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บทความปริทัศน์ (Article Reviews)

Journal Article Reviews

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Jeffrey Haynes. (2009). Conflict, Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building: The Role of Religion in Mozambique, Nigeria and Cambodia. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 47(1), pp. 52 - 75.

Haynes aims to discuss negative and positive roles religion can play in conflict, focusing mainly on the positive ones. He raises questions that are relevant when as conflicts associated with religions are becoming ubiquitous: How can a sense of belonging to a religious group become a source of conflict? What are the roles of religion in conflict and peace building? Or, more importantly, what are the strategies religious organizations and religious key actors adopting roles of peacemakers use in restoring peace in broken societies? His answers to these questions give readers a clearer understanding of the religion-conflict/violence phenomenon.

Haynes starts discussing the negative roles of religion in conflict by listing out several characteristics of religion that can become a source of conflict: how most religions regard their accepted dogmas or beliefs as incontestable; how religious groups see themselves as different and, more often than not, superior than

others; and how gender inequality can be found in the ways in which religions organize themselves. He then moves on to discuss religious fundamentalism, religious terrorism and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* controversies. By not using the term 'religious conflict' in his discussion Haynes shows that he understands the complexities of the religion-conflict relationship. This is because in some cases religion is at the heart of the conflict while in others it is merely used for mobilizing people for political, economic, or social struggles.

His next discussion on religion as a source of conflict is about identity formation and politics. The best part of the discussion lies in his explanation on how a sense of belonging to a religious group and the sharing of a religious identity could function as a social boundary. When that sense of belonging becomes stronger through meaningful social interactions among individuals in the group, a real or imagined attack to the group or its identity is interpreted as a threat to the individuals as well. This sense of insecurity encourages them to preserve and defend their religion with various means, including sometimes violent ones.

His argument on positive roles of religion in conflict is illustrated with three case studies from Mozambique, Nigeria, and Cambodia. Haynes chooses these case studies for their similar characteristics: the three countries are multicultural societies with similar levels of economic development that have gone through episodes of ethno-religious violence, and in which various actors were actively involved in the peace-building processes in the 1980s and 1990s. Haynes provides a brief context for each case prior to discussing how Sant' Egidio, a Catholic lay organization of Mozambique,

Pastor James Movel Wuye and Imam Muhammed Nurayn Ashafa of Nigeria, and Somdet Phra Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia, played various constructive roles in solving conflict and building peace. These contexts no doubt help readers understand the cases. Had he done a conflict analysis and actor-stakeholder mapping for those conflict cases as well as discussing them along a conflict resolution theoretical framework or similar approach to conflict, the discussion would become much more interesting, enhancing his argument.

The strength of his article lies in its clear presentation of ideas and straightforwardness. It has a well-formulated main argument, clear abstract, and subtopics. Haynes offers a balanced view on the relationship between religion and conflict by discussing both negative and positive roles. However, the article also bears some shortcomings. Although the argument and purpose are clear and the sequence of discussion is in place, the method of data collection is not stated and elaborated in the abstract or elsewhere. The lack of theoretical underpinning is another shortcoming of this article.

Overall, the article serves as a comprehensive piece of literature on the religion-conflict/violence phenomenon and on conflict resolution and peace-building in the developing world. It also highlights other issues. For example, how the issue of human development almost always becomes an underlining issue in most ethno-religious conflicts in developing countries. To me, a Thai lecturer interested in peace studies, it also inspires various research questions. For example, how effective are religious-based organizations as peacemakers in Thailand's southern unrest as compared to their non-religious counterparts?