Achieving Holistic Peace beyond a Military Victory: case of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

The small island state of Sri Lanka is in a period of revival after the end of a civil war which was fought for several decades. The roots of this conflict traces back to certain administrative decisions of colonizers as well as of successive governments which expanded the conflict into a fully-fledged civil war between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority represented by the terrorist organization, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. After three decades of persistent fighting the war came to closure in 2009 but the question of peacemaking left to answer was perhaps even more challenging. Eight years after the end of war, elements of violence still prevail which not only make it almost impossible to call the peace gained sustainable and holistic, but also probable for a conflict to resurge. Therefore the objective of this research is to analyze the post-war context of Sri Lanka and thereby determine a holistic model of peace which is sustainable beyond the military victory gained back in 2009. The research takes up a qualitative approach and to that end it gathers secondary data that assess the post-war situation of the country. The analysis is largely based on the theoretical analysis of Johan Galtung's theory of negative and positive peace in relation to post-war Sri Lanka. A careful assessment of the post-war data of Sri Lanka for the period of 2009-2016 suggests that the peace gained following the military victory is negative while lacking peace in its positive, holistic sense. The research findings manifest that although Sri Lanka has been unified territorially its numerous ethnicities are yet to be reconciled into one tightly knitted inclusive society to create the Sri Lankan nation that transcends narrow ethnic disparities. It also concludes that it may require years of commitment and significant upheaval of the attitudes of the public. But if that can be achieved, its results can be relished by many generations to come who shall not be burdened again with the agonies of war.

Key words: Sri Lanka, civil war, reconciliation, peace building, positive peace

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