and flashbacks have great consequences in the individual's life. The flashbacks and negative emotions associated with the event lead to constant feelings of personal distress and general anxiety. To avoid the retrieval, patients with PTSD develop avoidance behaviour and controlling strategies. Relationships, social life and occupational life suffer from this maladaptive avoidance behaviour, and in this manner, maintain PTSD.

Reduction of the flashbacks and feelings of distress can be acquired by creating a narrative of the traumatic event. Reciting the story transfers the painful memory to the VAM system and enables controlled retrieval. This way, the traumatic event is integrated in the autobiographical memory of the individual. The painful emotions associated with the event, will not be triggered by small sensory stimuli, but occur in the context of the trauma.

To conclude, the reconciliation process is partly caused by the large amount of PTSD patients in Cambodia. Personal healing and treatment for PTSD patients in Cambodia will improve the well-being of Cambodian people with psychological and mental health problems; thereby increasing their ability to function effectively within their work, family and communities. Hence, creating a stable environment to cope with the traumatic experiences and place those in the life-story.

Chapter 4 – Common Ground

The disciplines IR, CA and CNP provided various insights to answer the research question ‘how can the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process from 1979 till the present be explained in different levels of analysis?’ This chapter discusses these insights in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding (MCU). Interdisciplinary research requires an understanding of the different disciplines, otherwise conflicts and common ground (CG) cannot be found; each discipline has its own epistemology, methods, assumptions, concepts and theories.²²¹ Therefore the differences and similarities between the disciplinary insights and the causes of these differences are identified at first.

Before creating CG, the most important disciplinary insights are schematically illustrated in table 1. This table demonstrates where the insights conflict and indicates which integration technique can best solve the conflict. Some concepts and assumptions within the disciplines must be modified to create CG between the conflicting concepts. The integrative process will ultimately lead to the product of the MCU.²²²

Concept/Assumption	IR	CA	CNP	Conflict ²²³	Technique	Figure
Levels of analysis	X	X	X	Reconciliation refers to processes of different kinds of levels and the disciplines all 'work' from a different level. However, it is not clear how the different levels interact with each other.	Organization	Figure 1
Concept of reconciliation	X	X	X	All disciplines focus on a component of the definition of reconciliation as defined in the introduction. The conflict can thus be found in the fact that the	Organization	Figure 2

²²¹ Repko and Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research; Process and Theory*, 2017.

²²² Ibidem

²²³ The theory of finding and resolving the conflicts between the disciplines is based on A.F. Repko and R. Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research; Process and Theory* (Los Angeles 2017) 336-347.

				disciplines study different dimensions of reconciliation (see levels of analysis).		
Trauma	X	X	X	The disciplines CA and CNP have discussed the concept of trauma but there is not a common vocabulary to facilitate communication between the discipline since each discipline has developed its own technical vocabulary to describe the concept of trauma. Besides, it is not clear how IR is related to the concept of trauma.	Redefinition Organization	Figure 3
Memory		X	X	Both disciplines have discussed the concept of memory but there is not a common vocabulary to facilitate communication between the discipline since each discipline has developed its own technical vocabulary to describe the concept of memory.	Redefinition	Figure 4
Friction: Cambodian model versus 'other' models	X	X	X	All disciplines have discussed a certain friction between the Cambodian model and 'other' models of reconciliation, but there is not a common concept that contains this 'friction'.	Extension	Figure 5
Friction: Cambodian model versus Western model	X		X	Both disciplines describe a similar friction. However, it is not clear how the friction discussed by IR and CNP are related to	Organization	Figure 6

				each other.		
Cambodia has strong hierarchical traditions	X		X	Both disciplines have discussed the assumption of hierarchical traditions but there is not a common vocabulary to facilitate communication between the discipline since each discipline has developed its own technical vocabulary to describe this assumption.	Redefinition	-
Cambodian society has strong traditions of violence	X		X	Both disciplines assumed that strong traditions of violence are inherent in the Cambodian society. However, it is not clear where the assumptions are based on and whether they are related or not.	Organization	Figure 7

Table 1 - Most important disciplinary insights for the integration

Levels of analysis

The three disciplines all had their own focus concerning the reconciliation process in Cambodia. As explained in the introduction the concept of reconciliation refers to processes of different kinds of levels. The different levels of reconciliation (macro, meso and micro), as discussed before, are interrelated and in continual interaction, but require different research methods and disciplines because they all study different phenomena.²²⁴ As one could see in figure 1 (see next page), the disciplines used in this thesis all researched a different level of reconciliation, which implicates that these levels are also processed in the integration of the disciplinary insights (CG and MCU). This multi-layered character of reconciliation is a very significant factor when discussing the difficulty of the reconciliation process in Cambodia.

²²⁴ Ibidem

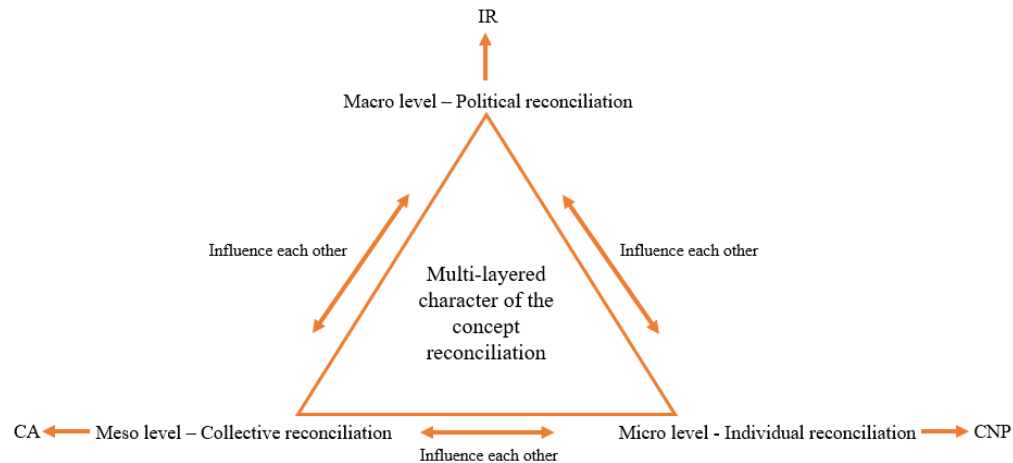


Figure 1 - Different levels of analysis

Reconciliation

The next CG we created is built upon the concept of reconciliation. As was stated in the main introduction, we have used the following definition of reconciliation:

As a backward-looking operation, reconciliation brings about the personal healing of survivors, the reparation of past injustices, the building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between individuals and communities, and the acceptance by the former parties to a conflict of a common vision and understanding of the past. In its forward-looking dimension, reconciliation means enabling victims and perpetrators to get on with life and, at the level of society, the establishment of a civilized political dialogue and an adequate sharing of power.²²⁵

We have chosen this definition as a starting point for this thesis, because it is multidisciplinary in nature and it contains themes that connect to the disciplinary research areas of IR, CA and CNP. As shown in table 2 (see next page) each discipline discussed different components of this definition of reconciliation in their disciplinary research.

²²⁵ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 19.

Component	Discipline	Content
The personal healing of survivors	CNP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How the brain processes traumatic events - Maintenance of PTSD and the behavioural consequences - Social dysfunction and difficulties in Cambodia - Treatments of PTSD mostly concern shaping a coherent narrative, placing the painful memory in context
The reparation of past injustices	CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Khmer Rouge Tribunal: ECCC = retributive justice - Traditional healers, spirit mediums, meditation and the notion of karma, compassion and forgiveness, are central to the understanding of community reconciliation of Cambodian society and all emphasize restorative ways of justice and reconciliation
The building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between individuals	IR	The rebuilding of relationships between the four Cambodian parties through free and fair elections organized by UNTAC.
The building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between communities	CA	The reconstruction of community relationships and restoration of social cohesion by means of reconciliation practices (bottom-up)
The acceptance by the former parties to a conflict of a common vision and understanding of the past.	IR	Democracy is a form of government without recourse to violence. So, to build working relationships for a democracy ‘the acceptance by the former parties to a conflict of a common vision and understanding of the past’ is necessary. The acceptance by the Cambodian parties happened by signing the PPA.
Enabling victims and perpetrators to get on with life	CA & CNP	How reconciliation can enable victims to become survivors and divided societies to transform themselves into communities where people work together and live productive, hopeful lives
The establishment of a civilized political dialogue.	IR	Related to the neutral political environment which had to be created. However, this political climate was not created by UNTAC, so instead of a civilized political dialogue, the Cambodian parties fall back in their traditions of power and violence
An adequate sharing of power	IR	The intention of UNTAC to create a power-sharing government via democratic elections

Table 2 - Different components of the definition of reconciliation, discussed by IR, CA and CNP

Although all components were covered within this thesis, the disciplinary main focuses were; ‘the building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between individuals’ (IR), ‘the building or rebuilding of non-violent relationships between communities’ (CA), and ‘the personal healing of survivors’ (CNP), as one could see in figure 2. The focus areas were connected to the different levels of analysis and therefore were in conflict, but at the same time in continual interaction with each other. By justifying that all components were discussed within this thesis (see table 2), we argue that it is not necessary to remove certain elements from the definition above. However, we are aware of the fact that our disciplinary insights do not provide a complete answer to the issue; many other disciplines can contribute in researching components of the above definition of reconciliation.

Given that all disciplines examined different phenomena, which demonstrate that the Cambodian reconciliation process has unique characteristics and follows its own route, we argue that each case must be addressed on its own terms, recognizing the contextual particularities of a society. Since we consider this as an essential part of reconciliation practices, we decided to add this aspect to the concept of reconciliation as conceptualized by the IDEA. This leads to the redefinition of reconciliation as: ‘As a backward-looking operation ... sharing of power. Overall, reconciliation discourses should always recognize the particular context in question.’

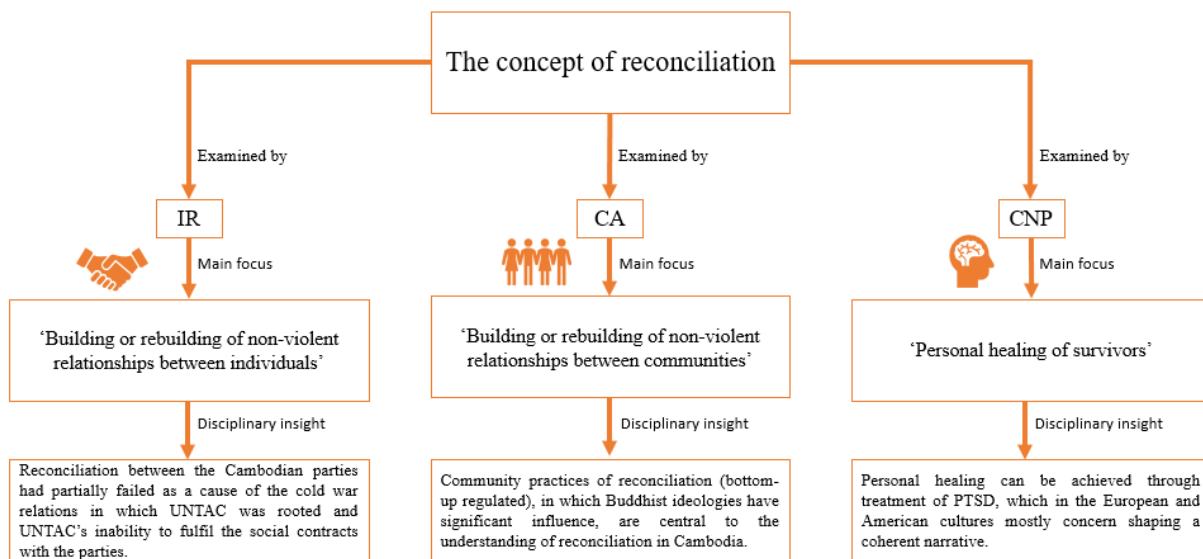


Figure 2 - Main focus areas of reconciliation examined by the different disciplines

Trauma

Both CA and CNP defined trauma as an influent complexity factor concerning reconciliation in Cambodia. According to CA, the most simple and broad understanding of the concept of reconciliation is 'the process of healing traumas'.²²⁶ Without specifically mentioning this definition, CNP also assumed that reconciliation is about the healing of traumas, because it focussed on the personal healing of survivors who suffer from PTSD. However, the disciplinary gap between CA and CNP indicates differences in the conceptualization of trauma. CNP has focused on the individual trauma which can be defined as a physical injury by exposure to a distressing event and an overwhelming amount of stress, beyond the individual's control.²²⁷ The anthropological definition of trauma goes beyond the individual and physical dimensions of trauma and extends the concept to the cultural, collective level of society. The chapter explained that a cultural trauma: 'the culturally defined and the interpreted shock to the cultural tissue of society', should be considered as more than the sum of individual suffering as illustrated by CNP.²²⁸ Indeed, people who are effected by traumatic experiences not always suffer from an individual trauma or PTSD, but still can experience a cultural trauma. So the biggest conflict between the definitions of trauma conceptualized by CA and CNP can be found in its individual (CNP) and collective (CA) character.

In order to make collaborative communication between the two disciplines possible, we used the integration technique of redefinition.²²⁹ The combination of the two insights leads to the redefinition of trauma as: a type of injury that occurs as a result of a severely distressing or disturbing event and expresses itself on the physical level and/or on the cultural tissue of society. By using the technique of organization, one could see the overlap between the two different definitions, and the new definition of trauma in figure 3 on the next page.

IR, in that matter, seems to have no direct relation on the concept of trauma at first sight, but is definitely related to the concept of trauma. IR has discussed that a democracy needs working relationships between politicians but also between communities and citizens.²³⁰ Trauma,

²²⁶ Etcheson, 'The Limits of Reconciliation in Cambodia's Communes', 202.

²²⁷ American Psychological Association, *Recovering Emotionally from Disaster* (2013), Retrieved November 16, 2017, from American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/recovering-disasters.aspx>.

²²⁸ J. Alexander, R. Eyerman, B. Giesen, N. Smelser and P. Stompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, 1.

²²⁹ Repko and Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research; Process and Theory*, 2017.

²³⁰ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 10-11.

at both the personal and collective level, effects how people interact with each other. Consequently, it withholds citizens with PTSD from the restoration of personal relationships and it disrupts social, community relationships on a larger scale. Since structures of democracy can only be implemented when there exist fair and cooperative relationships, trauma can be seen as a related concept (see figure 3).²³¹

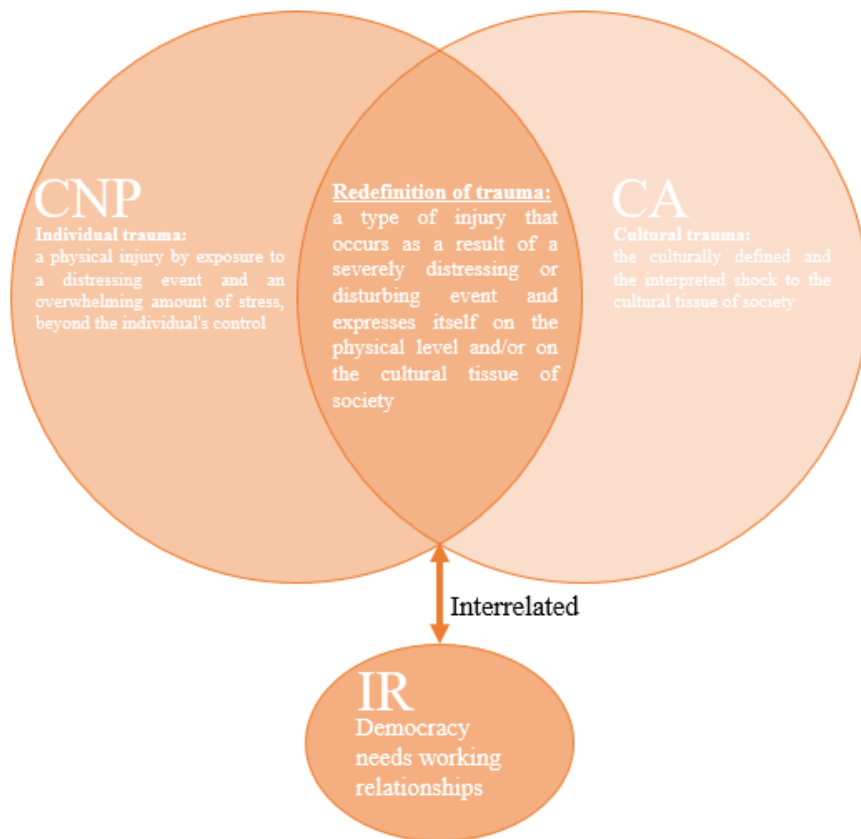


Figure 3 - Common ground and redefinition of the concept of trauma

²³¹ Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.) *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 2003.

Memory

Another CG can be created on the concept of memory which both CNP and CA discussed within their research. Where CNP discussed memory from an individual perspective and defined it as the faculty of the mind by which information is encoded, stored, and retrieved (the personal interpretation of an event), CA used the collective level of analysis and defined memory as a groups shared an 'agreed' version of past events.²³² In this sense collective memory should not be considered as the sum total of individual memory, but as a socially constructed phenomenon that is based on common sentiments, values, and the present circumstances in which a group finds itself.²³³ However, the friction between individual and collective memory is a complex discussion because there is never simply one memory, nor is there only one way to remember. To make collaborative communication between CA and CNP possible we created CG by using the technique of redefinition. Bringing the two disciplinary perspectives of memory together has led to the following definition of memory; an interpretation of a past event through the lens of an individual, as well as the perspective of a group (see figure 4).

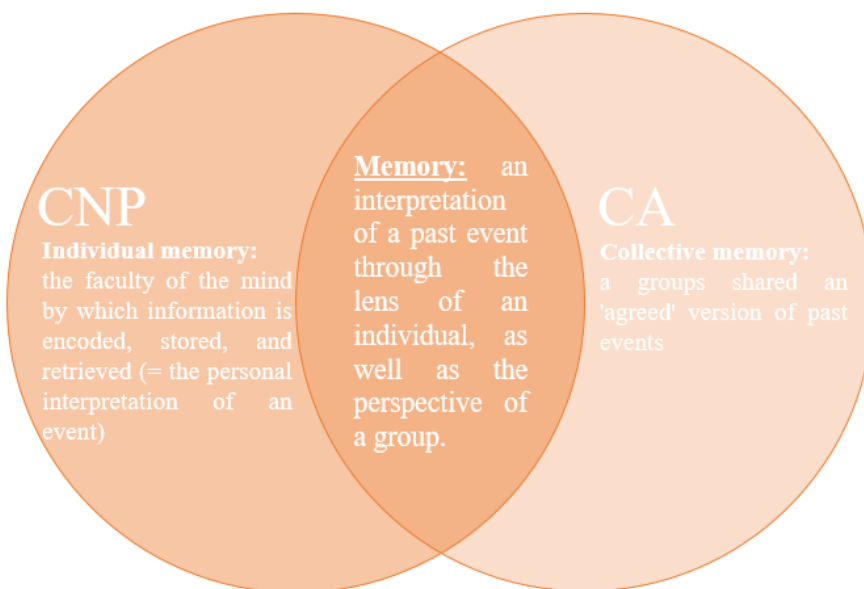


Figure 4 - Common ground and redefinition of the concept of memory

²³² Ferrándiz and Robben, *Necropolitics: Mass Graves and Exhumations in the Age of Human Rights*, 13.

²³³ Ibidem

Friction between the Cambodian model and ‘other’ models

While discussing the conflicts and similarities between the disciplinary insights we found that IR, CA and CNP all reveal a strong friction between the Cambodian model and ‘other’ models of reconciliation. CA discussed the friction between community practices of reconciliation (bottom-up), in which Buddhist ideologies have significant influence, and the more ‘common’, regulated (top-down) discourses of reconciliation. Because of the critical anthropological point of view that cultures cannot simply be compared with each other because beliefs, values, and practices should be understood from the culture where they are originated, rather than judged against the criteria of another, the chapter does not contain statements about 'the West'. To prevent generalization, CA used the notion of 'other manners' to indicate the non-compatibility in the meeting of two different rationalities. As discussed, traditional healers, spirit mediums, meditation and the notion of karma, compassion and forgiveness, are central to the understanding of community reconciliation of Cambodian society and differ from the more common, regulated discourses of reconciliation.²³⁴

Hence, there could be made strong associations with the disciplines IR and CNP. The disciplines did not specifically mention the concept of friction, but both discussed 'a non-compatibility in the meeting of two different rationalities.' The technique of extension is used on the concept of friction, which is derived from CA, to create a legitimate CG between the three disciplines (see figure 5 on next page).

²³⁴ Agger, ‘Calming the mind: Healing after mass atrocity in Cambodia’, 2015; Ledgerwood, ‘Buddhist ritual and the reordering of social relations in Cambodia’, 2012; Zucker, ‘Trauma and Its Aftermath: Local Configurations of Reconciliation in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal’, 2013.

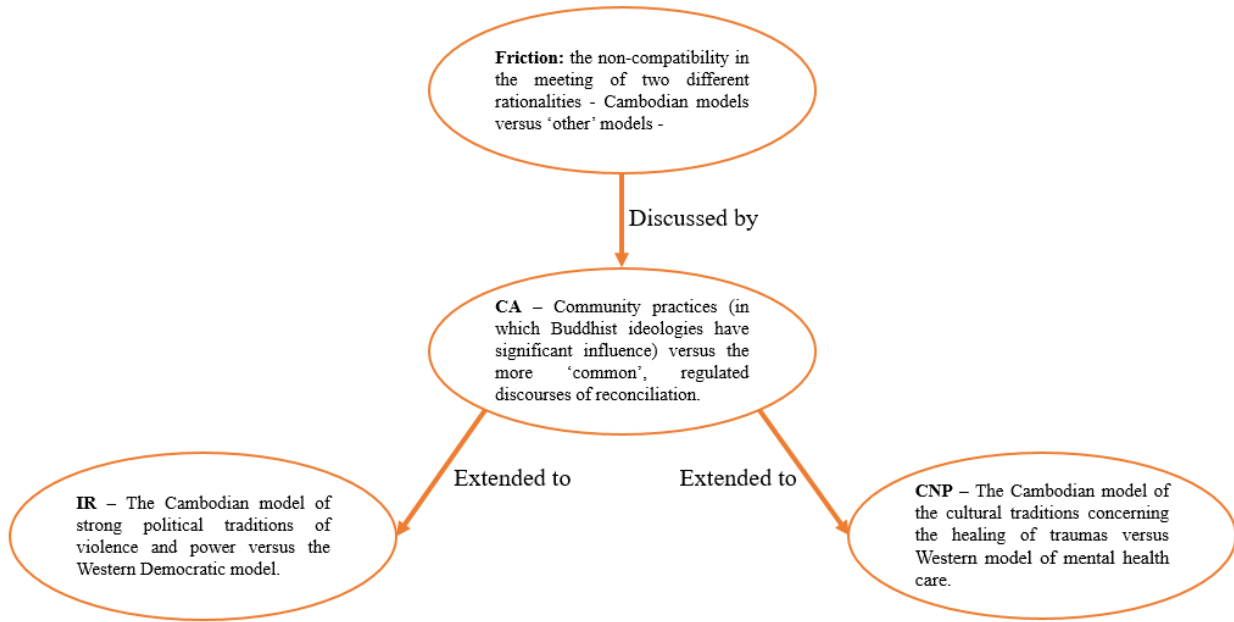


Figure 5 - Common ground and extension of the concept of friction

Friction between the Cambodian model and the Western model

When discussing the frictions within the disciplines IR and CNP, it appeared that both IR and CNP described a friction between the Cambodian model and the Western model of reconciliation. We have used the technique of organization to explain how the frictions, as discussed in IR and CNP interact with each other (see figure 6).²³⁵ In chapter one, friction is played out when a new form of government is forcibly introduced to an existing political order.²³⁶ As one could see in figure 5 and 6, in the case of Cambodia there was friction between the implemented Western Democratic model by UNTAC in Cambodia, and the Cambodian model of strong political traditions of violence and power.²³⁷ The Western model consists of democratic principles which had to transform Cambodia into a democracy.²³⁸ However, the Cambodian parties lost faith in UNTAC which caused a tension between UNTAC and the Cambodian parties. Consequently, the Cambodian parties rejected the democratic principles and

²³⁵ Repko and Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research; Process and Theory*, 346.

²³⁶ Öjendal, and Ou, 'From Friction to Hybridity in Cambodia: 20 Years of Unfinished Peacebuilding', 369.

²³⁷ Richmond and Franks, 'Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia', 35.

²³⁸ Selby, 'The Myth of Liberal Peace-Building', 66.

the Cambodian traditions of power and violence took the overhand.²³⁹ So, the main friction within IR when discussing the Cambodian reconciliation process can be found in which government model had to be implemented in Cambodia.

The disciplinary insights of CNP also exposed a significant friction between the Western model and the Cambodian model of reconciliation (see figure 6). CNP described that in European and American cultures; the West, treatments of PTSD mostly concern shaping a coherent narrative, placing a painful memory in context.²⁴⁰ It is argued that the narrative was necessary to cope with a traumatic event, following the longstanding Western methods in mental health care.²⁴¹ However, reciting stories is unusual in the Cambodian tradition, which writes off the core element of the Western treatment possibilities.²⁴² Hence, the friction was located between the longstanding Western model of mental health care and Cambodian notions of overcoming traumatic experiences. However, this overlap concerning the concept of friction in both IR and CNP should not be seen as precisely the same phenomenon. Since the discipline IR examined reconciliation at the political level, the friction that is established within these discourses of reconciliation are also political in nature. CNP, discussed the reconciliation at the individual level, in which the personal healing of a survivor is understood a therapeutic goal.

²³⁹ Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', 213.

²⁴⁰ Lane, R. D., L. Ryan, L. Nadel and L. Greenberg, 'Memory reconsolidation, emotional arousal, and the process of change in psychotherapy: New insights from brain science', *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, 38 (2015), 1-64.

²⁴¹ Hunt, N. C., *Personal Narrative and Social Discourse. Memory, War, and Trauma* (Cambridge 2000) 114-126.

²⁴² Ibidem

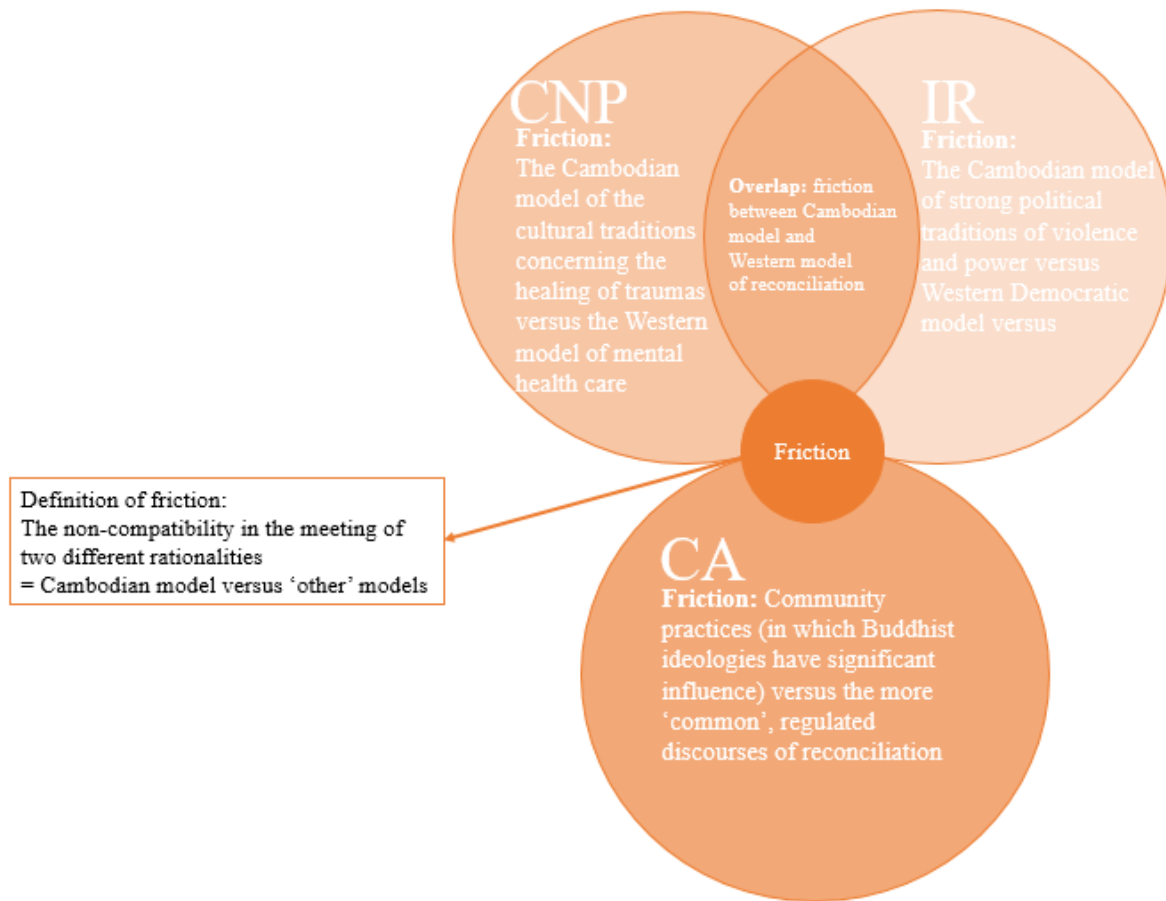


Figure 6 - Common ground of the concept of friction

Assumption: Cambodian society has strong hierarchical traditions

Discussing the various assumptions our disciplines contained, we observed that CA and IR shared a quite similar assumption concerning the way the Cambodian society and politics are organized. CA exposed an assumption concerning social classifications because it explained that Cambodian society is strongly motivated by the notion of wanting to be 'higher than' others.²⁴³ Here, strong associations can be made with IR. The strong political traditions of power demonstrated that Cambodian political environment is also build upon this notion of wanting to be 'higher than' others. Cambodian parties fought with each other, because they wanted to govern

²⁴³ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 357.

Cambodia.²⁴⁴ However, where IR focussed specifically on strong traditions of power at the political level, CA discussed the dimensions of how relationships in Cambodian society are structured vertically in terms of status.

This difference is caused by the different phenomena the disciplines study; IR holds the macro (political) level of analysis and CA the meso (collective) level of analysing the Cambodian reconciliation process. To resolve this conflict and to make genuine communication between the two disciplines possible, we have used the technique of redefinition. This leads to the shared assumption that 'Cambodian society has strong hierarchical traditions'. We have chosen the term 'hierarchical', because in a hierarchical society relationships tend to be organized in terms of both power and status; it comprehends both assumptions as found in the two disciplines.

Assumption: Dynamics of violence are deeply rooted in Cambodian society

Another observation was that both IR and CA assumed that 'dynamics of violence are deeply rooted in Cambodian society'. We have used the technique of organization to elucidate the dynamics of this assumption by visualizing the insights of IR and CA in figure 7. CA stated that Cambodian people would strive to defeat-and thus rise above-their enemy. Here the notion of violence is strongly present.²⁴⁵ In addition, IR assumed the traditions of political violence are inherent in the Cambodian society.²⁴⁶ According to CA this notion of violence is related to the central role played in Cambodian culture by the desire of revenge (*Kum*).²⁴⁷ This desire of revenge gives rise to long-standing feelings of hatred, which could be expressed in violent actions, as one can see in figure 8.²⁴⁸ However, as explained in chapter two, there exist many alternatives that place the desire for revenge in perspective, and as a result reduce violent actions.²⁴⁹ The traditions of political violence are expressed, for example, by the fighting between the Cambodian parties before the elections in 1997.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁴ Mersiades, 'Peacekeeping and Legitimacy: Lessons from Cambodia and Somalia', 213.

²⁴⁵ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 357.

²⁴⁶ Richmond and Franks, 'Liberal Hubris? Virtual Peace in Cambodia', 35.

²⁴⁷ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 352.

²⁴⁸ Etcheson, 'The Limits of Reconciliation in Cambodia's Communes', 206.

²⁴⁹ Hinton, 'A Head for an Eye: Revenge in the Cambodian Genocide', 353.

²⁵⁰ Paris, 'Cambodia and Liberia: Democracy Diverted', In: R. Paris (ed.), *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict* (London 2004) 86-87.

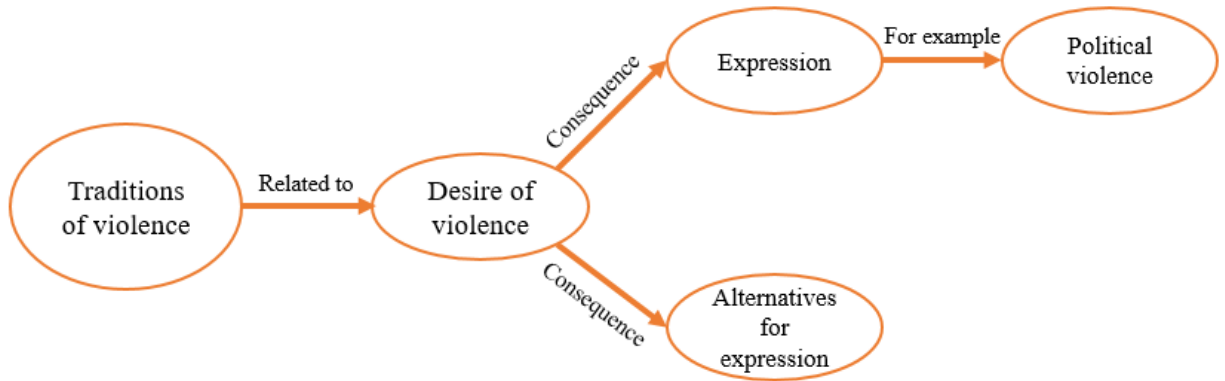


Figure 7 - Common ground of the assumption: Dynamics of violence are deeply rooted in Cambodian society

Chapter 5 - More Comprehensive Understanding

Constructing the MCU is carried out by using the created CG to integrate the various concepts that compose the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process. By means of this, a new and more nuanced whole will be created, as one could see in figure 8 and 9.²⁵¹

Figure 8 and 9 demonstrate that the post-violence context of Cambodia created the need of a system that would manage the conflict without recourse to violence. Since structures of democracy can only be implemented when there exist fair and cooperative relationships, reconciliation can be considered as an absolute necessity.²⁵² In addition, the distressing and disturbing event of the Cambodian genocide and its aftermath resulted in a high prevalence of traumatic memories. Trauma and memory are intimately connected phenomena because trauma consists of overwhelming memories that impress themselves on an individual, but also on groups through repetition compulsion. Trauma expresses itself on both the physical level and/or on the cultural tissue of society; PTSD withholds people to restore personal relationships, and a cultural trauma disrupts social bonds and undermines the sense of community.

Reconciliation, in this case, is an instrument for healing trauma. The phenomena of democracy and trauma are interrelated, because in order to establish a functioning democracy there should exist relationships in which people trust each other, and communicate and collaborate with each other in a peaceful way. In both cases - establishing democracy and healing traumas - reconciliation can be used as an instrument to achieve these goals (see figure 8 & 9).

Subsequently, when examining the Cambodian reconciliation process from the political, collective and individual level some significant friction was found between the Cambodian model and 'other' models of reconciliation. This friction is a very important factor in explaining the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process. As one could see in figure 8 and 9, this friction occurs in all disciplinary researches and thus refers to processes of different kinds of levels. Since the levels are interrelated, achieving effective reconciliation discourses (where significant frictions are eliminated), requires continual communication between theinvolved levels.

When zooming in on the Cambodian model of reconciliation we found that the strong

²⁵¹ Repko and Szostak, *Interdisciplinary Research; Process and Theory*, 2017.

²⁵² Bloomfield, Barnes and Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, 10-11.

hierarchical traditions that Cambodia appeared to have, are also problematic for the process of reconciliation. The strong and deeply-rooted relationships, that are structured vertically in terms of power and status, challenge the (re)building of relationships, and thus the process of reconciliation.

In short, the MCU explains that the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process between 1979 and the present can partly be explained by two main factors: the dynamics of trauma, which is a contributing force for reconciliation, and friction, which is played out within this reconciliation process (see figure 8 & 9). This friction complicates the process of reconciliation.

To make reconciliation discourses more effective, we argue that there should be paid more attention to the different models concerning the implementation of reconciliation practices. Actors, such as the UN, the Cambodian government, local communities and the individual all have different perceptions and expectations about the notion of reconciliation. To make sustainable cooperation between these different actors possible, the different perceptions should be taken more seriously when discussing the reconciliation process after the KR regime. In addition, reconciliation is never a theoretical matter, but always happens in a specific context. Each case, including Cambodia, must be addressed on its own terms, recognizing the contextual particularities of the society.

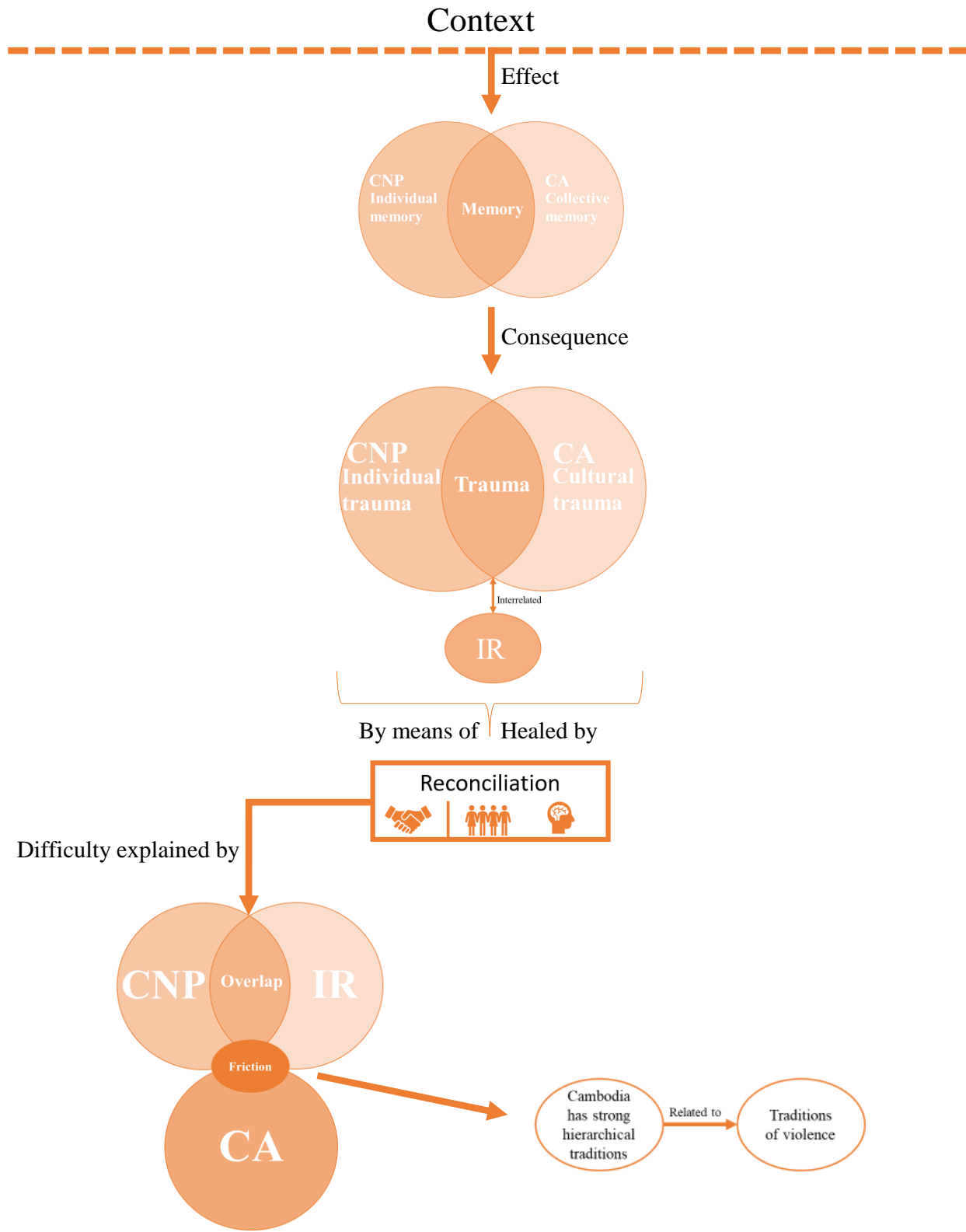


Figure 8 - More comprehensive understanding of the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process

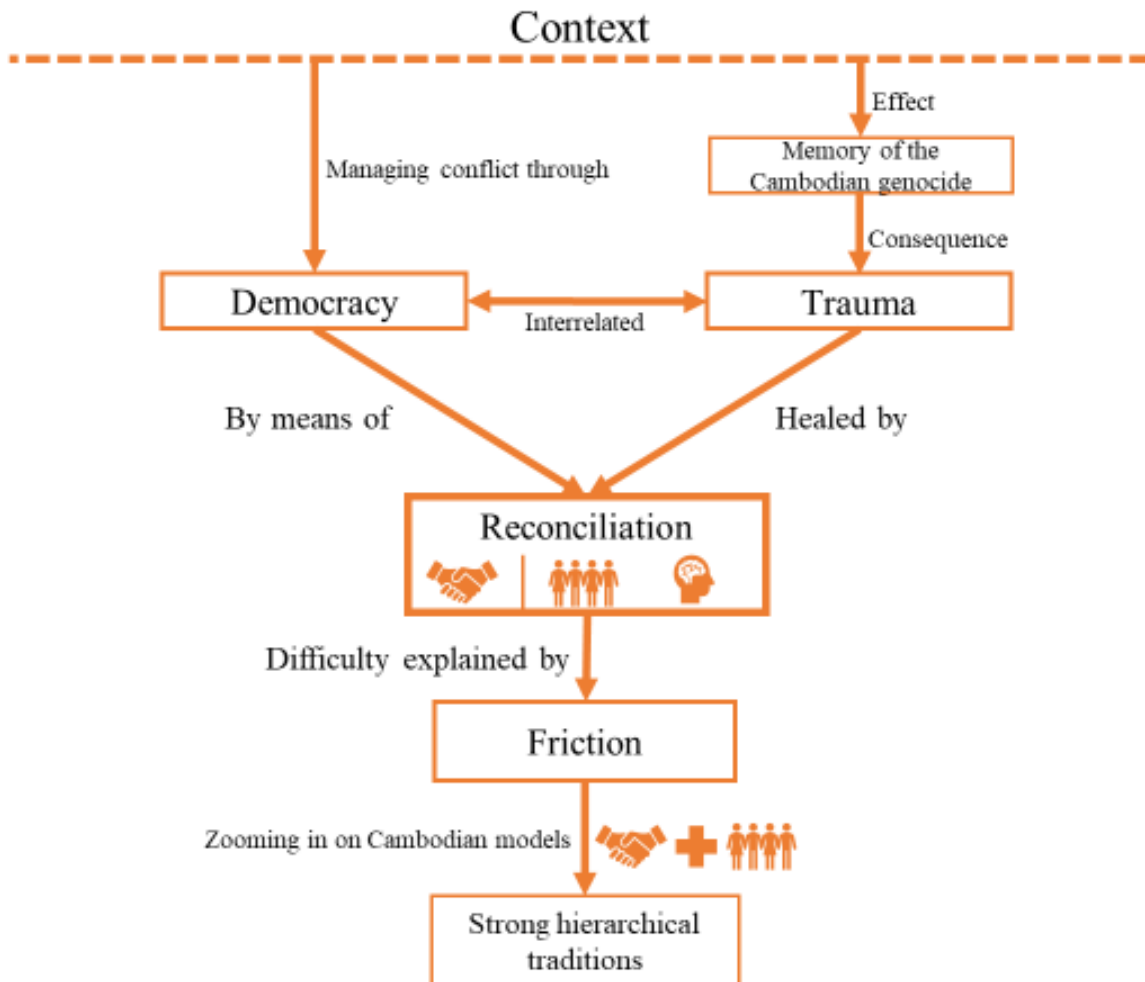


Figure 9 - Simplified representation of the more comprehensive understanding

Chapter 6 – Concluding Remarks and Reflection

Conclusion

This research has examined how the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process from 1979 till the present can be explained in different levels of analysis. The three disciplines provided valuable but diverse insights; insights that apart from each other all created a partial answer to the main question. In chapter one, IR discussed reconciliation between the Cambodian parties which eventually had failed due to the cold war relations in which UNTAC was rooted, and UNTAC's inability to fulfil the social contracts with the parties. In chapter two, CA argued that community practices of reconciliation (bottom-up regulated), in which Buddhist ideologies have significant influence, are central to the understanding of reconciliation in Cambodia. In chapter three, CNP examined that personal healing can be achieved through treatment of PTSD, which in the European and American cultures mostly concern shaping a coherent narrative.

However, these three insights alone did not answer the main question. In chapter four the differences and similarities between the disciplinary insights are identified, CG was created and this integrative process ultimately has led to the product of the MCU. The MCU presented that the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process between 1979 and the present can partly be explained by two main factors: the dynamics of trauma, which can be seen as a contributing force for reconciliation, and the significant friction between the Cambodian model and 'other' models of reconciliation.

This answer can definitely be considered as more than the sum of the disciplinary insights apart, because it is the product of an integrative process of the different insights. In addition, the various levels of analysis (political, collective and individual) all provide different perspectives on the Cambodian reconciliation process; all of which form part of the huge and complex topic of reconciliation. To make reconciliation discourses in Cambodia more effective, we argue that there should be paid more attention to both the different models concerning the implementation of reconciliation practices, and the contextual particularities of the society. However, these new insights which formed the MCU can also be considered as disadvantageous, because paying more attention to the different models and the contextual particularities of Cambodia does not signify that it accelerates the reconciliation process. Finding a pathway that meets the

requirements of all involved parties, is a difficult process that takes a lot of time. However, this thesis maintains that such an approach will ultimately have the most optimal and sustainable result.

Discussion

In the previous chapter the integration of the different insights was accomplished. It is interesting and important to point out the strengths and the limitations of this interdisciplinary research to value the overall conclusion. As stated in the introduction, the concept of reconciliation is highly complex in nature and requires an interdisciplinary approach. The MCU we provided in this thesis, however, does not comprehensively explain the difficult course of the Cambodian reconciliation process. There are countless questions that are still unanswered; our research is only an intent in this complex issue. The insights of IR, CA and CNP proved to be valuable in this case and definitely have more to offer in follow-up research. However, the disciplines also comprehend various limitations, because each discipline has its own defining elements — phenomena, assumptions, epistemology, concepts, theories, and methods — that distinguish it from other disciplines, but also limit the investigative capacities and the research field. Since each discipline discussed the Cambodian reconciliation from a certain viewpoint, they could never provide the complete picture. Moreover, many other disciplines could be valuable and contributing in answering questions concerning this theme. Disciplines such as Religious Studies, Social Sciences, Economics or Law could be important in further research.

Another limitation of our research could be found in validity factors, because the literature used within this thesis is largely based on literature that runs until 2015. Given the fact that reconciliation, as a rule, is a long-lasting process, we hypothesize that the reconciliation process of contemporary Cambodia is still operative in different domains of the society nowadays. Since there is not yet published literature concerning the reconciliation process between 2015 and 2017 we cannot ensure that the outlined situation of this thesis reflects the precise situation of the contemporary Cambodian reconciliation process. Further research is necessary to provide information about the discourse of the Cambodian reconciliation nowadays. In contrary to this research, further research should be based on fieldwork instead of literature research.

Furthermore, a critical note can be placed by the fact that the interdisciplinary research

was solely based on theories and methods of Repko and Szostak. Therefore, no comparison could be made with other interdisciplinary theories and methods. The question is whether this is a problem, since the techniques by Repko and Szostak are applied carefully and a more comprehensive understanding of this research is critically established. It would however be interesting for further research to see which other integration techniques would have been applied and what the outcomes could have been.

However, a strong side of our thesis definitely is its interdisciplinary approach in order to create a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the Cambodian reconciliation process. Another valuable aspect of our thesis can be found in its social relevance. The concept of reconciliation reveals a structure of great cross-cultural significance. After all, the reconstruction of relations in order to (re)build a lasting peace, is something that every post-conflict society is trying to achieve. However, reconciliation is integrated differently in each society. This thesis showed the importance of addressing cases on its own terms, taking into account the power of context. Each society needs to search, not for one road to reconciliation, but for paths traversing different parts of the war-torn social terrain. By demonstrating different components of the issue, this thesis provides a sufficient picture of the unpredictable, complex and long pathway that a reconciliation process can take and shows that discussing reconciliation processes in terms of 'slow' or 'fast' does not have any use. Post conflict societies or societies that are dealing with massive violence nowadays (such as Myanmar, Syria, Iraq, South Sudan, etc), could learn from a case like Cambodia, because it demonstrates that there is no short cut, or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence. Each society must discover its own route to reconciliation.

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