

Limitations of Liberal Peace Building in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT: After the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka, building national unity and peace is still difficult. However, after 30 years, the country needs stable peace and unity among the people. Based on this, in the practical environment of the country, the governments that come to power from time to time have won the elections citing war as the reason, but the expectations of the minority communities have not been fulfilled till now. Attitudes about the war among Sri Lankan people have been explained. At the same time; the position of the Sri Lankan nation, people, and civil society in building peace has also been examined. The perspective of the Sinhalese people and the Tamil people and their expectations have been examined and mentioned to explain what kind of positions the people have after the war. Also, what kind of activities Sri Lanka is taking in peace building among foreign countries and the position of international countries regarding its practices are also explained. In addition to being a qualitative study, information has been gathered and summarized through interview methods and documents related to the topic for this research. National unity among all the people of the country is essential. And it is necessary to build peace among all the parties of the country. All parties should come forward to provide facilities for people to live a smooth life. This article is based on the fact that the governments of the country should ensure that inter-ethnic relations and unity are continuously maintained.

KEYWORDS: Limitations, Sri Lanka, Liberal, Peace building

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic country. There was a war going on in this country for about thirty years. On the 19th of 2009, the Sri Lankan government announced that the war had ended. As the war ended, Sri Lanka began to face massive challenges. It was located both domestically and abroad. Among the domestic challenges, one of the most important is post-war peace-building. Even after the end of the war, Sri Lanka is experiencing massive setbacks in peace-building. At the same time, the sovereignty of the country must be protected and the importance of protecting the internal complexity must be emphasized. If the unusual situations occurring in the country are seen to undermine the stability of the country, then there is a problem in the peace-building process country. The concept of liberal peace-building overstates the liberal content of these policies and sometimes deliberately downplays the geostrategic drivers of many liberal peacebuilding policies. Similarly, while pointing to more substantial changes in global realities underlying peacebuilding in Sri Lanka and challenges to liberal norms, the need to follow them must also follow. The practical content of liberal peacebuilding may reveal much continuity with liberal approaches.

The war and atrocities that have been going on in Sri Lanka for the past three decades, the growing armed culture, and “genocide” (Alert, 2006) have directly and indirectly attacked and destroyed all Sri Lankans in various ways and have made the future of life questionable. To protect the political stability of the country, it is necessary to create ethnic unity among all the people. In particular, it is necessary to adopt systematic approaches in establishing peace structures to avoid a recurrence of a war situation. Although many attempts have been made by many to negotiate and avoid conflict, nothing has been fully successful to date. However, there is a situation in which the country's activities and peace-oriented limits must be followed very properly in building peace.

However, when a race that lives in the majority in a country does not meet the basic needs of the people living as a minority or is hindered from getting it, this minority race has to fight to protect itself even today. In this, the majority race has conquered the minority race by force of arms. This cannot be said to be a complete state of peace. So the responsibility of maintaining peace after the war fell on the government. However, a liberal peace framework is necessary for Sri Lanka due to ongoing problems such as the security of the minority population, immigration, and lack of harmony, religious oppression, and anti-terrorist activities. In particular, through this article, what is the trend of liberal thinking in the construction of post-war peace in Sri Lanka, and what are the limitations of political activities, internal and external peace practices, and involvement of civil society, economic and cultural activities that contribute to peacebuilding? To describe that, past research articles, topics covered in related books, practical activities, and reports presented to build peace in Sri Lanka have been used as a method of gathering information.

Limitations of Liberal Peace Building in Sri Lanka

1.2 Understanding the concept of peace in post-war Sri Lanka

Continuing the conditions that gave rise to war cannot bring about true peace. Retention of power is the initial phase of the war. It is fair to take power according to the will of the people.

But people cannot be deceived by keeping the said option (Alternatives, 2012). “The place for minorities within the Sinhala majority state has been a key issue in Sri Lanka’s conflict” (Bastian, 2021). Sri Lanka's post-conflict strategy adopts a comprehensive approach and solicits contributions from persons working in the public and corporate sectors, as well as from community and international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and all facets of Sri Lankan society.

The concept of peace in post-war Sri Lanka refers to the process of achieving and maintaining social, political, and economic stability after a long period of civil war that lasted for over 30 years. The conflict, which began in 1983, was fought between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a separatist group that sought to establish an independent Tamil state in the north and east of the country. “Peace is also prophylaxis. Peace enables us to face new conflicts peacefully. Peace makes people great because they are fewer victims of structural and cultural violence between genders, generations, and races, between classes, states, and nations, between regions and civilizations” (Galtung, 1969).

The end of the war in 2009 marked the beginning of a new phase for Sri Lanka, characterized by efforts to achieve lasting peace and reconciliation. To achieve this goal, the Sri Lankan government has implemented a range of measures aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict, including political, economic, and social grievances. Sri Lanka's armed conflict may be officially over, but its root causes remain in its society. While the government and other actors in post-conflict peace-building processes focus on initiatives such as rebuilding infrastructure on the ground, the country must move to an approach that addresses basic social problems and the policies and systems that fuel conflict.

Moreover, it should be noted that the notion of peace in post-war Sri Lanka is a complicated and diverse subject that calls for consistent effort from all parties involved, including the government, civil society and international actors. Even though there has been progress, much effort has to be done to address the conflict’s underlying root and guarantee a peaceful and prosperous future for all Sri Lankans. Thus, peacebuilding in Sri Lanka should be limited to addressing the obvious problems and should extend to cover the non-obvious problems as well. Post-war reconstruction can focus on social reconstruction, where social and emotional issues are addressed through a culturally and context-sensitive approach, rather than seeking social reconstruction based on idealistic shared ideals.

1.3 The Perspective of Sinhala People

Among the Sinhalese majority in Sri Lanka, there are two distinct factions. It can be classified as Buddhist Sinhalese and Christian Sinhalese. Therefore, different perspectives on minority communities exist among Sinhala people, while there is no universal position. Although some Sinhala people are sympathetic to the need for rapprochement and work to foster mutual respect and understanding among all communities. Interfaith conversation and cultural exchanges are examples of activities they support that work to foster racial and religious harmony.

Since the Tamil community has long endured prejudice and marginalization, this viewpoint has fueled tensions between the minority populations and the Sinhala majority. Even with certain initiatives to foster peace, there are still many obstacles to overcome before the conflict's underlying causes can be addressed and everyone in Sri Lanka is afforded equal rights and opportunities. It reflects the nation's history of racial and political tensions that the perspective of Sinhala people inside minority populations in post-war Sri Lanka is nuanced and complex. While some advocate for peace and inclusion, others have more nationalist and exclusive beliefs that might contribute to further polarization and conflict.

There are concerns among some Sinhalese about the government's handling of post-war issues, the treatment of the Tamil population, the resettlement of displaced people, and the promotion of ethnic reconciliation. Some Sinhalese nationalists also believe the government should take a hard line on Tamil separatism and resist any demands for autonomy or federalism. However, the two groups of Sinhalese have different ideas about minorities. Therefore, in 2022, during people's protests against the government, the Sinhalese held the war memorial together. At the same time, some sects are interested in erecting Buddha statues and promoting Buddhist supremacy there. In this case, it is possible to establish peace in the country by establishing harmony between races.

1.4 The perspective of non – Sinhalese people

Non-Sinhalese perspectives on Sri Lanka's post-war peacebuilding are equally fragmented. Tamils (Sri Lankan Tamil, Indian Tamil), Muslims (Tamil Muslims, Sinhala Muslims), and other minorities who are not Sinhalese have historically experienced discrimination and marginalization, which has contributed to their isolation from mainstream society. Many have questioned the government's dedication to rapprochement, especially in light of the sluggish progress achieved in fulfilling minority populations' demands for more political autonomy, land compensation, and war crimes justice.

The post-war viewpoint of the Tamil people Sri Lanka is a complicated and diverse country. The Tamil minority in Sri Lanka’s Northern and Eastern provinces fought the dominant government for more political and economic rights during the nearly three-decades-long civil war. Significant numbers of people were killed and displaced as a result of the violence, notably among the Tamil

Limitations of Liberal Peace Building in Sri Lanka

population. A situation that develops after a violent conflict has finished is referred to as a postconflict situation. It is a stage in which the economy is improving, infrastructure is being rebuilt, and relationships that have fallen apart are being repaired.

The government has also come under fire from some Tamil activists and human rights groups for failing to fully address the conflict's underlying issues, such as systemic discrimination against Tamils and political marginalization. Even if a war is won, peace cannot be achieved until a stable and contented nation is built. There are about 20 lakh Tamils in Sri Lanka. A stable country cannot be built if 10% of the country's population is not only dissatisfied, but also has anger, hatred, and pain.

The non-Sinhalese communities have also criticized the government's peace-building efforts, which they feel are too much influenced by Sinhalese nationalism and do not appropriately consider their concerns. As a result, many communities continue to experience persistent abuses of their human rights, including forcible evictions, land grabbing, and assaults on institutions of culture and religion. The peace-building process has not adequately addressed these problems, which has further pushed non-Sinhala populations out of mainstream society.

1.5 Foreign Dimensions of liberal peacebuilding

The international community, especially the United Nations and several donor nations, worked to liberally foster peace in the nation. Achieve lasting peace, this entailed advancing democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and economic prosperity (Alert, 2006). However, there has been a lot of criticism and discussion around the international aspects of liberal peacebuilding in Sri Lanka. The international community, led by the United States and Western Europe, has come under fire for imposing a top-down strategy for peacebuilding that failed to take the needs of the Sri Lankan people into account.

The culture of peace and the power necessary to face the dynamics and structures of violence and transform them into peace is not found in institutions and organizations from above or abroad. It can only be found in broad social participation in peacemaking. The application of security guarantees and peace conditions, the creation of an international monitoring mission to monitor the ceasefire, the funding for reconstruction in conflict-affected areas, and international facilitation of peace talks led by Norway and supported by three additional co-chairs (Japan, United State of America, and India) were key aspects of this heavy internationalization.

Furthermore, there has been debate over how international players should promote responsibility for human rights abuses that occurred during the war. The Sri Lankan government has opposed such efforts, and certain international actors have been charged with not doing enough to push for accountability, even though numerous Sri Lankan civil society organizations have called for an international probe into war crimes.

In other words, the causes of the conflict are a complicated combination of indigenous elements, such as ethnic divisions, poor governance, and uneven development patterns. Civil wars are internal problems with external remedies and the only way to end the impasse is by outside actions that change institutional structures, preferences, and incentives in favor of peace rather than conflict. The limits of international activity must be understood, and developing tactics cannot be founded on exaggerated beliefs about the power of outsiders to bring about peace. According to the contemporary peace-building paradigm, effective international participation appears to be only possible when a government shares an appreciation for the principles of liberal peace policy, but ownership must transcend beyond the ruling party.

2.1 ARGUMENTS

As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, the post-war activities have been celebrated as the end of terrorism, and peace has been established in the country. Still, no such attitude can be expected among the minority population. Due to the continuous oppression of the people who lost their property and lives, Sinhalese racists are carrying out. It has become impossible for people to breathe the air of constant peace. Although the North and South social understanding and peace process have not been successful so far, the majority community and the minority community continue to have disagreements.

The stated objectives of liberal peacebuilders and the actual results of their initiatives frequently differed greatly. Nationalist elements were energized by the peace process' extensive internationalization because it increased the perceived danger to Sri Lanka's sovereignty. The main strategies of peace-building in post-war Sri Lanka are based on calls for reconciliation and transitional justice. From this perspective, with the military defeat of the LTTE, the conflict has ended and Sri Lanka has begun to become a peaceful society.

Although the end of the war was a turning point in the history of the conflict, this analysis posits that the war was not simply an aberration but pointed to some deeper problems of social injustice and inequality in Sri Lanka. These problems result from long-term state-building processes and must be taken into account in the quest for a peaceful Sri Lanka. Moreover, the lack of common understanding among many different constituencies about reconciliation (the what, why, and how) is an equally difficult challenge in advancing Sri Lanka's post-war peace-building project. The very ambiguity of the idea of reconciliation added to the heated debates associated with various reactions to what reconciliation should entail in post-war Sri Lanka.

While it is too early to draw any conclusions from current developments in the Sri Lankan political arena and on the Vanni battlefield, this case illustrates both the problems inherent in liberal peace-building and the pitfalls associated with alternative endogenous versions of peacebuilding that may arise in response to the former. And also Instead of viewing the victor's peace as an attempt at liberal peace that failed and analyzing peace from the standpoint of what should have happened, we start with important internal

Limitations of Liberal Peace Building in Sri Lanka

political dynamics and demonstrate how these processes have affected the post-war peace. This enables us to acknowledge that, despite the war's end is a watershed moment, state creation has long-term trends that have shaped the postwar peace's characteristics. A situation has developed where the government is having fun by inciting various racist activities among minorities. For example, thirteen years after the war's end, ethnic and religious oppression is still being carried out by the Sri Lankan majority, and atrocities on minority people are taking place. Therefore, it emphasizes the necessity of liberal peace measures. In a nation with many different ethnic groups, the government's efforts to achieve freedom and liberal peace for everyone should be carefully implemented to prevent the afflicted minorities from igniting a new round of hostilities.

Features of the postwar peace including continued militarization intensified nationalism, and communal violence are generally attributed to a failed attempt at liberal peace building and an authoritarian backsliding. In contrast, the post-war peace process was seen as unsatisfactory and unacceptable among the minority population due to the historical processes of state formation aimed at consolidating the Sinhalese dominant state.

2.2 CONCLUSIONS

Finally, Sri Lanka's Majorities attempts to establish a state-based form of legitimacy for peace, supported by a language of Sinhalese nationalism, have led to extremely violent outcomes and long-lasting detrimental effects for minority communities. Hence, the paradox in Sri Lanka has been that while liberal peace-building has been divisive and unstable, alternatives have frequently had comparable effects. This article argues that peace builders can overcome some of the inconsistencies and conundrums in the liberal peace-building agenda by focusing more on how they establish legitimacy on the ground and by taking a more adaptable, nuanced, and longterm approach.

As mentioned earlier, significantly based on the fact that there are opportunities to establish peace in Sri Lanka, that is, liberal peace development is a Western theory. Still, its practical activities are possible in many countries. Based on this, the opinions of the minority and the majority on the issues can form the foundation for reasonable peace efforts in Sri Lanka based on international practices without bias. Also, proper Constitution amendment, abolition of the AntiTerrorism Act, decentralization of power to the provinces, protection of minority rights, respect for multicultural activities, creation of a mechanism for building peace among the people of the country beyond the issues of race, language, and territory, establishing harmony between races, the governments that come to power are concerned about the peace of all people. Facilitation of impartiality is one of the critical issues.

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Limitations of Liberal Peace Building in Sri Lanka

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