

Challenges and Possibilities for Post-War Reconciliation in Sri Lanka

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This research is about reconciliation process in post-war Sri Lanka. Reconciliation is a complex process which can rebuild the relationship between major conflicting parties. Ethnic reconciliation has been a contested subject of debate and discussion in Sri Lanka from the period of colonialism. During the three-decade civil war the relations between ethnic groups became highly deteriorated. The end of civil war largely instigated the need of ethnic reconciliation to attain sustainable peace and development. Though attempts were made by the previous government to rehabilitate ex-combatants from the direct violence, infrastructural development, resettlement of war related displacements, they did not ensure the reconciliation of ethnic groups due to number of shortcoming in the process. With the regime change in 2015, the so-called 'good governance' regime has initiated number of measures to strengthen the post-war democracy, development and ethnic reconciliation. Adoption of 19th Amendment to the constitutions, reintroducing bilingual national anthem, the release of lands in the Northern Province, conducting investigation about the missed personals, rehabilitation of war crimes, formation of Reconciliation Task Forces, the discussions on new constitution, the prohibition of abuse of powers, freedom of press, independence of the judiciary, appointing a Tamil as opposition leader are some of those measures introduced expected to strengthen reconciliation process. Though the present government has taken the above masseurs with regard to reconciliation, this study argues that No general or shared understanding of what reconciliation and peace building should mean has emerged in Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka's civil war ended unilaterally and by military means alone, emergence of ethno-religion nationalism, lack of political willingness, public cannot understand to the reconciliation process, ethnic centric polity are seem to be the major hindrances towards ethnic reconciliation. To achieve ethnic reconciliation, this study recommends that the root causes for ethnic conflict should be correctly identified and action should be taken in line with those causes to resolve them. Also ethnic majority and parties representing them must show their willingness to accept faults of part and extend their hands to accept every ethnic group as one nation with acceptance of their fundamental rights. The study adopted qualitative approach to collect data, particularly through semi-structured interview, focus group discussions and observations.

Keywords: post-war ethnic relations; good governance; ethnic reconciliation; ethnic minorities; Sri Lanka
