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Everyday Practices of Toleration: The Interfaith Foundations of Peace Accords in Sierra Leone

Joel Day
University of Southern California Center for Public Diplomacy

Abstract: Under what conditions can faith leaders influence peace in civil wars? The ongoing conflict in Congo, Syria, and Yemen indicate that faith leaders can fuel sectarian divide, but also intervene on the side of peace. Drawing on experiences in Sierra Leone's civil war, this paper highlights the role of faith leaders as moral guarantors of peace processes, with respondent former rebels indicating that without interfaith delegations personally bringing the peace accord to their remote jungle camps, they would not have trusted the UN-led process. Ethnographic analysis and over 60 field interviews with former combatants and religious leaders, presents a model for answering why faith leaders were central in terminating this conflict. Combatant's personal experience with a diverse mixture of Christian, Traditional, and Islamic leaders contributed to high confidence in peace accords, due to interfaith practices deeply embedded within the culture and shows the dispositions, rituals, and interfaith practices that provided the cultural foundations for successful interfaith intervention. The paper ends with generalizations for other interfaith groups seeking to intervene in conflict.

Introduction

Despite the growing literature on the subject, there remains an undetermined relationship between religion and conflict with a multi-directionality of signs and wide ranging coefficients. Fearon and Laitin (2003), and Collier and Hoeffler (2004) have not found a significant link between religious affiliation and conflict outbreak. Others such as Toft (2006),

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Address correspondence and reprint requests to: Joel Day, Center for Public Diplomacy, University of Southern California. E-mail: joelkday@gmail.com

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Svensson (2007), Hassner (2011), and Horowitz (2009) have found religious affiliation to be a crucial explanation of conflict dynamics. Other scholars have identified ways in which religion can contribute to peaceful mediation of conflict (Appleby 2000; Smock 2002; Gopin 2012; Hayward and Marshall 2015; Sandal 2017), though very little systematic data exists identifying the mechanisms of religion as a peace accelerant. With notable exceptions (Haynes 2009; Gopin 2012), extant explanations of the nexus between religion, violence, and peacemaking tend to abstract what religious actors actually do in everyday life, perhaps missing the connections between everyday rituals and practices and outcomes in conflict. Because of this, the field has largely neglected the deeper cultural and praxeological foundations necessary for religious interventions to spur peace and reconciliation.

This paper seeks to better understand why religion, in the case of the Sierra Leone civil war (1991–2002), was a tremendous force for peace. Through ethnographic analysis and interviews with former combatants and religious leaders, the paper presents a model for answering why faith leaders were so central in terminating this conflict. The paper offers a case study of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL) as a peacemaking force, and then traces the cultural practices that constituted culture in such a manner as to allow for the IRCSL's work to make an impact.[1] The paper thus answers a foundational puzzle under-examined by the field: What social preconditions are necessary for interfaith intervention in conflict to accelerate peace?

The sections below demonstrate that religious rituals and everyday practices of religious people had a substantial role in producing social conditions conducive for the interfaith intervention, mediation, and resolution by the IRCSL. Sierra Leone's interfaith conciliation was a framework of everyday life, a cultural foundation that everyone, on all sides of the conflict worked from dispositionally. The expectation of interfaith inclusivity in everyday life—activities such as sacred space, prayer, afterlife rituals, and rites of passage—translated to an interfaith culture being the most natural frame for peacemaking. I show how everyday practices indeed produced an expectation of a particular sort of peace processes, and, without that foundation, it is unlikely that peace accords would have worked in the same way.

After a brief discussion of methods and data collection, I organize the paper to answer two questions. First, *how* did the interfaith intervention work in Sierra Leone? This section establishes the empirical claims about the importance of interfaith intervention in the case of Sierra Leone. I

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outline three strategies and tactics employed by the IRCSL during the war, which ultimately succeeded at ushering in peace. Second, *why* did the interfaith intervention work in Sierra Leone? This section makes the case for how cultural practices constructed pathways for peace—the avenues of cultural practice that enabled the *how* of the IRCSL to make sense.

Utilizing locally established causality in the case of Sierra Leone, the paper culminates in discussion of analytically generalizable insights for faith-centered interventions writ large. The result is a three-part theoretical proposition for how extant cultural dispositions link religious interventions to successful peacemaking. First, interfaith interventions in conflict are successful when religious rituals and rites are shared and non-exclusive, fostering multiple understandings of identity and cross-cutting ties between groups. When religious culture is open and tolerant, the legitimacy of a peacemaking intervention is bolstered by the interfaith nature of the intervention. Second, interfaith interventions in conflict are successful when their coalition partners mirror the expectations of the culture. If conflicting parties have a broad understanding of religious tolerance, the intervening coalition should reflect that constituency because it creates a comprehensive platform for negotiation with multiple avenues, actors, and approaches possible. Third, interfaith interventions are successful when people expect them to solve immediate, tangible problems, as opposed to preaching salvific messages of eternity. Overall, this piece offers a theory for comparative research on religious actor intervention in conflict and presents new data to answer future puzzles on the variation of success of religiously led peacemaking.

Method & Data

To understand the social preconditions necessary for interfaith interventions in conflict to accelerate peace, I illuminate two sets of practices in the case of Sierra Leone. First, I outline the strategies and tactics of the IRCSL and established the case for their success. This frames the empirical "how" peace was achieved with the unique intervention by the IRCSL. Second, answering the theoretical "why" puzzle, I seek to understand the ways in which deeper cultural practices enabled those strategies and tactics to succeed at their aims of peace. Rituals, symbols, and practices are analyzed to reveal the production of expectations and demarcations, social power relations, and understanding of community, which constitute the combatants who accepted the peace-building intervention.

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A natural tool for such an enterprise is practice tracing, which treats the everyday of social life, or "ways of operating or doing things" (de Certeau 2011, xi) as the object of reference and then orders, dissects, and organizes them in a way that constructs those practices as units of analysis within an analytical narrative (Pouliot 2014, 250). This approach joins other work on practice in the social sciences, including conflict analysis (Pouliot 2010; Autesserre 2014) and religion (Seligman et al. 2008; Dupret et al. 2013; Whitehouse and Lanman 2014; Day 2015). As an interpretive sub-genre of process-tracing, practice-tracing is aimed at systematically organizing data to reveal social connections between social phenomena. Like process-tracing, tracing practices involve using evidence from within a case to make inferences about causal explanations within that case (Pouliot 2014, 4). And while process-tracing (Bennet and Checkel 2014) identifies a theoretically informed causal chain "between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable" practice-tracing is interested in how bundles of activities construct actors in particular ways (Pouliot 2014, 6). Without advocating a positivist framework, practice tracing also focuses the scholarly enterprise less on the ideas inside a subject's head, and instead upon the observable praxiological specificities of culture, proving an empirical foundation for claims about social construction (Dupret et al. 2013, 1).

This is an entirely appropriate approach for analyzing religion, who's impact on conflict is constitutive, rather than causal, since "religion principally shapes the identity of the actors and how they conceive of war, its meaning and content" (Hassner and Horowitz 2010, 203). In viewing social practices as the empirical foundation, this project joins bodies of work on practical theology which evaluates "what is done and what is said or professed" as a source of understanding how an object receives situations such as inter-religious peacemaking (Lozang Trinlae 2014; Swinton and Mowat 2016, 11, 13). Just as the field could stand for a more systematic treatment of identity and ideology as a variable (Abdelal et al. 2010; Sanín and Wood 2014), understanding of religious culture as a constitutive force for peace remains understudied. Focusing on underlying religio-cultural rites, rituals, and practices directs the research objective to understand what subjects think *from* rather than what they think *about* (Pouliot 2010), or, as Searle offers, looking at practice as the object of analysis casts light on "the set of non-intentional or pre-intentional capacities that enable intentional states to function" (Searle 1995).

Practices, as the focal point of data collection, center the scholarly enterprise on the bodily actions of everyday people—activities such as prayer,

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communion, burial or marriage rites and performances. Social theory from Bourdieu (1998), De Certeau (2002), and Cetina, Schatzki, and von Savigny (2005) holds that such practices forge social dispositions become the foundation on which an actor would accept IRCSL peacemaking offerings or believe the IRCSL guarantees. The larger point is that dispositional foundations come before these propositional-based outcomes like believing an adversary's promise or the decision to lay down arms.

To understand the practices of the IRCSL, and the practices within cultures of religion at work enabling those peacemaking pathways to make sense to combatants, this project utilizes standard inferential tools like interviews and focus groups, but practice tracing focuses the respondent on bodily actions, descriptive situational hypotheticals, and less on beliefs or ideology as the data of interest (Pouliot 2014). Practice tracing, as a method of social inquiry, is important, since "practices shape the opaque reality out of which a theoretical question can arise beyond the frontiers of any discipline" (de Certeau 2011, 51). This means that in order to proceed from *how* inter-religious peacemaking worked to answer the theoretical puzzle of *why* it worked, we must pursue a certain type of data—those "nodes of heterogeneous operations…implicit expectations… [and] explicit rules…" (de Certeau 2011, 55) that organize social production. I employed several methodological tactics in this pursuit. First, I conducted over 60 interviews April–June 2014. The interviews were conducted using a snowball sample and were collected in person and over the telephone. The interviews were a mixture of elites (tribal elders, members of government, religious clergy), former combatants, and victims of the war. Within the Muslim community, I primarily interacted with Sunni Muslims from the Maliki School and with many imams self-identifying as Sufis. I also spoke with several Shia and Ahmadis, primarily from immigrant communities. Salafism has not gained a large following in Sierra Leone and no respondent indicated being anything other than from the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. While I spoke to only a handful of leaders in the traditional "secret societies" where TAR is practiced, other respondents spoke of TAR and ethnic group elders participating in peace talks as representatives of traditional religious cleavages. Christian respondents included Baptists, Wesleyan and Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics, and Pentecostals. The variation in network affiliation counteracted the lack of randomness in snowball sampling, which aims to increase reproducibility and reliability. Geographical variation among respondents provides a robustness check as well: I interviewed religious leaders in towns across Sierra Leone—Bo,

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Makeni, Freetown, Kambia, Port Loko, Lunsar, Kenema, Koidu—and met with former combatants from every district.

The content of interviews posed situational questions to respondents (e.g., "When the war came to your town, how did the religious council act? Describe your religious ceremonies.") The rich levels of description attempt to go beyond propositional ideas and concentrated data on rituals and practice that I was not able to observe first-hand (Pouliot 2014). I also engaged in hundreds of hours of participant observation in religious rites of passage, religious services, meetings of the Inter-Religious Council, and informal gatherings of religious leaders. Participants were asked both about the IRCSL during the war, their role within the IRCSL or their role in combat during the war and why the Council worked, as well as a series of questions about their everyday rituals and religious practice, including prayer rituals, rites of passage, access to sacred space, and relationship with other faith communities. Subjects were assigned a pseudonym unless (1) they granted permission and (2) they held a public role in the war or the peace process. When all of these tactics were employed and the data formed a cohesive narrative, I was satisfied with the veracity of the narrative and the role that practices played to construct that narrative.

How the IRCSL Worked: The Function of Interfaith Interventions as a Peacemaking Lynchpin

A small, but powerful, literature points to the role that the IRCSL had in Sierra Leone's civil war. These are principally first-hand accounts of the author's role in the peace process and their relationship with the IRCSL (Turay 2000; Penfold 2005; Conteh 2011), and while valuable, they are less than systematic. Other literature explores the pathways religious actors create towards peace (Sandal 2017), yet applications to Sierra Leone are inferential at best. There is a generally shared understanding of the importance of the inter-religious council among practitioners, however little qualitative evidence exists to articulate the contribution the IRCSL made to the peace process.

Interviews with both religious actors and former combatants indicate that there are three principal pathways in which the IRCSL intervened in the civil war. First, the IRCSL provided for basic needs, humanizing combatants and refusing to isolate fighters from their congregations. Second, the council played a convening role for peace talks, offering

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good offices and publically pushed leaders towards talks. Finally, the IRCSL acted as a moral guarantor for the Lome Peace Accord process, at times physically taking the accords into the bush to rebel camps.

IRCSL leadership took steps to provide for the survival strategies of all combatants, humanizing all sides of the conflict, while still denouncing acts of violence. Imams and pastors would preach together while bringing food and water to town centers: "we would tell them, hey, you are not doing God's work, or Allah's work, you are just a fraud!" said a sheik from Kenema about the rebels. According to Joe Turay, a Catholic priest in Makeni, "The Inter-religious Council made a series of gestures to the RUF… They began with the liberation of the children and they could bring them food, talk to the government (on the rebel behalf)." Turay himself took part in the "kindness campaign" to be supportive of rebel "spiritual needs" so they would, in the words of Turay, "think twice before harming civilians." This basic support prevented all sides of the conflict from demonizing opponents. Usman Fornah, a Wesleyan leader in the IRCSL, agreed with this approach, saying, "we try to encourage them and console them, and convince them that they should lay down their arms and give peace a chance, so that they themselves can live in the community and live with the people."

To this day, Sierra Leoneans will refer to rebels as "our neighbors who went into the bush" (Millar 2012), a deep sign of forgiveness pointing to the pivotal model provided by the IRCSL. Over a dozen combatants told me of the kindness shown to them by leaders of the group. Some went far to say that the reason their families accepted them back into the village was because Usman Fornah advocated on their behalf and Rev. Simihafu Kassim, IRCSL treasurer and United Methodist Church pastor, "talked to the rebels as a mother." And according to Fornah, "I was playing that role among the rebels. You know, where they had violence among themselves, I was there. When they were captured and sentenced to execution, I would go and appeal on their behalf. I would say, you know, 'these are not rebels - these are not bad guys in the community.' If they (rebels) then want to set the town on fire, I would go to them and tell them, no this is not right. We conducted prayer sessions and they came to our prayer meetings, you know of course, I suffered along the road, but for me, I am thankful I live to tell the story today (because) if it were not for the intervention, this war would not have ended."

The council's persistent engagement seems to have actually reduced the levels of intensity and abuses against civilians without turning the

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civilians to armaments against the rebels. I met a man in Koidu Town, who, though a lay leader, marched Christian school-children over 50 miles to escape the rebels in 2001. On one occasion a small band of rebels came across the group and the man said to them, "hey, these are God's children. You need to let us go, or the Council will just come and free them and you will be in great trouble!" The rebels let the entire group go. Providing nurture and guidance to rebels humanized their plight without legitimizing it and also created room to bargain for peace.

The IRCSL also played a convening, good offices role for peace talks. Bishop Biguzzi, the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Makeni Diocese, who played a key role in founding the IRCSL, was keenly interested in bringing together religious leaders to put pressure on all sides to engage in peace talks. Lutheran Bishop Tom Barnett of Aberdeen engaged in several missions with Biguzi, Fornah, and many Imams into the bush to speak with the rebels and negotiate peace. According to the Bishop, "we knew that we were the only ones that they could trust. So Biguzi, myself, and several Imams all took ourselves into the bush. We sat on the ground, brought food, cared for their sick, and then we talked to the leaders." It was this interfaith nature of the IRCSL that swayed leaders from all sides to trust them as guarantors of the peace process. According to the priest Joe Turay, "so we get together, Christians and Muslims, and they knew they were mutual in the sense that I mean, they could talk on behalf of their people, their constituency. Both sides of the story, both the RUF and the government forces trust them. That they have no interest… their interest is the common good." Turay continued, "And as moral guarantor to the peace process, their role was crucial to bring both sides to dialogue and talk about issues. And that is exactly what they did."

These talks proved so effective that the RUF invited the IRCSL to preliminary meetings before the formal negotiations. The group met directly with junta leader Johnny Paul Koroma to urge him against targeting civilians and to negotiate—even while he refused to meet with any other civil or international organization. The group also met with rebel leader Foday Sankoh throughout 1999 in order to convince him of the legitimacy of UN-led talks and urged him to cooperate fully with peace negotiations. Many report that Sankoh's May 1999 ceasefire directive was a direct result of interventions by the IRCSL. Then, as formal talks got underway, the council's main strategy was to remain neutral and to act as a facilitator. Their goal was to build confidence and trust between talking parties. In

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moments when the parties failed to see eye to eye on certain issues, such as power-sharing and withdrawal of ECOMOG, the Council members turned to public prayer and preaching (Penfold 2005). Barnett remembered how, when the RUF was about to walk away from the talks he stood up, and just began preaching to them, saying "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Not Salone, Heaven!" Dozens of such accounts manifest in interviews—the IRCSL defaulted to preaching, praying, and exhorting to prevent hard-line spoilers from gaining legitimacy, while also simultaneously preventing Sankoh and Koroma from leaving the negotiating table. Throughout the 6 weeks of negotiations, from May to July 1999, Sankoh and the RUF refused to meet with other parties unless the IRCSL was present, according to three leaders of the group who were present at the negotiations.

Finally, the IRCSL's broad constituency—tribal elders, imams, pastors representing every aspect of the country—positioned the IRCSL to actually have the only remaining infrastructure to deliver aid and assist in Lome Accord implementation. After the Lome Accords, the IRCSL "organized the free distribution of thousands of copies of the agreement to civil society groups and local and international NGOs. It also continued to reach out to the civil populace and the rebels, primarily through biweekly 'experience-sharing' sessions on various themes of the agreement" (Turay 2000). These civic-engagement sessions provided a robust forum for discussing implementation issues. Several formal rebels confirmed in interviews that the IRCSL forums created the trust necessary to implement demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of the RUF because they explained what the accords formally entailed and provided a safe space for everyone to share their experiences.

The Council was not without detractors and I encountered narratives criticizing religious actors' engagement in the peace process. Wesleyan and other evangelical leaders pointedly criticized the role that tribal chiefs and traditional leaders played in the IRCSL, maintaining that such affiliation muddied the "holy" nature of the mission. However, the legitimacy of the IRCSL was based less upon ideological or theological positions, and instead upon the breadth of participation. The criticism I heard was less from former combatants or witnesses of war, and more a side comment from the evangelical wing of the Council. In other words, while I heard internal consternation about the diversity of the coalition, the external reception of the IRCSL was war precisely because everyone could see the religions working together to achieve peace. Many respondents indicated that had the coalition been more stridently

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evangelical, the enterprise would have failed. Religiously driven narratives were thus not a significant barrier to success. Instead, the challenges for the IRCSL were largely logistical—gaining access to meeting rooms, garnering those good offices necessary to force peace talks.

The *how* data show an important social fact, namely, that the IRCSL was instrumental in peacemaking, with many respondents articulating a causal link between Council actions and the Lome Peace Accord outcome. This in itself offers peace studies and religious peacemaking scholars an important case study with descriptive data on the process pursued by religious actors in a particular conflict. However, the deeper question about *why* these moves worked remains the central puzzle of the rest of this paper. Below sections trace the dispositions, rituals, and practices that constitute the foundation on which the interventions of the IRCSL made cognitive sense.

Why the IRCSL Worked: Cultural Practices and Constructed Pathways of Peace

On my third day in Sierra Leone, a friend and I hopped on the back of a motorcycle taxi and sped across town. Muhammad, the young bike driver picked us up, and, as we sped through the Freetown suburb of Aberdeen, I heard the call for Islamic prayers ring out from a mosque. My friend shouted over the hum of the motorcycle: "Muhammad, why you drive now? Shouldn't you be at prayers?" He responded: "Oh, my mother was a Muslim, so I'm Muhammad. But my father – he was a Christian." I followed up: "And what does that make you?" He laughed: "Well… Both."

Sierra Leone presents a case where many people indeed not only believe, but practice, a mixture of Islam, Christianity, and Traditional African Religion. "Despite their spiritual differences, the two faiths have coexisted in a spirit of tolerance and harmony to a degree rarely seen elsewhere and setting an example for other countries to follow." (Penfold 2005, 54).[2]

The work of the Inter-Religious Council certainly inspired peace and the data indicate a causal connection between rebels signing the Lome Accords and the actions of IRCSL. But upon what social foundations did this arise? Why was an interfaith intervention a necessary component to achieve an accord? Some might argue further that mental states and propositional goal-seeking, such as being receptive to a peacemaking

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intervention, are inherently contingent upon unthought dispositions since practice is the site of social competence and judgment. Therefore, it is necessary to look here to see the constitutive fabric of culture at work forming acceptance of peacemaking actions. As Schatzki summarizes, "connections and orders among mental conditions, consequently, are laid down in practices" such that the structure of mental being is established not by intrinsic substance, but by social practices. This orientation allows a researcher to reflect on the constitutive fabrics of peace and why one form of intervention, as opposed to others, "clicked" with a population in conflict. Practice turns our attention to what people are doing with their bodies in everyday activity as a means to understand how they receive propositions, such as a peace proposal. As Schatzki argues, "inter-relations and patterning" should be conceived of as "socially instituted," via social practice (Schatzki 1996, 2), meaning that such practice-oriented data is necessary to answer any puzzle about *why* and actor in Sierra Leone chose to follow the prompts of the IRCSL. If bodies are the places where these conditions are played out, scholars should prioritize descriptive data that tells us about bodily practices and the conditions of culture a priori of mental states such as "choice" to sign onto an agreement.

Below, I identify two sets of social practices that I find conditioned actors in such a way as to be receptive to interfaith peace initiatives. First, the extent to which sacred spaces were shared and co-inhabited by a mixture of religious traditions, and second, the co-mingling of ritual rites of passage. Sierra Leonean incorporation of Traditional African Religion, Christianity, and Islam established a social expectation or baseline for how one is to behave competently as a person of faith, which served as a central constitutive foundation for the work of the IRCSL. My argument is that the strategies discussed above within the IRCSL were received precisely because of this extant social practice, which, through everyday ritual "fused" actors to a broad, bridged community (Whitehouse and Lanman 2014) and established the expectation that peacemakers would work from a similar "bridging ties" framework (Sen 2006).

Shared Space and Scripture

Sierra Leone culture has no clear demarcations of sacred space between Christian, Muslim, or TAR boundaries.[3] Leaders within the IRCSL

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regularly invite congregants of alternative religions to practice within the halls of their own churches. For example, when I visited the town of Port Loko, one man told me that the local church was burnt down in the war and the Imam then hosted weekly Christian services in the mosque every week. Leaders from the IRCSL—Archbishop, pastor, Imam, and Sheik alike—all told me that they regularly open their houses of worship to one another. I came to Bambuna with a local educational supervisor, asking the Paramount Chief about the school population. This particular Chief was incorporated into the IRC's peace process and we discussed at length how religion is practiced in the remote area. "You have both Christian and Islamic schools," he said. "We all go to each school – Islam and Christian, Anglican, Catholic. We all get along because we all worship the same God. God is God, who is different in different places. Shia in some, Baptist in other. But we say, be as you are." The Chief then told a story: His father, the former Paramount Chief was a devout Muslim, but he allowed the Baptists to build their church and allowed locals to go to church. "When I became Chief," he smiled and pointed across the street from his house, "I built a Mosque, but I am a Christian – I went to school at the Baptist church that my father let be built." The same leaders who promote and encourage interfaith sharing of space—even co-practicing in the same buildings—are the exact leaders in the IRCSL who played a crucial role in stemming the conflict dynamics of civil war. Dozens and dozens of respondents indicated to me that one of the proudest aspects of Sierra Leone national identity is the radical sharing of sacred space.

In a recent visit to Sierra Leone, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion, Heiner Bielefeldt, recalled how he was amazed at the level of shared prayer and public tolerance. He noted in awe that a Christian person when their church is overcrowded he might well decide to go to a mosque to pray. "Such a statement, which in many countries would be fairly unusual or even unthinkable, seems rather indicative of the tolerant situation in Sierra Leone," he stated. "Likewise, Muslims told me they have no difficulty to pray in a Christian church." (News 2013) Regarding the IRCSL, leaders embrace and promote the practice of shared prayer. I noted in their meetings that Muslim leaders would bow their heads during Christian invocations. During a focus group I conducted, I asked Sheiks from around the country whether they were actually praying or just showing respect. Of the 10 Muslim leaders in the group (a self-described mixture of Hanafi Sunni, Sunni from the Sufi tradition, and Ahmadi), nine indicated they

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were praying following the Christian's lead. Joe Turay, a Catholic priest confirmed this trend in mainstream religious circles: "Well I would say that even now, we even see that at Christmas, during festivities, our Muslim neighbors will come and pray with us in our church. And then during their own festivals, during the month of Ramadan, we will go and pray with them."

I also found evidence that parishioners also practice faith with pliable and open boundaries of inclusion and welcome, following their IRCSL leadership. According to a Catholic congregant for example,

> even if you are six in a community if you believe a particular denomination, you are free to go about your worship. Nobody questions you. Even if you are six, if there is a program that you want the majority, the Muslims or the Christians denominations, and you want them to join you in prayer, in worship, in a ceremony, they will join you! You will pray together. And when you are praying they will go to their different churches or different mosques.

It was based on this goodwill and friendship, leaders from around the country came together in the first meeting of Islamic and Christian leaders in the fall of 1989. As the story goes, the meeting opened with both a Christian invocation and a Muslim prayer, and then alternated speakers. This meeting was so widely hailed as a success, leaders promised one another that follow-on meetings would follow this convention. Such was the practice throughout the last several decades of the group's existence, even when it formalized itself into the IRCSL in 1997. Built into the fabric of the organization was thus a pluralistic emphasis on deference and respect to the other, with absolutely no privilege paid to one group over another. I witnessed the interfaith movement first-hand when I attended a formal conference of the Inter-Religious Council in Makeni. Seated in a sticky-hot gymnasium, about halfway through the conference, an elder Catholic priest marched up to the podium, and before his speech to his peers, ordered all to stand up and stretch.

For 15 minutes, I exercised with the top Islamic and Christian leaders in the country, altogether doing arm 'windmills,' jumping jacks, and side-lunges. After we all sat down, the priest began a lecture: "Muslim friends, A salam alaikum! [Alaikum a salam]. Christian friends, may the peace of the Lord be with you! [And also with you]. We must not take it [pluralism] for granted, we must build on it." The message continued around the theme: "there is no compulsion in religion"[4] which the priest

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continued by talking about how God, "created man into nations and tribes so you can better understand [God]…we know God better by knowing each other. The Universal Ummah, and the Body of Christ are hallmarks of universal welcome. Because religion is a religious prerogative, we must watch out for each other's freedom. We should be each other's keeper. We should inspire people to show love and reject discrimination." After breaking into applause, the priest led the audience in a series of songs—to which each group knew the words of the other's. First, he began with an Islamic incantation (which he led), the Christian anthem, which each of the Sufi/Sunni and Shia Muslim leaders also knew by heart. Afterward, I assembled an hour-long focus group totaling 15 leaders from different denominations. I asked about the types of groups that would be allowed into the Council, and almost all laughed or giggled at me, saying that all Buddhists, Bahai, and "even Jews" would be welcome, "even if there were only one." The group expressed a general welcome for all types of traditions, as illustrated by a one leader, using 'God' and 'Allah' interchangeably in the focus group, "God has as many faces as there are people in the world… we see Allah through the consciousness of our own hearts. If we cannot accept our differences, then we hate God who created us."

In over a dozen separate interviews with IRCSL leadership, I was told how a majority of people in Sierra Leone interpret scripture in a way that gives credence to both traditions. Indeed, I found some evidence that the Quran is read as a legitimate liturgical source in Christian services. This radical overlap in scriptural practice between Muslim and Christian groups is evidenced by the general ways in which educated locals talk about central elements of their faith: "The two faiths, the two books. The Koran and the Bible share so much in common. There are very, very, few, few differences, it is almost the same. The Old Testament and the Koran. It is only the New Testament that is different, 'cause you know, the New Testament is all about Christ. And the Apostles. And for the Old Testament, it talks all about the Prophet. And it is the same that you find in the Koran."

I approached a local Christian priest to ask about this phenomenon, who responded with an even deeper layer of syncretism. I asked, "How do you think that happened? How come there is such a strong inter-religious, special nature of Sierra Leone?"

> That is a good question. Maybe I will say the dynamics of how we have integrated Traditional African religion into the mainline religions… You

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> have people who are Christians, but they are not afraid to go to the witch doctor. (laughs). They will go to the Mass on Sunday, then they will go to the Ju Ju man, and the Ju Ju man will pray for them, and they will see nothing wrong in that. Then they will go back to their church and they will pray and give thanks to God. To put it crudely, whatever works for them and their god. I mean, polygamy in terms of Islam, has woven itself firmly into Islam as far as traditions. So you go to weddings, Islamic marriages, you think of Islam, but it is traditional religion, woven into Islam. I mean, they have been able to integrate that.

"Do you think that there is truth in the Koran, too?" I asked to see the priest's reaction and willingness to incorporate other texts into his worldview. He did not pause:

> Yes definitely. It's about God's reign. Which I presume, even in the Koran, is a reign of peace. It's a reign of Justice. It is the reign of God. But again, it depends on how people interpret the reign of God. We can impose that and give people our own kingdom instead of the word of God.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these broad interpretive frameworks and ecumenticalism were shared by all constituencies in the war, including rebels. Foday Sankoh, rebel leader, reportedly directed his commanders to pray over their camps, holding ceremonies with Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, and traditional incantations. Sankoh's political capital with the rank and file was raised through these ecumenical daily practices. When respondents were asked the counterfactual "what if Sankoh had directed only one sect's prayers?" leaders from the IRCSL emphatically believed that he would have lost followers and trust with the broader population.

The broader argument here is that shared practices matter in forging the social preconditions for peacemaking. As many social theorists have poignantly argues, broad-based, non-exclusive associative social arrangements form the foundations necessary for conflict de-escalation and peacemaking (Seul 1999; Phan 2003; Varshney 2003). The findings in Sierra Leone indicate that non-exclusive interpretative approaches to scripture that predominate build dispositional expectations about where legitimate peacemaking comes from—namely, broad-based non-exclusive groups. In the case of Sierra Leone, the widely accepted institutional architects of peace were those same actors who embody those open interpretive scriptural practices in religious culture.

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Rituals and Rites of Passage

At some point between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, clerics, traders, pastors, and armed conquerors brought Islamic practices to the West African coastal subregion, and my respondents in Temne and Limba tribes in the north indicated that their oral tradition quickly incorporated the new faith into a range of local religions and tribal rituals, especially those relating to the afterlife, the spiritual role of ancestors, death, and witchcraft. According to a Makeni Catholic priest, his own mother would both pray on Sunday and consult witches and tribal faith healers:

> The Christian faith and the Traditional African Religion, the dynamics between the two, we see it playing out in our own lives in our own families. My own brother (laughs) he had sickle cell anemia. My mother, would go to the Ju Ju man, and ask him to pray for my brother, and he would use the African incantation, and I mean, combine everything. And at that age, I was frowning at my mother, saying 'how can you, you are a Christian.' - and then I learn to be sympathetic to my mother. She is bringing her own worldview to Christianity and who am I to condemn?

Thus, in afterlife practice, traditional beliefs are broadly tied together with Christian mainline denominational practice, in addition to widespread Traditional African Religion infusion with Muslim practices of death and divination. In every community I visited, respondents within the churches and mosques led by IRCSL-affiliated pastors and sheiks, would tell me that "debuls" or jinn, explain windfalls or failures of both the individual and community. There is the widespread practice of honoring ancestors, who are the owners of the village, not the living. It is thus common to see people paying homage to dead relatives no matter their faith: they leave rice at the door for an ancestor to show respect. And this is seen as entirely consistent with the major religions. Within this context, I asked a young man whether his church taught about judgment of non-believers:

> Both books talk about judgment. Both books talk about resurrection. You go to the Muslim faith and they tell you that judgment after. The only difference seems to be the traditionalists they don't believe in these things. When somebody dies, that's it. They are dead. But for these two religions: the Christian religion, the Muslim religion, for sure. They will tell you about resurrection and they will tell you about judgment…

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The practice of inclusion within the area of afterlife is apparent here even as the respondent talks about social beliefs. The respondent's own beliefs are framed within a socio-cultural practice of inclusion, which impacts how one competently talks about personal beliefs. In further conversation with almost 20 pastors and sheikhs from around Salone who each participated in the IRCSL during the war, not a single one believed a member of the other religious tradition would go to hell. The closest that one Wesleyan member of the IRCSL came to this was to remark, off the cuff, that Christians should not participate in TAR, but when I pressed him on which practices should be avoided, he just smiled and said, "Yes, God does work in mysterious ways."

Important moments in life—holidays, baptisms, births and burials, are all shared by the community regardless of one's particular faith. As a pastor told me,

> At Easter, you see Muslims going to the beach, together with Christians, to celebrate together. The same thing happens at the end of the fasting period, where there is occasion for Muslims to invite the Christians. It happens even for marriages. When it comes to marry(ing) you see a Muslim – they come to church.

Catholic Priest, Joe Turay, like all IRCSL pastors, will preside over the weddings of Muslim and Christian couples.

> So the priests who come from Muslim parents, though people will criticize and say it's our own type of Muslim-Christian religion, that we are not strict, that is what people will say. But I would, yeah, say, it is our own brand of religion. Our own brand of Christianity and Islam. And it is a tolerant Christianity.

Other rites, like baptism, are incredibly fluid. "Early on, before the war, there was a real problem with religious groups forcing conversion. In order to attend school, children had to convert." This posed quite a problem since the closest school might be more than a day's walk away. A Christian teenager thus living, eating, sleeping, bathing, talking, being in a Muslim community, away from one's support network and family was hardly a Christian for long. The daily practices and rituals of religious school provided a social incentive of conversion. Yet, once the rainy season ended, and school-kids were expected back in the farming commune, they might very easily still practice the local

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traditional faith or Christianity. This was neither a secretive or forbidden process—it was pragmatic.

As schools became more prevalent, especially in the West, the choice was less about travel time and more about which nearby school's fee structures were most cost-effective. Often school-children converted back and forth from Islam to Christianity from academic year to academic year. Local boy Fasluku might come home "Andrew" and continue living a double life: Fasluku to Muslims and Andrew to Christians. Such was the case with my own gate-keeper at my house—to me he spoke as "Lawrence," but to the local neighbors, he was "Abado." The fluidity of religious rites of passage, like conversion, indicates an incredibly inclusive set of religio-cultural practices. Throughout the 2014 meeting of the IRCSL and in my focus groups, pastors and imams both kept referring back to the high levels of intermarriage between faiths. Over and over, respondents would say that violence can be prevented by the practice of intermarriage—indicating that the practice of intermarriage is at the very core of culture and constructs the logic of social relations. What's more, these practices were shared by all sides of the conflict, providing a practical bridge of commonality—a central cultural bedrock—from which the logic of peacemaking through interreligious mechanisms was natural and virtually uncontested. The peace process worked because it was built by actors that embodied interreligious everyday cultural practices.

Alternative Explanation: Ideas

While I find above that to everyday practices structure the preconditions for peace accords, an alternative explanation is that ideas, doxologies, liturgies, and belief in certain principles are perhaps more important to the outcomes in question. For example, in order for the tactic of convening good-offices to work, participants must have a shared, preexisting foundation for trust and respect. Those ideas come from somewhere. Ample literature in religion and conflict indicate that theologically inspired ideas can prove consequential in motivations toward forgiveness (Escher 2013), generating empathy, nonviolence, and pacifism (Gopin 1997), framing of conflict in cosmic terms (Juergensmeyer 2003) or belief in an afterlife which elongate time horizons leading to more severe outcomes (Toft 2006).

While ideas certainly matter, fieldwork seemed to support the notion that ideas were far more structured by practices set in culture than by liturgies or theologians. The explanation of "this is who we are and what we

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do" was far more apparent than "this is what we believe." Such observations align with everyday practices as an encompassing political phenomenon in terms of meaningful patterns of action, or "bundles of ideas and matter that are linguistically, materially, and intersubjectively mediated" (Adler and Pouliot 2011, 13). Practice thus places religious ideas within the larger milieu of "public theologies created, spread, and consolidated by religious and political institutions" (Sandal 2012). In other words, theological ideas cannot be separated from the social, institutionalized world in which they are situated. In this manner, embodied practices are revealed in the public arena where culture and spiritual mentality (ideas) are fused: thus it may be impossible to fully extricate the observable action of sharing sacred space and ideas entwined with that action. When observing a practice, one observes how theologies of Doxa are systematically performed in common space: in the case of Sierra Leone, the core ideas performed as public theologies included shared rituals and rites.

Though fields of practical and public theology point to the difficulty of extricating ideas from practice, I attempted to understand if core ideas were motivating in the peace process as I describe above.[5] One of the key areas where Sierra Leoneans could highlight the role of ideas uniquely over practice is in theological conflicts with competing denominations such as Hanafi versus Salafi doctrine. For example, some respondents spoke of the concern they had of Salafist mosques rising in East Freetown and Fourah Bay. In a series of focus groups I conducted in Makeni, over a dozen Islamic leaders talked about "new" types of Muslims coming in and setting up mosques that do not allow Christians to pray, do not allow intermarriages, and enforce a particularly hard-interpretation of the Quran, Sharia, and Hadith. "There are sources of religious intolerance in this country," said an elderly Sheik from Waterloo. "These are the Islamic missionaries." Another continued the thought "Salafi extremists are saying that Sufi and Shia practices are *not* Muslim. I am Sunni, but this is not right!" This statement excited the group in agreement, almost all of whom indicated that they had interacted with missionaries from Saudi Arabia in recent years. The central concern articulated was the exclusionary nature of the Salafi school, closing off access to Christians and preventing inter-marriage. The ideas here are not that extremists do not belong, per se, but that their exclusionary teachings impact the open and tolerant practices enshrined in the shared public theologies that the leaders had come to expect, such as intermarriage.

Even trained religious leaders indicated acceptance and tolerance activities as the lens by which they interpret theological ideas. Catholic

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Archbishop Timba-Charles, perhaps jokingly, told me that he was a Muslim in practice "sometimes" but Christian in belief. Talking about how he has allowed Muslims use Catholic churches for prayers, he said it was important to empower and "build up" neighbors of a different faith so that nobody in the community would perceive him as excluding anyone. The logic of practicing acceptance as inherent to Sierra Leone identity was clear:

> And this is not a, 'we don't take our religion seriously' – we do! We believe that theologically the God who made us is a God who respects diversity. Therefore it would be against the spirit of that God to go and look at the other person and harm him in the name of God. That is not acceptable. That is our message. This is our export. But we don't yet have the container to carry it, or the vessel to take it across!

Lay individuals, and especially former fighters, that I interviewed displayed very little interest in ideational explanations for peace outcomes. Instead, the most common reasoning for why people trusted the clergy was because they engaged in the process *together*. When pressed about the 'reasoning' for the interfaith leadership and broad acceptance of religious difference, respondents deferred to 'the Sierra Leone way' and 'that's what we do'—perhaps pointing towards a public theology of everyday tolerance—bundles of symbols, practices, and performances, rather than purely action inspired by belief. The reasoning, for leaders and lay, for the foundations of the peace process, consistently pointed to performance and dispositions of acceptance, rather than ideology scoped from religious text. For instance, a former combatant in Port Loko told me that inclusion is 'just what we do in Salone' and that people believed in the interfaith lead peace process because 'it fit the Salone way.' These explanations diminish the role that religious ideas (e.g., peacemaking, the golden rule, etc) especially when paired with Christian respondents who told me that the Quran was a 'legitimate liturgical source' (even quoted during a Christian burial ceremony) and Muslims who know Hail Mary prayers by heart. Perhaps most problematic for any pure ideational based explanation is that the bridging practices observed are not based on any new ideological perspective—not a single person I spoke to a cited Sierra Leonean theologian, philosopher, or thinker who influenced their views on tolerance. There is very little indication that national religious leadership is committed to articulating any interfaith Doxa or building a theological intellectual foundation to support their public

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practice. Respondents, from Wesleyan to Catholic, Sunni and Shia, and TAR from various tribes indicated they were not following a different orthodoxy than believers in other countries, but simply that they have a greater tolerance for difference in Sierra Leone. For all these reasons, a purely ideational explanation for peace in Sierra Leone should be set aside in favor of a more holistic practical theology explanation with practice as the key observable way to access, document, and describe how theology plays out in everyday life.

Theory-Building: How Religious Cultural Dispositions Matter in Conflict

Rich descriptions of religio-cultural practice provide a locally established social causality. Practice-based methodology instructs that this local causality can then be leveraged with the aim of producing generalizable insights (Pouliot 2014). There are three straightforward arguments that generalize from the locally causal 'why' the IRCSL intervention worked. First, that bridging practices and multiple points of shared identity in Sierra Leone produce resilience to the cosmic binding that might occur in religious conflicts. Second, that broad coalitions of the IRCSL, building on shared social dispositions of inclusion, create a maximal platform for negotiation. Third, that shared inclusive frameworks about the afterlife largely meant that leaders were able to focus on immediate concerns, rather than elongating their time horizons into the cosmic realm. Together, these dispositions culminated in a functioning IRCSL and may provide important pathways for other interfaith peace movements to build upon.

Bridging practices between religious groups, through shared sacred space and rites of passage, provided a means for the community to have multiple points of identity, data which supports extant theory from Varshney (2003) and Sen (2006). This multiplicity of religious identity, as displayed in practice, creates means for living everyday life without us/them othering. As Amartya Sen argues, the nexus between identity and violence is particularly sharp when communities live lives insulated from experiencing others, allowing for religious bonds to be constructed around one-dimensional cleavages (Sen 2006). Shared practices prohibit the ritual intragroup binding that occurs in exclusive groups. The fact that the IRCSL is made up of over a dozen sects and denominations meant that the core organizing principle was not around group sameness, but around tolerance and diversity. Binding—the process where groups

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see those fitting within their worldview as inherently set apart—could not take hold since the practice of inclusion radically prohibited it. In this manner, one might conclude that the mechanism as work was one of bridging in which local religious cultures and institutions had a pacifying effect (De Juan, Pierskalla, and Vüllers 2015). This bridging mechanism effectively pre-empted the 'sectarianization of the conflict' because it made religious outbidding and binding a non-competitive strategy for leaders (Hashemi and Postel 2017).

My interview with Catholic Archbishop Tamba-Charles succinctly captures the connection between inclusive practice and the bridging mechanism, leading to a perceived 'natural' connection between fighters and the strategies of the IRCSL:

> it made a big difference when the religious leaders came from different backgrounds. The Muslim leaders made a greater impact when… a greater impact when the religious leaders come from different backgrounds. […] So maybe that is the background, the root of our religious tolerance - because there are people whose family members are different religions. And when their family meets, they have Muslim prayers and Christian prayers. It's not just in official meetings, it is embedded in our life and that makes a big difference.

Multiple religious identity practices indicate a real resilience to the feeling that an attack on one of their own is an attack on the ontological basis of the meaning of life itself—what some scholars have called frames of 'cosmic war' (Juergensmeyer 2003). Instead, as discussed in the above section, bridging practices created a kinship usually reserved for in-group associates, meaning that differentiation and out-group othering could not occur fall on religious fault-lines.

The bridging social practices in Sierra Leone show ritual fusion in everyday life, such that religious practice affirms pluralistic and non-exclusionary frames. For this reason, appropriating 'cosmic war' frameworks to the civil war were simply anathema to all parties and it provided a key foundation for the interfaith peacemaking of the IRCSL to make logical sense as a 'natural' pathway of peace.

Shared, bridging practices created more extensive platforms for negotiation via the IRCSL. While exclusive practices create limited menus of actor behavior, a broad and inclusive everyday practice clearly promoted cultures of open debate, confrontation, and compromise, forged quite literally with shared alters, shared prayers, and shared faith. The mechanisms of

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commonality upon which peace was built were the same mechanisms that caused intermarriage and shared interpretative religious frameworks. Though conflict may break out for a variety of reasons (resource predation in this case, not religious in nature), communities like those in Sierra Leone are able to imagine pathways for concession, because everyday rituals shun intransigence and forge acceptance. While Denny and Walter argue that ideological forces restrict the bargaining menu and have 'less elasticity' by which to come to a settlement (Denny and Walter 2014), Sierra Leone experienced the opposite because of wide bargaining menus forged by shared religious practice. The IRCSL was keen to highlight shared experiences as they built their coalition, combining dozens of local congregations, mosques, and traditional chiefs together under one umbrella to push for peace. Original members of the organization indicated that this organizational feature mirrored the reality on the ground—religious tolerance was a feature of society and thus had to be a feature of the IRCSL.

Finally, while many religious conflicts are fueled by actors elongating time horizons from the immediate to the eternal (Toft 2006), the opposite seems to be true in Sierra Leone. In a wide-ranging discussion among Islamic and Christian leaders that I witnessed at Makeni University in the Bombali District, an elderly priest, well-respected in the Sierra Leonean Catholic Church opined on the roots of religious conflict in Nigeria, contrasting it with the experience in Sierra Leone.

> People say they have 'absolute truth'…absolute truth is God. And we are not God. It is not possible for us to have this absolute truth. So they say, 'I am right, everyone else is wrong: we know heaven, we know how to pray,' No! There must be a [religious] educational community that teaches humility. This will de-escalate tensions.

Speaking from his experience, the same priest told me in a focus group that if people were convinced of "absolute truth" during the war, "it would have been much, much harder to make peace […] because then they fight for that idea, not for peace." While we expect that exclusive practice results in the causal mechanism of elongating time-frames, the practices of inclusion I traced in scriptural interpretation, prayer rituals, and shared rites of passage, all illustrated how radical inclusion mitigate the notion of eternal reward since it is not based on sacred scarcity principles (Avalos 2005). Ultimate inclusion in time-frames effectively nullifies any power those time-frames might have as a mechanism to inspire actors to fight longer in a losing battle. For example, the practice of

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ancestral worship may lengthen one's time horizons, but since the practice includes all actors—not just one's insular group—the time horizon is lengthened for all participants, canceling out any eternal benefit one might receive in fighting longer and harder in the present. This allowed for the IRCSL to set aside questions about afterlife rewards, and instead negotiate for the here and now, for peace in the immediate time frame, rather than fighters being directed to cosmic time frames. Peacemakers, and in particular, religious institutions seeking to make peace, should replicate this rhetorical decision.

These generalizable insights indicate that bridging religious practices, the building of broad coalitions, and focusing on immediate rather than cosmic time horizons is key for interventions. For interfaith peace organizations seeking to build peace, the implications of this research include highlighting points of shared religious culture, fashioning the movement along these cross-cutting cleavages, perhaps downplaying sectarian nature of intervention and even pre-empting sectarianization of the peace down the road by not lifting one religious leader as a model peacemaker. Finally, the IRCSL's focus on immediate services and alleviating present suffering should be a model for others, perhaps setting aside rhetoric about eternal reward or punishment and instead focusing parties on issues with immediate time frames. After aligning these strategic anchors, organizations can set about pursuing tactics such as convening, service provision, and providing good offices and moral guarantees.

These two empirical sections show both a causation and a constitutive force at work. Local culture and everyday practice of bridging religious ties were key constitutive foundations for accepting the IRCSL's tactics. To many former combatants, the IRCSL was a "natural" peacemaker because they built the peace movement upon the shared practices that were found already existing in culture. A deep practice-based analysis reveals the cultural preconditions of shared interpretive frameworks, shared sacred space, shared rites and rituals, as important for shaping actors in a manner that accepted the IRCSL. Then, the data show how causal the IRCSL was as an effort for peace via their strategies of providing good offices and acting as guarantors of the process.

Conclusion

What social preconditions are necessary for interfaith intervention in conflict to accelerate peace? The case of the IRCSL in Sierra Leone shows an

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interfaith intervention in conflict that indeed accelerated peace. This successful intervention was predicated upon the IRCSL, as an institution, reflecting the shared religious practices ingrained in culture. In Sierra Leone, dispositional foundations bridging communities together through shared religious practices substantially shaped propositional-based outcomes like believing an adversary's promise or the decision to lay down arms. Tracing practices related to scripture, space, rituals, and their bridging ties in Sierra Leone points to the foundations that combatants thought from, rather than the content that they thought about. From this deeper, perhaps unthinking dispositional location of practical theology, when the IRCSL utilized particular strategies like good offices and acting as a moral guarantor, the intervention worked to make peace because it matched up with pre-existing expectations sewn into culture through practice. The intervention in Sierra Leone was successful because leaders in the intervention embodied the much shared cultural ties that constituted the combatants who accepted the peace-building intervention. The lesson here is clear: intervention actors may be more successful when they build upon shared cultural ties of the conflicting parties.

The findings in Sierra Leone may be difficult to apply to other cases, especially conflicts that splinter along religious identity faultlines. If religious actors are engaged in outbidding or spoiling, as seen in terrorist organizations, it could prove difficult for a religious organization to garner the support of combatants. This also speaks to the deep cultural foundations that the IRCSL seemed to rely upon in the Sierra Leone case. Peacebuilders around the world should focus on everyday practices of toleration and build their peacemaking strategy based on broad, bridging practices that cut across the faultlines of the conflict. Everyday toleration practices will depend upon community contexts—while in Sierra Leone, religious practices provided the foundation for peacemaking, other conflicts may have ethnic or tribal, civic and electoral, ecological, or other cross-cutting ties between parties that peacebuilders can utilize similar to what the IRCSL did in Sierra Leone. Varying dimensions of everyday toleration would also stipulate that the leading actors engaged in peacemaking should match with the underlying cross-cutting practice. With this framework, those who promote and fund peacemaking interventions could create ethnographically informed concept maps of shared everyday practices and empower local organizations in that arena (tribe, denomination, party, activist) to build a campaign to leverage those cross-cutting ties, matching intervention strategy with the underlying practices shared between parties.

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Future academic studies on peacemaking should also take everyday practice seriously as a foundation of trust and cultural capital. Through tracing rituals and practices, future studies can explore how culture constitutes the combatants who accepted—or reject—a peacemaking intervention. Such studies would provide important descriptive data that are necessary to identify the social preconditions for peacemaking. On an empirical level, practice tracing offers a rich descriptive model worth replicating in other comparative studies evaluating interventions in religious, ethnic, or other socially based conflicts. The empirical data also provide a foundation for answering additional puzzles on variation of inter-religious intervention strategies in West Africa, exploring why other inter-religious peacemaking efforts failed in regions with syncretistic practices and bridging ties.

Ultimately, the story of religious peacemaking intervention in Sierra Leone can be instructive in a broad array of studies on how culture matters as a precondition for peace: Everyday bridging ties and shared practices forge pathways for peace intervention based on shared experience and privilege those interventions that build on shared culture. Scholars and practitioners should thus take everyday cultural practices seriously as a foundation for peacebuilding intervention strategies.

NOTES

1. This paper will refer to terms "inter-religious" and "interfaith" interchangeably. The inter-religious term is how local actors in Sierra Leone refer to the formal institutional exchange between religious organizations, as in the *Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone.* Interfaith also refers to groups from divergent faith traditions working together in pursuit of a common end.

2. Official estimates put the Muslim population at 77 and 21% Christian and yet even the US State Department notes that "many persons combine Islam or Christianity with indigenous religious beliefs."("Sierra Leone 2013 International Religious Freedom Report" 2013) A majority of Christians are from mainline denominations, while Muslims are Suni generally within the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.

3. For example, Traditional African Religious practices within Secret Societies occur in all 16 ethnic tribes in Sierra Leone. Each of these tribal cleavages has elders and tribal chiefs who embody the TAR practices passed down from generations. These tribal elders may also be practicing Christians or Muslims. When elders or chiefs joined the IRCSL in peacemaking missions, the symbolism was not only that they spoke for their tribe, but joined as leaders or traditional culture as peers in the interfaith mission.

4. The reference is Islamic, coming from Surat al-Baqarah 2:256: "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing."

5. Furthermore, bodies are the places where mental states "and their interrelations and patterning" should be conceived of as "socially instituted," via social practice. Bourdieu's notion of habitus is a process where an actor taps into a "stock of unspoken know-how, learned in and through practice and from which deliberation and intentional belief become possible" (Schatzki 1996, 22) Both Bourdieusian and Wittgensteinian approaches to practice theory would instruct the methodologist to stop asking about ideas since they are preconditioned on other bundles of activity and not an observable object of meaning-making in the world.

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