Building "Trust" in Sri Lanka's Reconciliation Process in the Post-War Era

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INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is an island nation in the Indian Ocean Region which was ravaged by a three decade long separatist war between Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sri Lankan state which ended in May 2009. Over 30 countries have proscribed the LTTE organisation including the European Union following UNSC Resolution 1373/2001.[1] The resolute decision of the Rajapaksa government in 2005 to militarily annihilate the LTTE is often cited as a result of failed peace-talks in 1990, 1995, and 2002.[2] The LTTE self-identified as "freedom fighters" or a "self-liberation movement" but lost credibility for their cause due to brutal tactics, such as forcible conscription of child soldiers, assassinations and various other atrocities. In the course of the war, the LTTE expelled Sinhalese and Muslims from their controlled areas. It has now been over a decade since the end of the war which is considered a transitional period during which reconciliation, peace, social cohesion and nation-

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[1] Crisisgroup.org (https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/sri-lanka-failure-peace-process), accessed 25 June 2020. International Crisis Group reports the peace talks were limited to negotiations by two parties, mainly the LTTE and the UNP led by Ranil Wikremasinghe; a non-inclusive process without involvement of President Kumaratunga, key southern politicians, non-LTTE Tamil parties and Muslims.

[2] The Diplomat (https://thediplomat.com/2015/04/how-sri-lanka-won-the-war/), accessed 25 June 2020. With the election of Mahinda Rajapaksa in 2005, Sri Lanka embarked on a grand strategy to combat the LTTE by leveraging diplomatic channels to cut off LTTE's foreign financing sources, its funding networks, and by orchestrating a split in the LTTE. In 2004, Colonel Karuna Amman alias Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan defected from the LTTE with 6000 carders and provided the government with vital information which helped the government's victory. Sri Lanka's Tamil population amounted to 12 percent and active LTTE supporters were only around 300,000 soldiers.

building should have been national priorities. Unfortunately, the reconciliation process was slow and unfulfilling for those who were affected by the war, particularly the Tamil and Muslim minorities.

The 2015 government change provided some relief to war-affected parties as the *Yahapalanaya* government took several positive steps towards reconciliation by establishing independent commissions and undertaking steps to implement United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolutions.[3] However, it soon became unpopular and support dwindled as the government changed once more to a Rajapaksa-led rule in 2020, just five years later. The Easter Sunday Attacks of 2019 claimed by the ISIS revealed a new, yet harsh reality of Islamic radicalisation in Sri Lanka which was largely overlooked. Against such a context, new questions emerge regarding Sri Lanka's reconciliation agenda.

In this essay I conduct a critical inquiry on why Sri Lanka's reconciliation process was an unfulfilling journey by establishing a link between educational policies and how they impact building inter-communal trust, which is an integral element to achieving reconciliation. Firstly, I examine how "reconciliation" and "trust" are conceptualised and what the existing literature has demonstrated regarding the impact of educational policies on building inter-communal trust. Secondly, I will provide a brief overview of Sri Lanka's reconciliation process. Thirdly, I will use examples from events between 2009 to 2020, to demonstrate how communal trust was eroded due to ethno-religious violence and other factors. Finally, I will demonstrate how reforms in educational policies, specifically how adopting a secular education policy could help build communal trust and accelerate the reconciliation process with reference to Singapore's Moral Education as a benchmark.

CONCEPTUALIZING TRUST IN RECONCILIATION

Trust is an ambiguous concept with changing moral value and meaning. Given its conceptual vagueness, the Catholic University of Leuven in its report *"Identity vs Performance: An Overview of theories explaining trust in government"* has defined trust within a government-citizen interaction framework in which citizens' attitudes toward a government are mainly based on subjective evaluations, such as its ef-

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3 Perera, Jehan. 2019. "Constitutional Council And Independent Commissions Part Of Transition To Rule Of Law". Sri Lanka Brief (https://srilankabrief.org/2019/02/constitutional-council-and-independent-commissions-part-of-transition-to-rule-of-law/).

ficiency and quality service.[4] Trust is considered a social construct and tolerance of uncertainty.[5] According to Sztompka, trust is composed of seven factors: regularity, efficiency, reliability, representativeness, fairness, accountability and benevolence.[6] For a functioning and vibrant democracy, it is important to build trust in governance, state institutions and agencies and between different ethnicities. Govier and Verwoerd argue building trust between parties is essential for reconciliation and even relevant for cooperation without which people feel bitter, resentful, and vindictive towards others.[7]

> "People are unable to cooperate with each other and work together unless their relationships are characterized by trust".[8]

Although Johan Galtung and Louis Kriesberg's definitions recognise reconciliation as a process, they have been unable to define reconciliation without defining peace and justice where peace is an end goal and justice is a means of achieving it.[9] For the purpose of this essay, national reconciliation is recognised as a process set in the context of a transition towards a stable constitutional democracy after prolonged periods of human rights violations. In the Sri Lankan context, reconciliation is envisioned as a continuing process. However only a few studies had attempted

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[4] Bouckaert, Geert, Steven Van de Walle, Bart Maddens, and Kampen, Jarl K. 2002. *Identity vs Performance: An overview of theories explaining trust in government.* Leuven: Public Management Institute, Katholike Universiteit Leuven.

[5] Lewis, J. David, and Weigert, Andrew. 1985. "Trust as a Social Reality". Social Forces, 63 (4): 967-985.

[6] Sztompka, Piotr. 1996. "Trust and Emerging Democracy: Lessons from Poland". International Sociology, 11 (1): 37-62, (doi:10.1177/026858096011001004).

[7] Govier, Trudy, and Verwoerd, Wilhelm. 2002. "Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation". Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 32 (2): 178-205, (doi:10.1177/004931032002003).

[8] Govier, Trudy, and Verwoerd, Wilhelm. 2002. Op. cit.: 200.

[9] Galtung, Johan. 2001. "After Violence, Reconstruction, Reconciliation, and Resolution Coping With Visible and Invisible Effects of War and Violence". In: *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory And Practice*. Oxford: Lexington Books.
Johan Galtung describes reconciliation as a process with twelve approaches. He presents the equation Reconciliation = Closure + Healing in which closure refers to not reopening hostilities and healing as rehabilitation (Galtung 2001, 3-4).
Kriesberg, Louis. 2001. "Changing forms of Coexistence". In: *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory And Practice*. Oxford: Lexington Books. Kriesberg refers to reconciliation as a process by which the respective parties whom were in destructive conflict restore a minimally acceptable relationship and as a process to advance both peace and justice (Kriesberg 2001, 47-48).

to quantify or categorise its progress.[10] I argue that since trust is central to reconciliation, trust-building within the reconciliation process is only possible, where a secular education policy nurtures the younger generations to resist racism and resist condoning or engaging in ethno-religious violence, while enabling critical thinking skills and the ability to embrace living in a plural society with mutual respect and dignity.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SRI LANKA'S RECONCILIATION PROCESS

The year 2009 was eventful for Sri Lanka with the war officially declared over, and the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), Ban Ki Moon, arrival in the country to discuss post-war development issues with then President Mahinda Rajapaksa. Discussions ensued on the establishment of development programmes for the North (former LTTE-held areas), re-establishment of democratic institutions and electoral politics. A key promise was made on implementing the 13th Amendment, which called for a decentralised form of government with more autonomy at the local government level. Several notable resolutions were adopted in the United Nations Human Rights Council including at the 11th Special Session.[11] President Rajapaksa appointed the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) in 2010, which submitted its report to parliament in 2011. The findings of the LLRC-report were criticised and rejected by the UN panel of Experts, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and International Crisis Group. Subsequent UN resolutions (19/2, 22/1, A/HRC/25/1 and A/HRC/25/23) continuously called upon the government to address reconciliation and accountability in the country. The United States Department of State Country Report (2010) on Human Rights Practices in Sri Lanka was highly critical of the government's human rights progress, especially on

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[10] Veriteresearch.org (https://www.veriteresearch.org/publication/unhrc-resolution-30-1-implementation-monitor-statistical-analytical-review-no-3-2/), accessed 30 July 2020.

[11] Ohchr.org (https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/SpecialSessions/Session11/Pages/11thSpecialSession.aspx), accessed 30 July 2020.
Channel4.com (https://www.channel4.com/news/sri-lanka-execution-video-new-war-crimes-claims), accessed 30 July 2020. In the subsequent year, the Tamil diaspora worldwide were promoting the Tamil genocide narrative after Channel 4 News broadcasted footage from inside the final stages of the war with brutally shocking images of extra-judicial killing which further pressurised the international community to intervene in Sri Lanka's human rights discourse.

general human rights violations after the war.[12] In 2013, a second commission was appointed, headed by retired High Court Judge Maxwell Paranagama.

At the 34th UNHRC session in March 2017, the Sri Lankan government co-sponsored resolution 34/1, which contains certain commitments of Sri Lanka towards transitional justice and post-conflict peace-building. This included: Transitional Justice and Reconciliation, Rights and Rule of Law, Security and De-Militarisation, Power Sharing and International Engagement. A report by Verite Research, on the implementation status of these commitments has revealed, there is only partial progress in consultations for transitional justice, establishment of truth, justice and reconciliation commission, establishing an office for missing persons and reparations.[13] There is very poor progress on the accountability and justice mechanisms regarding alleged human rights abuses during the conflict perpetrated by both the state and the LTTE. Power sharing matters, which were largely to be addressed by constitutional reforms, have only seen partial progress.

EROSION OF COMMUNAL TRUST DUE TO ETHNO-RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

Sri Lanka, whose population is a multi-ethnic and a multi-religious one – with a current religious composition as follows: 70.1% Buddhists, 12.6% Hindus, 9.7% Islamists, 6.2% Christians, 1.4% Roman Catholics and other denominations[14] – and had historically experienced religious and political violence. Between the years 2009 to 2020, however, there were numerous events which could be interpreted as dangerous to Sri Lanka's social fabric in the post-war period. Among such events were the issues of ethno-religious violence and cultural imposition examined by Gunatilleke which extend to land grab, militarisation, desecration and defilement

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[12] Refworld.org (https://www.refworld.org/docid/517e6dd3f.html), accessed 30 July 2020. The 2012 United States Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Sri Lanka provides a detailed overview of Sri Lanka's bleak human rights situation. For example: it cited extra-judicial killings, Welikada prison riots, and enforced disappearances of LTTE suspects. This included harassments extended to journalists who were reporting on corruption, nepotism and human rights violations.

[13] Veriteresearch.org (https://www.veriteresearch.org/publication/unhrc-resolution-30-1-implementation-monitor-statistical-analytical-review-no-3-2/), accessed 30 July 2020.

[14] Minorityrights.org (https://minorityrights.org/country/sri-lanka/), accessed 1 October 2020. The 2020 census report presents the figures as Sinhalese (74.9 percent), Sri Lankan Tamils (11.2 percent), Indian Tamils (4.2 percent), Sri Lankan Moors (9.3 percent), and Malays (0.2 percent).

of Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim places of worship, and simultaneously attempts by government actors to build Buddhist places of worship and symbols in areas where the ethnic and religious minorities were majorities.[15] Activities as such potentially threatened the reconciliation process.[16]

Communal violence and ethno-religious tensions have also been a serious impediment to reconciliation. Some of the major events included the Grandpass Mosque Incident in 2013, Aluthgama Riots in 2014, attacks against Christians in Galle and Hambantota in 2014, etc., with involvement of hardline groups which were engaged in a dangerous discourse playing on the apprehensions regarding certain Muslim cultural practices.[17] Buddhist radical groups had also used social media extensively against peace movements in the country. For example: a Buddhist monk

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[15] Gunatillake, Gehan. 2018. *The Chronic and the Entrenched: Ethno-Religious Violence in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies. According to Gunatilleke, religious violence occur in several forms including: physical violence, destruction of property, intimidation, threat or coercion, hate campaigns or propaganda and discriminatory practice. Although a solid legal framework exists to provide constitutional guarantees to religious freedom and to tackle particular issues like hate speech, enforcement of these laws are terribly lacking.
Hrw.org (https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/10/09/why-cant-we-go-home/military-occupation-land-sri-lanka), accessed 3 August 2020. Military Occupation of land in areas such as Pallimunai and Mullikulam leading to protests are reported in this article as a stumbling block to reconciliation; Thecitizen.in (https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/NewsDetail/index/6/17293/Sinhalization-of-Tamil-Areas-by-Building-Buddhist-Shrines-over-Hindu-Temples), accessed 3 August 2020. This article reports the row between Buddhists and Tamils regarding erection of Buddhist Stupas near Hindu Temple site in Kanniya, destruction of Temple ruins in Muttur and disregard for Tamil archaeology etc.; Asianews.it (http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Sri-Lanka,-Buddhist-destruction-of-a-mosque-halted-24598.html), accessed 5 August 2020. Protests in Dambulla over construction of a Muslim Mosque and Hindu Temple near the Golden Temple of Dambulla.

[16] Srilankamirror.com (https://srilankamirror.com/news/410-chinese-donation-for-buddhist-temples-in-north-east), accessed 21 August 2020. Government building Buddhist stupas in Northern and Eastern province with Chinese funds supported and defended by government minister Daya Gamage.

[17] Gunatilleke, Gehan. 2015. *The Chronic and the Acute: Post-War Religious Violence in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies and Equitas. Hardline groups such as Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), Sinhala Ravaya and Ravana Balaya (see Gunatilleke, 2015: 27-29).
Gunaratna, Rohan. 2018. "Sinhala-Muslim Riots in Sri Lanka: The Need for Restoring Communal History". Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses 10 (4): 1-4. In public rally speeches of BBS in 2013, they made demands to eliminate halal certifications, to ban Sri Lankan women working in the Middle East and to prevent building of mosques financed by Middle Eastern countries. Gunaratna writes Sinhala ultra-nationalist group Bodu Balan Sena's "public position was that Sri Lanka is a Sinhala Buddhist country" as opposed to a multiethnic and multi-religious country (Gunaratna 2018: 2).

who spoke with Muslims to settle the halal problem was also harassed online.[18] This demonstrates that inter-religious coexistence efforts that are catalyst towards reconciliation were also hampered.

The 2018 riots in Digana and Ampara and the desecration of Buddhist statues in Mawanella were high intensity events during which violence among Sinhalese and Muslims ensued in both online and offline spheres.[19] It is, however, difficult to establish whether these attacks were a prelude to the Easter Sunday Attacks in 2019 as the targets for suicide bombers were luxury hotels and churches opening new ethno-religious fault-lines among Muslims and Christians.[20] Still, the dangers of Islamic radicalisation were flagged by different studies, organisations and individuals.[21] It is also opined that trust among communities and also into the government eroded because of the government's inability to prevent the attack despite receiving actionable threat intelligence.

HOW DOES SECULAR EDUCATION POLICY HELP BUILD COMMUNAL TRUST AND RECONCILIATION?

Davis argues education should encourage students to think about and act towards the security of others and draws attention to how being educated in a singular

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[18] Orjuela, Camilla. 2019. "Countering Buddhist Radicalization: Emerging Peace Movements in Myanmar and Sri Lanka". Third World Quarterly 41 (1): 133-150, (doi:10.1080/01436597.2019.1660631). Religious radicalisation turns individuals against their own and moderate adherents within the same religious groups.

[19] Ibid.

[20] The suicide bomb attacks on churches and luxury hotels killing 264 innocent people were perpetrated by two Muslim hardline groups: National Thawheed Jamaath (NTJ) and Jamathei Millathu Ibrahim (JMI). The mastermind of the Easter Sunday attacks, Zahran Hashim, hails from the troubled village of Kattankudy; Army.lk (https://www.army.lk/news/kattankudy-mosque-massacre-remembered), accessed 30 August 2020.
In 1990, the LTTE massacred 147 Muslims in a mosque. The town of Kattankudy had also experienced Wahhabi proselytization and Islamic sectarian conflicts. These were identity-based divisions caused due to marginalisation and exclusion from post-war peace processes.

[21] Bodubalasena.org (http://www.bodubalasena.org/bodu-bala-sena-public-rally-balangoda-2019-8-10/), accessed 30 September 2020. In this public rally speech Gnanasara Thero states that he warned the government in 2014 that Zaharan Hashim and his followers should have been taken into custody. See also the International Crisis Group Report, 2007. Crisisgroup.org (https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/sri-lanka-s-muslims-caught-crossfire), accessed 30 September 2020. This report warns that a Muslim armed struggle was among the fears in 1990, so was Islamic radicalisation among frustrated youth and Muslim sectarian conflict.

religion limits critical thinking; that a secular value proposition, a school culture based on human rights education could help nurture a generation to resist determinism and absolutism.[22] Singapore offers a benchmark study of how moral education could nurture the future generations in shared values that could forge bonds between racially and culturally divisive communities to co-exist.[23] Moral education is considered a means for nation building. Singapore, like Sri Lanka, was also colonised by the British who divided the Singaporean population into four communities. The Chinese comprised 70% of the population, 20% were Malays, 10% were Indians and the rest were Eurasians. In 1978, Dr. Goh Keng Swee's reforms encouraged moral education to be taught in the second language and Singaporeans were encouraged to learn English for commercial purposes and as a link language.[24]

In Sri Lanka, education throughout primary, secondary and tertiary levels remains free for the populace wherein 97% are administered by provincial councils, while only 3% of the national schools are administered centrally, which results in huge disparities in resource allocation.[25] Education financing has also remained just below 2% of the GDP. Apart from that, the lack of sound educational policies, and religiously segregated schools resulted in communities growing apart and alien from developing inter-cultural understanding.[26]

Also in the case of Zahran Hashim, considered as the mastermind behind the Islamist attacks in 2019, education had played a central role.[27]

The suicide bombers of the Easter Sunday Attacks were sons of a wealthy spice trader and were highly educated.[28] Davis draws attention to Robert Pape's

[22] Davis, Lynn. 2008. "Gender, Education, Extremism and Security". Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education 38 (5): 611-625: 620-622, (doi:10.1080/03057920802 351432).

[23] TerroWei, Tan Tai. 2006. "Moral Education in Singapore: A Critical Appraisal". The Journal of Moral Education, 23 (1): 61-73. Written and Reported by Jane Corbin. United Kingdom: BBC, 2020.

[24] Wei 2006. Op. cit.:67-68.

[25] lk.undp.org (https://www.lk.undp.org/content/srilanka/en/home/Blog/2015/unlocked-blog-1-4-lesser-known-stats-about-sri-lanka-s-system-of-education.html), accessed 5 September 2020.

[26] Ft.lk (http://www.ft.lk/Opinion-and-Issues/free-education-system-the-unexplored-flaws/14-567774), accessed 5 September 2020.

[27] Youtube.com (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZI7M9i6NmqQ), accessed 28 September 2020.

[28] Thedispatch.in (https://www.thedispatch.in/who-and-why-of-the-perpetrators/), accessed 6 September 2020.

book "Dying to win" which debunks the traditional suicide bomber as coming from marginalised and economically deprived background to that of highly educated and socially integrated men, who commit suicide out of a sense of perceived duty.[29] Taking the recent example, it calls for a thorough reform of religious education within Sri Lanka and for the Muslim community to revamp the education system by providing accredited degrees in Islam for religious teachers and for educational backgrounds of religious preachers to be vetted. This form of monitoring of religious education should be done by the Sri Lanka Muslim community leadership in conjunction with the relevant line ministries at both centre and provincial levels. The International Crisis Group also recommends *Madrasa* and Muslim Family Law reforms, which is already under discussion by the *All Ceylon Jamiyyah Ulama* (ACJU).[30] However, singular religious education will not work for Sri Lanka in the long-run without thorough reform across all religious institutes and also the introduction of moral education to the school system.

Apart from reform in religious education, language training and promotion of inter-cultural understanding is also important. One interesting example of possibilities for co-existence are the Tamil and Muslim communities in the Northern and Eastern Provinces where there are schools with Tamil as medium of instruction.[31] Muslims and Tamils in Sri Lanka share certain commonalities as predominantly Tamil speaking minorities. Irrespective of the 1990 ethnic cleansing of Muslims by the LTTE, Muslim-Tamil relationships were not embedded on deep seated animosity. Thiranagama writes "*Tamil-Muslim relations are precisely neighborly relationships formed by mutual intelligibility and everyday proximity*".[32] Schools should also localise

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29 Davis, Lynn. 2008. Op. cit.: 616. See also on suicide, Waha, La Toya. 2018*. Religion And State-Formation In Transitional Societies: Sri Lanka In A Comparative Perspective*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft.

30 Crisisgroup.org (https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/302-after-sri-lankas-easter-bombings-reducing-risks-future-violence), accessed 7 September 2020.

31 See also the example of how religious rituals in villages such as Panama (with Tamil and Sinhalese mixed families) engage in rituals and the worship of goddess Pattini and God Kovalan during the ceremonies of PādaYātra and Ankeliya ("horn pulling"). This is indicative of rival ethno-religious groups engaging in religious ceremonies together setting aside their differences. Piyarathne, Anton. 2015. "The Contribution Of Religious Rituals To Link Sinhala And Tamil Communities: The Case Of Panama In The Eastern Province Of Sri Lanka". In 71 Annual Session Of The Sri Lanka Association For The Advancement Of Science. Jayawardenapura: University of Sri Jayawardenapura, (http://dr.lib.sjp.ac.lk/handle/123456789/1952).

32 Thiranagama, Sharika. 2013. "Claiming The State: Postwar Reconciliation In Sri Lanka". Humanity: An International Journal Of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, And Development 4 (1): 93-116.

and implement the UN General Assembly resolutions A/74/476 on the Culture of Peace on importance of fostering interreligious and inter-cultural dialogue.[33] The Ministry for Youth Affairs and sports council recently conducted discussions on improving school infrastructure to develop a sports culture through which inter-communal interactions and healthy competition could be promoted to forge better relationships which is a commendable initiative.[34]

A study on rituals and ceremonies in an Israeli-Palestine school has shown that the *Hanukkah-Idel Filter* Christmas ceremony which addresses cultural issues could promote reconciliation work.[35] In Sri Lanka, the Sinhala-Tamil-Muslim New Year celebrations have also been an opportunity to bridge the cultural divide through communal interactions in schools and in village ceremonies. However, the recent decision of the government to stop singing/playing the national anthem in the Tamil language in public functions has dealt a blow towards promoting reconciliation.[36] Bekerman writes "the dimensions of reconciliation include a recognition of injuries inflicted on the other side, acknowledgement of the humanity of the other side in spite of the horrors they have perpetrated, and a willingness to integrate".[37] The Office for National Unity and Reconciliation in conjunction with civil society and non-governmental organisations conducted a wide range of cultural programmes to promote reconciliation including drama, musical and art exhibitions, movie

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[33] Ipsnews.net (http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/09/culture-peace-change-world-better-age-covid-19/), accessed 7 September 2020.

[34] Colombogazette (https://colombogazette.com/2020/09/17/need-to-establish-a-sports-culture-in-sri-lanka-discussed/), accessed 28 September 2020. MP Namal Rajapaksa was recently sworn in as cabinet minister for sports and youth affairs to improve school infrastructure and to promote a healthier sports culture in Sri Lanka.

[35] Bekerman 2002. Op. cit.: 271-274.
"The dimensions of reconciliation include a recognition of injuries inflicted on the other side, acknowledgement of the humanity of the other side in spite of the horrors they have perpetrated, and a willingness to integrate" (Bekerman 2002, 274).
Bekerman, Zvi. 2002. "Can Education Contribute To Coexistence And Reconciliation? Religious And National Ceremonies In Bilingual Palestinian-Jewish Schools In Israel". Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology 8 (3): 259-276, (doi:10.1207/s15327949pac0803_10).

[36] Trtworld (https://www.trtworld.com/asia/sri-lanka-scraps-tamil-national-anthem-at-independence-day-33479), accessed 28 September 2020. At the 2020 Independence Day celebrations, the newly sworn in President, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, denied the National Anthem being sung in Tamil.

[37] Bekerman 2002: 274.

screenings and film-making projects.[38] There was also a discussion to promote the right to peace and develop peace education in Sri Lanka in a human rights lens spearheaded by the ONUR and Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms, but these liberal peacebuilding agendas have largely not been implemented without cooperation from the line ministries.[39]

CONCLUSION

A thirty year long civil war constitutes a bad memory. A decade after the civil war, there is no positive peace with absence of violence as ethno-religious violence has continued to plague Sri Lankan society. Several steps were taken by the government to promote a discourse on reconciliation, but arguably rather than a national initiative, it was undertaken as a response to international pressures. The Verite Research UNHRC resolution 30/1 Implementation Monitor demonstrates the poor progress of government commitment towards addressing reconciliation. Although recommendations of the LLRC report included developing inter communal understanding to be undertaken by the government, various incidents and events that have pervaded Sri Lanka's post-war landscape ranging from communal violence to the Easter Sunday Attacks have shown a massive disconnect. Countries such as Singapore have adopted secular education policies and moral education to build social cohesion, and to nurture generations to accept diversity and multiculturalism, to foster an environment of mutual respect and shared values. Sri Lanka must also follow suit through increasing education financing, re-vamping its religious education and school system to enable inter-religious and inter-faith dialogue, diversity and a human rights based civic education to resist religious determinism, exclusivism and divisiveness.

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[38] Ft.lk (http://www.ft.lk/Opinion-and-Issues/Reconciliation-through-Economic-Development-Budget-2019-s-hollow-prescription-for-north-and-east/14-675364), accessed 28 September 2020. ONUR with Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms conducted various arts and cultural programmes to promote reconciliation.

[39] Dailynews (https://www.dailynews.lk/2018/10/02/features/164177/right-peace), accessed 27 September 2020. The article highlights that peace is a dynamic process and not an absolute end goal. There were several positive steps taken by the Yahapalanaya government (2015-2019) towards addressing reconciliation. This includes: The Right to Information Act, establishment of the office for reparations, awareness raising campaign on reconciliation titled "Ahanna", street theatre performances and the need to coordinate these activities under the theme of "non-recurrence".

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