

Winning The Peace Through Reconciliation : A Case Study of Sri Lanka

"I think there is so many important things that needs to happen after war but this (reconciliation) is just not one of those things, this the THE most important thing. We have to make sure that there is a Sri Lanka where there is healing and that we break away the roots of war."

-Representative of a NGO in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Sri Lanka concluded a brutal civil war between the state and the separatist group in May 2009. Since then the president of Sri Lanka appointed the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) to investigate human rights violations and present recommendations to achieve reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

This dissertation seeks to understand the concept of reconciliation and how it has been applied in Sri Lanka and the impact it has had on the society in Sri Lanka. The research involves interviews with NGOs in Sri Lanka and outside Sri Lanka who works towards reconciliation and sustainable peace in Sri Lanka.

Through this research what we have come to understand is that whilst many great recommendations have been made by the LLRC, the implementation of these recommendations has been a failure. What we have further come to understand is that whilst the government is developing infrastructure and the economy, nothing much has been done to heal the emotional wounds of the war affected people. Therefore, NGOs have been instrumental in giving their knowledge and experience in finding an effective way to go about achieving reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Whilst many further recommendations were made by the NGO representatives interviewed, what stood out most was that the Sri Lankan government should be open to involving third parties, such as local NGOs and international bodies, in the reconciliation process in order to make it more efficient, effective and successful, to see a Sri Lanka that has been healed of its wounds and taking a path towards sustainable peace.

Key Terms & Abbreviations

Key Terms

Peace - When the word peace is used it refers to sustainable peace which does not merely mean the absence of war but the existence of “a diverse community striving together to meet the needs of all of its members” (Institute for Sustainable Peace)

Reconciliation - The definition of reconciliation will be explored in more depth in section 2. However, as an operational definition reconciliation is “the process of addressing conflictual and fractured relationships and this includes a range of different activities. We see reconciliation as a voluntary act that cannot be imposed” (Hamber and Kelly 2004: 3)

The state - this terms will be used at certain parts to refer to the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL)

The terms Research Project and Dissertation will be used interchangeably

The North and East of Sri Lanka - Refers to the areas of the country that were mostly affected by the war. The final battle was also in the North of the country. See appendix 4 for a map of Sri Lanka.

Abbreviations

GoSL - Government of Sri Lanka

IDPs - Internally Displaced Persons

IIGEP - International Independent Group of Eminent Persons

LLRC - Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission

L.r - Literature Review

LTTE - Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

NGO(s) - Non-Governmental Organisation(s)

PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

UN - United Nations

“Reconciliation is a process and not an outcome and, in times of transition, a fraught and haphazard process at that.”

- Brandon Hamber

1. Introduction

In May 2009, a 30-year long civil war finally came to an end, giving hope to Sri Lanka's far and wide to finally enjoy peace. But this was short-lived because although the war was over, there was yet a culture of fear and unfinished business to be taken care of - from facing up to allegations, made by the international community, of war crimes and human rights violations to developing the war torn parts of the country and most of all healing the emotional wounds of those who were struck by the war most and building trust and unity between the Sinhalese and Tamils of the country. Martin Luther King famously stated that “peace is not the absence of war but the presence of justice,” a culture where people are free of fear and insecurity. This is what is missing in Sri Lanka right now (Kohona 2012), and this is where the concept of reconciliation comes into place. Reconciliation is extremely important to Sri Lanka because of the state that the country is in right now, as revealed in an article by Kohana (2012): “Peace will not come while not addressing hunger, deprivation, marginalisation and inequality. Peace will not come from testimony provided to truth commissions or by simply punishing the wicked for past misdeeds”. Although reconciliation is an ongoing process and doesn't happen overnight, four years since the end of the war, the lack of evidence for the implementation of the recommendations shows that there is little or no social development. The state invested immensely in the development of infrastructure and the economy. However if human feelings and emotional wounds of the victims and witnesses are not healed, there is no point in all other aspects of development. A central theme throughout the concept of reconciliation is the healing of emotional wounds, and the seeking and telling of the truth in order to balance the dominant narratives. There is more than one dominant narrative in Sri Lanka and it is important that reconciliation takes place so that one dominant narrative is established, so that like post-apartheid South Africa victims can forgive the perpetrators, which will help the country move forward towards sustainable peace.

Reconciliation is a daunting concept and before we explore further how academics have previously attempted to define reconciliation and how to actually achieve it, we will try to identify and contextualise the conflict in Sri Lanka.

Firstly, it is important to understand and identify the conflict because this is what will point us towards the right direction in terms of reconciliation. The conflict in Sri Lanka has always been identified by many academics as an ethnic conflict. It is ethnic because the conflict was between the two main ethnicities - Sinhalese and Tamils. It is also an ethnic conflict because of the main ethnic markers that divide the society, based on geographical location, language and culture, which was some of the main aspects that made the minority feel marginalised (Anonymous 2011:48). However, the conflict can also be identified as political because the Tamil's fight for autonomy and self-determination are based on political desires and needs. It is also political because the conflict was believed to be steered by the political elite (Anonymous 2011:48). Both Sinhala and Tamil political leaders "have influenced the trajectory of the war over the course of its history" (Anonymous 2011:48). Therefore the conflict can be identified as an "ethnopolitical conflict". Looking at the conflict in this manner we can come to the understanding that although the ethnic relations between the Sinhalese and Tamil's have been affected by this conflict, it is not intractable. Not only the Sinhalese and Tamil's but also other ethnic groups have had a proven history of being able to coexist together. This means that there is tremendous hope for achieving peace through reconciliation within the community although a lot of work needs to be done to push the political leaders towards the right direction in effectively implementing strategies for reconciliation (Anonymous 2011:48).

1.2 Background

Sri Lanka is made of four main ethnicities - Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers, of which Sinhalese make the majority with 73.8% of the population and Tamil's identified as a minority group of 13.9% (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka 2011). Many

scholars believe that after Sri Lanka gained independence from the British in 1948, the Tamils started feeling marginalised because they lost privileges that they used to have under British rule (Hoglund and Orjuela, K 2011: 23; Wickramasinge 2006). Hoglund and Orjuela (2011:23) lists some factors that contributed to Tamil's feeling marginalised:

- “Language reforms, which made Sinhala the sole official language.
- University admission reform working to the disadvantage of the Tamils of the northern parts of the island,
- The granting of a special place to Buddhism (the religion of the Sinhalese) and
- Resettlement of landless Sinhalese in Tamil-dominated areas”

(Hoglund, K and Orjuela, K 2011: 23)

Bogape (2010:358) states that “There has been no economic and cultural interaction between communities and as a result there is no real national unity.” However this statement can be disputed because there has been plenty of cultural and economic interaction, even during the time of the conflict between the separatist group and the armed forces, it didn't actually prevent the different ethnic communities from interacting; from conducting business together to even celebrating cultural and religious festivals together. An example of this has been presented by a past student of one of the leading Catholic schools in Kandy, who wrote about how regardless of religion or ethnicity students celebrated all the different religious and cultural festivals together, below is an extract from the poem written by him:

“...I was a part of a tradition where everyone wished me for Christmas and I wished them for *Avurudhu*, *Ramazan*, *Pongal* etc... I was a part of the tradition where all boys jointly organised the Islamic *Majilis*...I was part of a tradition which once was complimented by then Her Excellency the President Madam Chandrika Bandaranayake for treating all children alike without any discrimination of colour, cast, race or creed. She called us a real life example of ethnic harmony, co-existence & tolerance.” (Dolapihilla 2013)

However it cannot be ignored that at the leadership level of the country, i.e in the political arena of the country, there seems to be a sense of “chauvinism, communalism and caste-

based practices...” (Bopage 2010: 358). Bogape (2010:358) also suggests that this in turn has created huge gaps in the society with an “over-centralised” government who tries to cover these gaps through repression. Soon, the group that was fighting for the rights of the Tamils - with an aim of autonomy and a sovereign state for the Tamil people - started using terrorist tactics to get what they wanted. This in turn created “one of the world’s most protracted and brutal internal armed conflicts.” (Hoglund, K and Orjuela, K 2011: 20). The end of this conflict estimated 84,000 deaths and reported over hundreds of thousands of cases of forcibly displaced persons (Hoglund, K and Orjuela, K 2011: 20). Although the post-war discourse in Sri Lanka portrays Sri Lanka as a multicultural society with space for all ethnicities to live together in harmony (Hoglund, K and Orjuela, K 2011 : 25), and to some extent this can be seen where Sinhalese and Tamil’s live together and conduct economic activity together, however, the counter-discourse made prominent by the Tamil diaspora and not necessarily the Tamil’s living in Sri Lanka is that the: “Tamil struggle for rights and/or self-determination needs to continue” (Hoglund, K and Orjuela, K 2011 : 25). This is why reconciliation is so important to Sri Lanka, so that a relapse into violent conflict can be prevented.

On that note, it is important to understand that there is always two sides to a war, and in order to prevent this from happening again we need to look at both sides and the reason behind their actions. As laid out by an Anonymous author (2011:34-35) firstly we will look at the side of the Sinhalese whose main agent of violence was the state and especially the armed forces. From the perspective of the state, it was a legitimate war that fought against the terrorist acts of one of the “most ruthless terrorist organisations in the world” (officially recognised by 32 countries). The damage was the high number of civilian casualties especially in the North and East of Sri Lanka. The damage also includes human rights violations such as “arbitrary arrests, detention, torture and extrajudicial killings” (International Crisis Group 2010 cited in Anonymous 2011: 34). The second side is the side of the Tamils, whose main agent of violence was the Liberations Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), from their perspective they were fighting for self-determination and autonomy of the Tamil community who they believed to be marginalised. The damage was again the high number of civilian

casualties using tactics such as suicide bombings, political assassinations, recruitment of child soldiers (International Crisis Group 2010 cited in Anonymous 2011:35), and in the final stages of the war using civilians as a shield and “blurring the distinction between combatants and civilians and exposing civilians to additional harm” (UN Panel Report, 2011: iii cited in Mensen 2011:34). A statement by the UN Panel Report of 2011 states: “... a wide range of serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law was committed both by the LTTE and the GoSL” (UN Panel Report, 2011: ii cited in Mensen 2011: 34). Although we will not go further into the human rights violations committed by both sides, it is important to understand the context of this situation, and the depth of the emotional wounds that the government now has to reconcile in order to move forward.

The field research conducted aims to establish how non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play an important role in the process of reconciliation. Although the pressure is on the government to make the biggest difference, without the help of NGOs, we will come to find out that it is near to impossible to achieve something tremendous like national reconciliation. Thus in the next section we will explore the literature that presents the various theories of reconciliation and the process of reconciliation and link it to how it can help Sri Lanka move forward into sustainable peace. By the end of the next section we will come to realise that there is little or no academic work done to link NGOs to this process, thus the next section will outline the aims and objectives of this research project and how it will fill that gap in establishing how NGOs can take this process forward and their views on reconciliation, with the hopes that this will, in the long run, help Sri Lanka move ever closer towards sustainable peace. This research project also aims to further our understanding of how reconciliation fits in the current political climate of Sri Lanka and if reconciliation will be possible. The next section will outline the methods of research and analysis. The final section will present the findings and open a discussion which will help us fill the gap in the research that is already out there. We will finally end with further recommendations that may help the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka.

“Reconciliation requires changes of heart and spirit, as well as social and economic change.

It requires symbolic as well as practical action”

– Malcolm Fraser

2. Literature Review

In order to determine if reconciliation can or cannot be achieved in the context of Sri Lanka we need to explore and understand what reconciliation really is. The various literature that have already explored this area will aid us in understanding the next steps for Sri Lanka. In this section, we will gain an in-depth understanding of reconciliation, the process of reconciliation as pointed out by Susan Dwyer (2003) and further understand how this broken society can be healed by using theories such as the transnational justice approach, which shows the importance of truth seeking, prosecution and memorialisation and reconciliation. We will also look at obstacles to the reconciliation process such as the concept of national versus individual reconciliation and how these two may clash and make it difficult for overall reconciliation for the country.

2.1 Understanding Reconciliation

Like many theories the concept of reconciliation has a wide range of meanings. According to Villa-Vicencio (n/d cited in Crocker 2003:54) reconciliation is “simple coexistence.” It is human to have your own opinions and even disagree with the opinions of others but being able to respect your fellow citizens and find common ground and live together non-violently is what reconciliation is (Crocker 2003:54). Mark J. Osiel identifies this approach to reconciliation as “liberal social solidarity”. On the other hand political scientists Amy Gutmann and Denis Thompson identifies it as “democratic reciprocity” (Crocker 2003:54). There is also the sociological angle of looking at reconciliation. Taking as an example the approach used by post-apartheid South Africa and Chile, reconciliation can be seen as “forgiveness, mercy (rather than justice), a shared comprehensive vision, mutual healing, or harmony” (Little 1999

cited in Crocker 2003:54). South African political analyst, Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert (2000:70) explains that reconciliation is a process that restores a relationship between different groups which will help these groups “move on in peace while accepting each other’s integrity” (Van Zyl Slabbert 2000:70). This is so very important to any post-conflict society because it will prevent the society from relapsing into a conflict. Preventing the relapse into a conflict is extremely important to Sri Lanka, thus through this research project we will further our understanding on what approach to reconciliation will best suit the context of Sri Lanka.

According to Crocker (2003 cited in Prager and Govier 2003:3) any society that has faced serious wrongdoing need to consider these goals in order to effectively reconcile. Firstly the truth about past events need to be thoroughly investigated. The second goal is to provide a public platform for victims to testify, to tell their stories in order to gain closure. Once the victims have been heard, serious measures need to be taken to hold the perpetrators accountable, or like South Africa, even use the concept of forgiveness and give victims the chance to forgive wrongdoers, and if it serves the community better, provide amnesty for these perpetrators. The concept of forgiveness alone, however, is not enough in order to ensure that the society will not relapse into violent conflict, the state needs to ensure that every citizen complies with the rule of law. It is also important that victims are compensated. This is specially important in a context like Sri Lanka where the conflict began because minority grievances were not been taken care of. The sixth goals presented by Crocker (2003) suggests that the state needs to dedicate time and effort towards constitutional reform. In the apartheid context of South Africa, the constitution itself encouraged racism and xenophobia. Although in Sri Lanka it was not that far drawn out, certain things in the constitution such as Sinhala being the sole official language may have been one of the many aspects that caused the conflict, therefore constitutional reform, too is important. Another important objective is community based activities in order to encourage reconciliation between previously opposed groups. And the final goal is “deepening and strengthening the quality of public deliberation” (Crocker 2003 cited in Prager and Govier 2003:3), where the public will be encouraged to engage and be a part of the politics in the country in order to create a truly democratic society, which is another important aspect of reconciliation.

Whilst these goals may help a nation move towards sustainable peace, there are those academics such as Susan Dwyer (2003) who argue that reconciliation is “merely a ruse to disguise the fact that a ‘purer’ type of justice cannot be realised” (Dwyer 2003:92). The fact that in the process of reconciliation, perpetrators of human rights violations are let off with minimum punishment, say little about the nations ability to deal with such dilemmas such as justice and strict rule of law. However, it must be argued that forgiveness may be a harder concept to come to terms with, and this may say a lot more about a nations strength and ability to forgive and move on. However, this may be a tricky situation when the state is the main perpetrator of human rights abuses. As Dwyer argues, how can we expect a person who has seen his or her loved ones being abused, killed or disappeared, to be able to forgive the state or other perpetrators for such brutal violations? (Dwyer 2003:95). Is it humanly possible for one individual to do so? While reconciliation is so important for a nation to move forward towards sustainable peace, “the obligatoriness of reconciliation - at either the micro- or the macro- level - would appear to be defeated when interpersonal reconciliation is psychologically impossible” (Dwyer 2003:95). Nevertheless, Dwyer also lays out the argument that reconciliation is mainly a process which helps a nation come to terms with and understand what has happened, to find out the truth, to reduce the tension between opposing groups, to accept new beliefs and attitudes in the hope that it would never reoccur again (Dwyer 2003:106). Taking into consideration the context of Sri Lanka, which was explained in the introduction and which will be further discussed below, reconciliation may also help citizens trust the state to do what is right and take care of minority grievances, whilst also keeping the majority content. As Dwyer believes, “reconciliation is guided by normative ideals of intelligibility, coherence, and understanding...” (Dwyer 2003:106). Henceforth, we will look at a few theories tied to reconciliation which will point out the process and specific approaches to reconciliation.

2.1.1 The Process of Reconciliation

Among the different theories on reconciliation Dwyer’s (2003) theory best suits the context of Sri Lanka. According to Dwyer (2003) reconciliation is “understood as narrative

incorporation” (Dwyer 2003:98). In the current context of Sri Lanka there is more than one dominant narrative; that of the GoSL prominent in Sri Lanka, and that of the Tamil diaspora, who still believe that the fight for autonomy and self-determination of the Tamil people need to carry on. These two narratives clash, and in order for reconciliation to be achieved the “incompatible descriptions of events” need to be brought “into narrative equilibrium” (Dwyer 2003:100). According to Dwyer (2003), the process of reconciliation should go through three stages. The first stage requires the different parties to come to a clear understanding of the events that took place, “where only the barest facts - who did what to whom and when - are relevant” (Dwyer 2003:100). The second stage should involve the articulation of the different interpretations of what took place, so that the different parties can hear the various different sides to the narrative. Finally, after hearing the different narratives, the parties to reconciliation should “accommodate the disruptive event into their ongoing narratives” (Dwyer 2003:100). Although the different narratives should be accommodated, it does not mean that the crimes committed need to be excused, however, like the reconciliation process in South Africa, it can involve an apology and an offer for forgiveness (Dwyer 2003:100).

2.1.2 The Transnational Justice Approach

Another important theory adding value to the concept of reconciliation is the transnational justice approach. The transnational justice approach will be extremely useful for Sri Lanka because the nation needs to come to terms with what happened and leave the past behind. To do so the country needs a proper system in place, and having a structured approach like this will definitely help Sri Lanka. The transnational justice approach is defined by the UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, as:

“the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation” (UN Doc. S/2004/616 [3 August 2004] cited in Anonymous 2011:37).

Transnational Justice is a very broad topic and the approaches are different in each situation. But for the sake of this dissertation we will use this approach to focus on societies such as Sri Lanka that are “emerging from violent and abusive pasts” (Anonymous 2011: 38). There are five types of approaches that this theory uses: “truth seeking, prosecutions, reparations, reform, memorialisation and reconciliation” (Anonymous 2011:37). Taking into consideration the context of Sri Lanka, we will look at the three most appropriate and useful approaches that can help Sri Lanka.

A) *Truth Seeking*

Firstly, we will look at ‘truth seeking’. Truth seeking aims to establish the truth about what happened during a conflictual time. This is extremely important because according to international humanitarian law, victims of human rights violations have the right to an effective remedy. “This includes the right to know the truth about the abuses they have suffered, including the identity of perpetrators, the causes that gave rise to the violations, and, if appropriate, the ultimate fate or whereabouts of the forcibly disappeared” (González and Varney 2013). In the past there have been truth-seeking activities that took place in Sri Lanka. Examples of this are given below.

In 1994 there were three presidential inquiries that were made into enforced disappearances that took place in the country between the late 1980s and early 1990s. This inquiry received over 30,000 complaints. The inquiry stopped its work midway, but a similar commission continued in 1994 and published a report in 2002 (Iqbal 2002 cited in Anonymous 2011: 38). In 2001 the Presidential Truth Commission on Ethnic Violence was established to investigate the ethnic pogrom that took place in 1983, commonly known as Black July in Sri Lanka, and other riots and ethnic uprising between 1981 and 1984. The report was published in 2004, along with the first public apology by the President at the time (Anonymous 2011:38). More recently, in 2006, a commission of inquiry was again established by the president to investigate human rights violations that took place in August 2005. The work was monitored by the International Independent Group of Eminent Persons (IIGEP), however up to the date

of this article the findings have not been published. The IIGEP withdrew from the enquiry stating that: “it deemed procedural flaws that were affecting the transparency and independence of the Commission and the protection of witnesses” (Anonymous 2011:38). There have been other official truth seeking approaches including unofficial inquiries by human rights organisations. However it can be seen that in general truth seeking has not been very successful in Sri Lanka. It has often been criticised as “politically motivated ambitions to slander members of the political opposition at the time (who were members of the sitting government over the periods that were under investigation)” (Anonymous 2011:38). As mentioned before, the only external truth-seeking initiative was one by the UN Panel of Experts, in 2009, that the government was against “on the grounds that it is an infringement on the country’s sovereignty” (Ministry of External Affairs 2010 cited in Anonymous 2011: 40). However, the government responded by initiating the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) which was to:

“report on the lessons to be learnt from the events in the period, Feb 2002 to May 2009, their attendant concerns and to recommend measures to ensure that there will be no recurrence of such a situation.” (Presidential Media Unit 2010 cited in Anonymous 2011: 41).

Although the LLRC was criticised by the UN Panel of Experts and other human rights organisations, one of the more commendable attributes is the willingness of the government to engage in a transnational justice approach to reconciliation, “even though as the decisive military victor it could easily have opted out of such an engagement” (Anonymous 2011: 41). Although major organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch were invited by the LLRC to appear before it, the invitation was declined because these organisations believed that the LLRC did not have enough investigative powers over war crimes (BBC News cited in Anonymous 2011:41).

While truth seeking is seen as an important aspect to the transnational justice approach, there are others who believe that truth seeking is counterproductive. There has been historical evidence, such as in South Africa, where truth telling was crucial to the reconciliation process. However, Prager and Govier (2003) believe that “truth telling can be

counterproductive and instead of healing societal cleavages can generate more” (Prager and Govier 2003: 12). Prager and Govier go on to argue that for “creatures like us” truth seeking will fail to be realistic because reconciliation depends on forgiveness (Prager and Govier 2003: 13), and for human beings forgiveness is quite a hard concept to grasp, it is almost like putting the victim on a pedestal. Dwyer further argues that although truth is essential “...how, in all good conscience, can victims be asked to bear the further burden of undertaking the hard work of reconciliation? And what about justice?” (Dwyer 2003:107).

B) *Prosecution*

Carrying on from this concept of justice, we come to the second approach of transnational justice; prosecution. It has to be noted that a proper legal system needs to be in place in order to effectively complete the process of reconciliation. As Dwyer argues, truth seeking and forgiveness should not replace justice (Dwyer 2003). Sri Lanka may be known for not having a proper legal system in place to prosecute perpetrators of human rights violations. There are violations over the past 20 years that have never been investigated. The justice system is “subject to political pressure, lacks effective witness protection and is glacially slow” (Amnesty International, supra n 24 at 2 cited in Anonymous 2011: 43). A statement by Amnesty International clearly sums up the legal situation in Sri Lanka:

“Those that do make it to trial rarely conclude with a conviction; defendants are acquitted for want of evidence; witnesses refuse to testify; hearings are subject to repeated delays; even the prosecution has failed to appear in court in key human rights cases. This is not simply a problem of inadequate resources or institutional capacity (although these too are obstacles); it is a problem of political will” (Amnesty International, supra n 24 at 2 cited in Anonymous 2011: 43).

However, there are some instances that should be taken into consideration, where Sri Lanka has prosecuted wrongdoers for human rights violations. Added to the indictments against LTTE members who have carried out bomb attacks - attacking the Central Bank of Sri Lanka in 1996 and the temple that houses the Buddha’s tooth relic in 1998 - there have also been prosecutions against security and army personnel. An example is the conviction of

security personnel who failed to prevent the killing of 26 LTTE cadres in a low security area, and the conviction of six army personnel who was involved in a gang rape of an 18 year old Tamil school girl in Jaffna in 1996. However these are just a very few examples in contrast to those cases which have been ignored. Anonymous (2011) argues that in the event that there have been prosecutions, it has mainly “been against ‘small fish’ or lower-ranking officers in the case of security personnel. Those in command structures have escaped the net” (Anonymous 2011:42).

C) Memorialisation and Reconciliation

The third and final approach in transnational justice is memorialisation and reconciliation, which is very much central to this dissertation. Even before the LLRC was formed and its report published, there have been instances in Sri Lanka where memorialisation and reconciliation activities have taken place. In the early 1990s, a civil society group based in Colombo, started memorialising violences related to the ethnic conflict, including bombings, assassinations etc. They did this with road paintings of “peace, nonviolence and tolerance in the exact physical location of the violence” (Anonymous 2011:42). Another example that adds to this is the reconstruction of the Jaffna public library, in 1997, which was destroyed during the conflict. And during the peace talks that took place between 2002 and 2003, the government initiated and launched a national plan of action for reconciliation, it was “well-formulated to include a cross-section of civil society representation and inputs” however this did not go as well as planned because it “failed to trickle down to the general public” (Anonymous 2011:45).

2.2 Obstacles to Reconciliation

Whilst we have understood the concept of reconciliation and the process of reconciliation, we will also look at obstacles that may hinder the reconciliation process.

When it comes to reconciliation, one of the obstacles that the nation is very likely to face is the distinction between national reconciliation and individual reconciliation. Although nationally reconciliation can be achieved in many ways, of which a few have been highlighted above through the theory of transnational justice approach, it may be an entirely different ball game to achieve personal reconciliation. And this is quite ironic because in order to achieve national reconciliation, we would expect it to start from the individual. Dwyer (2003) questions, “would the pursuit of national reconciliation be purchased at the cost of denying justice to individuals?” (Dwyer 2003:102). This whole idea wakes us up to the fact that reconciliation is a very arduous process (Oppelt 1998 cited in Dwyer 2003:103). Even though forgiveness is an important aspect of reconciliation, is it humanly possible to forgive someone for doing brutal things to you and your family? “Trust is extraordinarily fragile” (Oppelt 1998 cited in Dwyer 2003:103), in most circumstances it is hard to forgive and build trust for someone close to you, then how is it possible to forgive and trust someone you do not personally know? Dwyer (2003) also emphasises that when you look at it in this perspective there are implications to the psychological capacities of persons to engage in reconciliation” (Dwyer 2003:102). A quote by Marius Schoon sums up this dilemma well:

“On the whole, I’m in favour of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (of South Africa). I think it is going to bring about national reconciliation. In my case, it is not going to bring about personal reconciliation” (Quote by Marius Schoon cited in Dwyer 2003:105).

Although these obstacles are bound to persist in any post-conflict situation, reconciliation is important to a post-conflict society. According to dominant conflict prevention theory, more than anything reconciliation is important to prevent a reemergence of the conflict, and this should be guided by strong objectives that will take a society toward sustainable and durable peace (Hoglund and Orjuela 2011 : 22). After such violence and in the case of Sri Lanka, civil war, if the society is left in the same conditions as they were; if their grievances are not dealt with, if there is no integration of societies, there is no point in having ended the conflict, because there is the chance that the conflict may start again, and might even be bigger and messier. This is why reconciliation is so important. Also, taking into consideration the human

psychological aspect of the end of a conflict, it is in the interest of the victims of such violence that they are given the highest support to get over what happened to them and their loved ones (Dwyer 2003:97). It is not enough that the state does external developments, they must also invest time and money in healing the emotional wounds of the people. "Given this assumption, we can understand not only why we are motivated to pursue reconciliation but why reconciliation is of deep moral significance" (Dwyer 2003:97).

2.3 Reconciliation in the Sri Lankan Context

Considering the point above of how morally significant reconciliation is, Sri Lanka's move to choose the path of reconciliation is a positive move to heal the nation that suffered from 30 years of civil war and the serious human rights violations that was committed by both sides. The UN wanted to conduct an external investigation into war crimes that were alleged to be committed, specifically, during the last stage of the war. However, holding on to their sovereignty, Sri Lanka rejected this motion by the UN. Høglund and Orjuela (2011) states: "The dominant discourse of the Sri Lankan government after May 2009 has been that the conflict is now solved and that hence there is no need for reconciliation" (Høglund and Orjuela, 2011:24). It may be argued that this statement contradicts the fact the president of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksha, appointed the LLRC in order to investigate human rights violations and make recommendations for reconciliation. However this report was criticised by the UN Panel of experts and International Human Rights Groups (Høglund and Orjuela, 2011:30) and in Sri Lanka too, there is a perception among the people that the state seems to be taking an unhurried and inefficient move towards implementing the recommendations in the LLRC report (Moonesinghe 2013). However, through this dissertation we will closely look at the recommendation made by the LLRC, and determine through the experiences and observations of NGOs if these criticisms are just and fair.

Academics such as Høglund and Orjuela (2011) argue that because of the decisive victory of the state, the usual conflict prevention and reconciliation theory seems to be unfit in the

context of Sri Lanka. “With the total defeat of the LTTE there was no apparent ‘other side’ with which to reconcile and negotiate a post-war future” (Hoglund and Orjuela 2011: 24). Furthermore Hoglund and Orjuela argues that with the death of the main leaders of the LTTE, the state has no interest in listening to the grievances of the Tamil people. However, it has to be argued that, the LTTE were not the sole representatives of the Tamil’s and there is still space for Tamil politicians to step up and take leadership and represent the Tamil people. Thus reconciliation definitely seems to be a positive move and a possible one.

Another prominent criticism about the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka suggests that the state’s main focus is economic development. This has been conveyed through the governments' development agenda which focuses on physical reconstruction of conflict affected areas (Anonymous 2011: 31). Economic development is definitely needed to move on from a horrible past into a positive and prosperous future, however it has been argued that “the state appears to be working on the assumption that economic recovery combined with the reestablishment of subnational democratic institutions in the North and East of the country will take care of all remaining minority grievances” (Anonymous 2011:32). Nevertheless, economic development will take care of some minority grievances, such as unemployment and standard of living, therefore this motion by the government is not entirely a fruitless one.

2.4 The Progress of the Reconciliation Process in Sri Lanka

As discussed above, although there has been criticism regarding the LLRC report, we suggest that the initiative to publish this report with recommendations for reconciliation, is a positive move by the GoSL in order to heal the nation that has been wounded with many years of war. Therefore we will now look at what has and has not been happening in Sri Lanka in terms of reconciliation, either initiated by the GoSL or by third parties. Many reports have not been published on the progress of the reconciliation process and the research will aim to find out more about the policies implemented by the GoSL picking from the knowledge

of NGOs working in the area. However, before we come to that section we will explore existing literature outlining how reconciliation has taken place in Sri Lanka thus far.

An important part of the reconciliation process is dialogue between parties that were adversaries during the war. Many NGOs and other organisations within the country including Sinhalese nationalist organisations and even the armed forces are encouraging dialogue “with an aim to reach out to the Tamil victims of war and build a unified Sri Lanka (that is, a Sri Lanka without ethnically based political and military struggles)” (Hoglund and Orjuela 2011:31). Initiating activities that will have former adversaries in a situation where they can talk and find common ground is an effective way to minimise the likelihood of conflict in the future. However, this also needs to be done at leadership level in order to truly make a difference. This also leads us to why NGOs are important in the process of reconciliation. NGOs as initiators of dialogue and as intermediaries between former adversaries, can make a positive contribution to the reconciliation process. A study conducted by Simpson (1997), in Bosnia, suggests that NGOs are the social actors who make the voices of people heard (Simpson 1997: 478). In activities that encourage dialogue, giving people the opportunity to speak up is a positive step towards reconciliation.

Another issue that persists in Sri Lanka is the treatment of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). According to reported figures the final months of the war left about 300,000 people displaced, with their homes been destroyed. Most of these people were placed in welfare centres in the North. According to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights (cited in Anonymous 2011:36) around 280,000 IDPs have been returned to what is left of their homes and is slowly building up their lives (Hussain 2010 cited in Anonymous 2011: 36). By September 2012 the last IDP Camp Manik Farm was closed and all IDPs were returned to their homes (The Hindu 2012 [online]). A documentary by Guy Gunaratne (CODOC 2009 [film]) explored the state of this IDP camp as soon as the war ended in 2009. What was portrayed was that the camp was really like an enclosed village, with clay huts for families to live in, markets and medical centres for the health and well being of the IDPs. However, there have been criticism that the state of the camps were not as good as they

were shown to be. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has even described the camps as “internment camps” because the IDPs were not allowed to leave, and outside visitors to the camp including relatives of the IDPs, media, NGOs and other organisations were heavily restricted (BBC 2009 [online]). However there has also been good feedback about the rehabilitation program that was conducted for those alleged to be former LTTE cadres, which included education and training in order to integrate them into society (Hoglund and Orjuela 2011).

Another issue the state has to deal with is land rights. The problem of land rights existed even before the war began, from the time Sri Lanka was colonised by Britain. Sinhalese were sent to settle in Tamil dominated areas, mainly in the Eastern and Northern Province even before independence from the British (Wickramasinghe 2006:117). As Wickramasinghe (2006) states:

“In Sri Lanka, the term "colonisation" meant the creation of agricultural settlements in the interior of the island. By the late 1960s, the government had alienated more than 300,000 acres of land to 67,000 people in major colonisation schemes” (Wickramasinghe 2006: 117)

However, there are other scholars who disagree that colonisation was a reason for the ethnic distribution in the Eastern Province of the country. Two pacts made between Sinhala and Tamil leaders in 1957 and 1965 (The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957 and the Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1965) “recognised the special rights of Tamils in colonisation schemes in the Northern and Eastern provinces” (Wickramasinghe 2006: 117). Some scholars have even argued that Tamil politicians should not have criticised the settlement of Sinhala landless farmers in Tamil dominated areas because elsewhere in the country Tamils were free to settle wherever they wished. However, the problem now is far deeper, because the land previously owned by Tamils in the Eastern and Northern province are said to be controlled by the army for fear of land-mines. Tamils are pleading for their legally owned lands back. “Though recommendations have been made with regard to land ownership and the “extents of private land” that is being “utilised for security purposes”, there

are several civilians who are yet to have access to their land” (Nirosh 2013 [online]). This is a big issue that the state needs to deal with in order to proceed with the process of reconciliation effectively.

Whilst returning land to citizens of the North and East, and returning of the IDPs to their homes, and creating opportunities for dialogue will help the reconciliation process there is one thing that is much more difficult to tackle; human memory and feelings. After what the entire nation had to go through for thirty years, anger, fear, mistrust and suspicion lingers in the minds and hearts of all those who were victimised either by the GoSL, the armed forces or the LTTE (Anonymous 2011:37). After the systematic defeat of the LTTE by the GoSL the fear among the Sinhalese and other ethnicities living in areas other than the North and the East seems to have deteriorated and the current Rajapaksha government holds the political support of the majority because of this. However, there is so much the Tamil’s in the North and East has to come to terms with before they trust the state again. As de Silva (2010) states: “it (GoSL) would learn very early that it is much more difficult to plan and implement a policy of reconciliation with the Tamil minority than to plan the defeat of the LTTE” (de Silva 2010: 238). The Tamil’s, Sinhalese and Muslims equally dealt with serious trauma. On the side of the Tamil’s, the ethnic pogrom of 1983 saw “politically instigated gangs of Sinhalese vengefully attack(ing) Tamil civilians across the country”, the burning down of the Jaffna (the northern-most district, with a majority Tamil population) public library in 1981, and the final few months of the war where there was major civilian casualty and the loss of the Tamil and Muslim people’s lands, homes and livelihoods. On the side of the Sinhalese, the terrorist attacks that ravaged the country, mainly the densely populated cities such as the capital Colombo, Galle in the South and Kandy in the hills. The Muslims too have had to deal with loosing their homes, when in 1990, the LTTE gave 48 hours notice for all Muslims to evacuate their homes in the North or face death. The LTTE also shot 172 Muslim men who were praying at the mosque in Batticaloa. “These and other examples of remembered violence have left deep anger, fear and suspicion on all sides” (Anonymous 2011: 37). Furthermore, the move by the GoSL to reject the independent investigation by the UN, gives a negative image about the government; an image that portrays the government as one that

marginalises the protection of human rights (Bopage 2010: 360). Therefore, it is important that the government takes steps towards clearing these negative memories that are instilled in the minds of the citizens and taking steps towards healing the emotional wounds that will help the reconciliation process one step further.

Given the thorough exploration of the literature that already exists around reconciliation and the post-conflict context of Sri Lanka, we have increased our understanding of what reconciliation is. It is not merely the external development of infrastructure and economic prosperity that will help a nation successfully achieve the goal of reconciliation, but it is also about the citizens of the country. It is about putting victims before anything else, and making sure that they have all the support they need to move on from a violent and tragic past, to regain their livelihoods and move on to a positive and prosperous future. However, this tremendous task cannot be completed merely by the government alone. It should be a joint effort by civil society and those representing civil society. As we also understood above, NGOs play a vital role in being that bridge between civil society and its government. Considering the very little literature there is on the important role that NGOs play in the process of reconciliation, this dissertation will aim to establish that role and understand how reconciliation in the current context of Sri Lanka can be efficient and effective with the joint effort of NGOs and the government, which will finally lead to sustainable peace.

3. Research Aims and Objectives

Aim:

To examine the impact of the recommendations made by the LLRC in the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka based on the opinions of major NGOs working in the area.

Objectives:

- To understand how the concept and process of reconciliation works in the context of Sri Lanka and establish if this kind of reconciliation is possible in the current political climate of Sri Lanka.
- To determine if the LLRC has made any progress in terms of implementing the recommendations by looking at opinions of NGOs that have been working to achieve sustainable peace in Sri Lanka.
- To establish the important role played by NGOs as intermediaries in the reconciliation process, and thereby make further recommendations on how Sri Lanka can efficiently move towards true reconciliation and sustainable peace.

4. Methodology

This section will outline the methodological approach used to achieve the aims of this dissertation. It will begin by presenting the methods of data collection, sampling methods and the strategy used for data analysis. We will also consider the ethical considerations that have arisen from the research and outline some of the difficulties and limitations of the research and how they were overcome.

4.1 Methodological Approach

As put forward in the previous section, this research project aims to examine the impact of the recommendations made by the LLRC in the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka based on the opinions of major NGOs working in the area, also considering how NGOs can play an important role as a bridge towards a true reconciled nation. Considering the nature of this project a qualitative approach will be used in order to achieve the objectives. A qualitative approach to the research will help understand how reality, in this specific case the reality of sustainable peace, is constructed and its “cultural meaning” (Neuman 2006:13). This is tied to the constructionist view on social reality, which is: “there is no inner essence that causes the reality people see; it is a product of social processes... In general what people see and experience is socially constructed” (Neuman 2006:89). Added to that a qualitative approach will further the authenticity of the research. Given the time limits for the research project, it gives the opportunity for the researcher to conduct fewer interviews but in-depth ones with sufficient information. It also gives the opportunity for thematic analysis and for the theory and data to be “fused” to give a better analysis of the phenomenon being studied. Most of all, the researcher is very much involved in the project with the use of a qualitative approach, which gives a better understanding of the subject studied. As Denzin and Lincoln say this allows for a highly self-aware *acknowledgement of social self*, or of researcher’s position in society” (Denzin and Lincoln 2003b cited in Neuman 2006:15).

4.2 Philosophy of Research

This research project bases itself on the philosophy of interpretive social science (ISS), where the researcher studies participants in their natural settings and tries to understand and interpret how people “create and maintain their social worlds” (Neuman 2006:88). This form of social science can be traced back to German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) and German philosopher Wilhem Dilthey (1833-1911). Dilthey presented two different types of science: *Naturwissenschaft* and *Geisteswissenschaft*. The latter fits the research paradigm used for this dissertation, i.e. “rooted in an empathetic understanding, or *verstehen*, of the everyday lived experience of people in specific historical settings” (Neuman 2006:87). Taking into consideration the context of this research project, using the idea of *verstehen*, we will learn how reconciliation can be achieved by studying and understanding the observations and recommendations of NGOs, whilst keeping in mind how their background and their personal experiences shape their observations and recommendations.

The concept of hermeneutics will be used to analyse the interviews conducted with NGO representatives to “discover meaning embedded within the text” (Neuman 2006:88) - in this case the text would be the interviews conducted with the NGOs. As Neuman suggests, the true meaning of a text is not obvious on the surface, the only way to discover the true meaning is to study the text in detail (Neuman 2006:88). When analysing the interviews, the constructionist view on social reality as outlined earlier will be kept in mind. Therefore when coming to an understanding of the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka it needs to be kept in mind that the reality seen is also constructed by social processes. Therefore, instead of studying the social condition as they appear, this research project will study the “processes by which people actively construct and can transform their existing conditions” (Neuman 2006:93), in this way we can come to the conclusion and establish whether reconciliation is possible or not in the current social and political climate of Sri Lanka.

4.3 Sampling Method

For qualitative research, when selecting the participants for the research, it is the relevance to the topic that is important as opposed to their representativeness (Flick 1998:41 cited in Neuman 2006:220). This is because the quality of the content contributed by the participants adds more value than the number of participants. Therefore, in selecting the participants for this study a non-random sampling method was used. Sequential sampling, combined with snowball sampling was used in gathering respondents. Sequential sampling involves finding as many relevant participants as possible “until time, financial resources, or (the researcher’s) energy is exhausted, or until there is no new information or diversity from the cases” (Neuman 200:24). Snowball sampling was also used where some NGOs interviewed recommended other NGOs or individuals that they felt could contribute to the research.

All the participants were from NGOs or civil society organisations and had to be directly involved with the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka. In other words, they had to have a vested interest in reconciliation. Whilst four out of the five participants were from organisations based in Sri Lanka, one was an organisation based in the United Kingdom working towards justice and peace in Sri Lanka. The names of the participants and their organisations will not be disclosed because of the sensitive nature of the subject being studied. This will be discussed further in the ‘Ethical Considerations’ section of this chapter.

4.4 Research Design

Applied Research will be used in this project, where the research is designed “to offer practical solutions to a concrete problem...” (Neuman 2006:25). This would constitute to the research through the interviews which aims to find further recommendations to achieve sustainable peace through reconciliation. Stemming from this method of applied research, evaluation research will be conducted to determine how well the GoSL is carrying out its work of reconciliation. This will be done through the interviews with NGOs, which outline their observations on the reconciliation process. Furthermore, the recommendations made by the

LLRC will be analysed and presented in the next section, intertwined with the analysis of the interviews with NGOs.

All-together five interviews were conducted, although over 20 organisations were contacted. Whilst it was aimed to conduct all interviews face-to-face, time and geographical constraints gave way for three face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The interview guide for the semi-structured interview contained a list of topics that were covered with every respondent, “but the order and the exact wording of questions” (Phellas, Bloch and Seale 2012:183) were changed according to the situation, and the flow of the interview. Added to this, two self-completion questionnaires, which contained the same questions as the semi-structured interview, were sent out to respondents who then replied with answers via email. Each face-to-face interview lasted about 30 to 45 minutes and each self-completed questionnaire was about two pages long on average. It was decided to conclude the data collection with five interviews because adequacy was attained (Neumam 2006:458) and there was sufficient data to go on with the analysis. They were long interviews, so baring in mind the time available to transcribe and analyse the interviews, the researcher made the decision to conclude at that.

An interview guide (see Appendix 1) supported the semi-structured interviews and was also the basis for the self-completed questionnaire. The interview guide was created with a “good understanding of the related literature (Phellas, Bloch and Seale 2012:185) and, the research aims to find out what the literature could not provide answers to. When creating the interview guide it was important to make sure that “the concepts contained within the aims of the study (were) comprehensively covered” (Phellas, Bloch and Seale 2012:185). The questions were open-ended in order to have better access to the participants views, opinions and experiences (Byrne 2012:208). The interviews were conducted in locations that were familiar to the participant, such as their office, home or a nearby café which was recommended by the participant. This helped in making the participant comfortable and relaxed in order to get the best out of the interview.

4.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is an integral part of the research project. According to Neuman (2006), for qualitative research data analysis is an ongoing process rather than a final stage. He says “qualitative researchers look for patterns or relationships, early in a research project, while they are still collecting data [...] Thus, analysis is less a distinct final stage of research than a dimension of research that stretches across all stages” (Neuman 2006:459). The analysis strategy used for this research project is *thematic content analysis*, which is based on a “systematic formalised coding process” (Rivas 2012:367). The data was coded according to the dominant themes in the study which were identified in the process of analysing the data, also with a view in integrating some of the main themes identified in the literature in the awareness that inductive and deductive reasoning (where the first moves from the specific to the general and the latter from the general to the specific) are not mutually exclusive. According to Martinez (2012) “induction is in fact reality based on the premise that when an argument is inductive it goes through a process; a process including theory, hypothesis and probability”.

The coding process involves three main stages. However, before the actual coding could take place, the researcher had to immerse herself in the data - i.e. reading the data many times before coding it - in order to be sensitive towards the subject studied. This then led to the first step of the coding process which is ‘open coding’. This “brings themes to the surface from deep inside the data” (Neuman 2006:461). This condenses the data into analytical categories. The second stage of coding is ‘axial coding’, where the codes are organised and linked, and the preliminary analytic categories are further narrowed down. And finally ‘selective coding’ where the “researcher examines previous codes to identify and select data that will support the conceptual coding categories that were developed” (Neuman 2006:464). A framework approach will be used to arrange the data into a chart “developed from the thematic framework” (Rivas 2012:382). This type of analysis strategy will focus on information gathered across all the cases instead of looking at one case a time (Rivas 2012:367).

4.6 Ethical Considerations

It is important to consider ethics of any research project because “the researcher has a moral and professional obligation to be ethical, even when research subjects are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics” (Neuman 2006:129). In basic words, considering ethics is distinguishing between right and wrong when conducting research. At any given time the best weapon against “unethical behaviour” is the individual researchers “moral code” (Neuman 2006:130). If the researcher acts in good conscience and is constantly considering dilemmas throughout the research there is no way for things to go ethically wrong. Following are a few of the ethical issues considered during this research project.

The most common problem in research is scientific misconduct. This happens if the researchers “falsifies” or “distorts” the method of data collection or uses the work of others instead of conducting their own research (Neuman 2006:130). Similarly, research fraud occurs when the researcher invents data to present in the final report (Neuman 2006:130). However, at no point in this research was the work of others used or the method of data collection falsified. It is quite common for a researcher to abuse the power and trust bestowed on them by an organisation or a university as is in this case. It is the responsibility of the researcher to “guide, protect, and oversee the interests of the people being studied” (Neuman 2006:131). It is also important to mention that this research project did not involve physical harm, injury, humiliation or degradation to the participants. It was, moreover, ensured that participants are in no way put “in stressful, embarrassing, anxiety-producing, or unpleasant situations” (Neuman 2006:132). Although this research does not study criminals or illegal acts by subjects, it is important to keep in mind the current political climate in Sri Lanka, where many NGO workers have been attacked or arrested. therefore this is why, a conscious decision was made to keep the interviewees anonymous , making sure that they do not get into trouble with the state for observations they have made in the interviews. It is extremely important to get informed consent from participants, because “participation *must* be voluntary” and the participants should know what they are getting involved in before they agree to take part (Neuman 2006:135). This ethical consideration was taken care of by using

an information sheet (appendix 2) which was sent out to participants, giving them the opportunity to understand the purpose of research and what is expected of them, before they agree to take part. A consent form (appendix 3) was also handed to participants to sign before the interview was recorded, asking their permission to be recorded and also asking if they would like to be identified in the report or kept anonymous. Although all participants except for one did not want to be anonymous, the researcher made the ethical decision to keep participants anonymous, for their safety and the safety of their organisations. Added to that all measures have been taken to keep all the details of the participants and the notes and recordings of interview private.

4.7 Methodological Difficulties and Limitations of Research

There were a few unexpected difficulties that had to be taken care of when conducting this research. The most important were: time constraints and geographical location which limited the researcher in doing face-to-face interviews. These will be discussed below.

Although the researcher travelled to Sri Lanka to conduct the interviews, other commitments allowed only one month in Sri Lanka, therefore in keeping in sync with the schedules of the participants only two face-to-face interviews were conducted in Colombo, whilst one face-to-face interview was conducted in London and the rest via email. This also meant that whilst it would have added more value to conduct interviews with NGOs based in the North and East of the country, this was not possible. Conducting interviews with NGOs in the North and East will give a more insightful view of the situation because the conflict was the most serious in these areas, thus it is expected that most of the recommendations of the LLRC should be implemented there too. However, to some extent this problem was overcome by interviewing NGOs that are, although based in Colombo, do most of their work in the ground in these conflict affected areas.

Furthermore, the fact that the researcher is Sinhalese may raise issues about the neutrality of the research. Starting from the presupposition that neutrality in research is never

completely possible (Delamont, Oliver, and Connolly 2001), has posed as a challenge in being neutral in the analysis and discussion considering the biases the researcher may have. However, academics such as Hammersley, Mills, Becker and Gouldner have stressed the importance of objectivity and neutrality in social research, also known as 'partisan research'. Hammersley believes that the "refusal to engage with the arguments of the other side undercuts the possibility of fruitful discussion", especially when it comes to debates on race and ethnicity. Furthermore being biased "turns sociology into a political morality play" (Hammersley 2000:149). Nevertheless being aware of this bias was the first step in aiming to be neutral as possible. Abductive reasoning helped in providing an unbiased social scientific account by looking at the issues at hand from the perspective of the participants (Bryman 2012: 401). Added to that being reflexive, which involves "critical self-scrutiny" has helped the researcher in being aware of the role she plays throughout the research process and her place in society.

“Reconciliation is being urged upon people who have been bitter and murderous enemies, upon victims and perpetrators of terrible human rights abuse, upon groups of individuals whose very self-conceptions have been structured in terms of historical and often state-sanctioned relations of dominance and submission.”

- Susan Dwyer

5. Findings

In the following section we will discuss the findings from the interviews conducted with NGOs that have a vested interest in the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka. By the end of this section we hope to further our understanding of the concept of reconciliation and how it has been or has not been applied in Sri Lanka. We will also come to an understanding about the vital elements of reconciliation, i.e. truth telling and forgiveness, in the current political climate of Sri Lanka, which were discussed in section 1 and section 2 of the dissertation. By the end of this discussion we hope to reach an in-depth insight of the impact of the recommendations made by the LLRC and how reconciliation can be achieved in the context of Sri Lanka by closely examining the views and suggestions of NGOs working in this area.

5.1 The Participants

Representatives from five NGOs were interviewed for the purpose of this research project. As mentioned in section 4, it has been the conscious decision of the researcher to keep the participants anonymous due to the sensitive nature of the subject studied. A code from A-E will be given to identify each NGO representative in this section. We will first outline what these NGOs have been doing in or outside Sri Lanka to aid the reconciliation process either directly or indirectly. This will be done in order to have a clear understanding of the relevance of these organisations to this research project and how their expert knowledge and views may help in furthering our understanding of the impact of the recommendations made by the LLRC on the Sri Lankan society.

Organisation A is based in London, however, works towards furthering peace and justice in Sri Lanka. They do this through lobbying the international community to take a tougher line with the GoSL in terms of owning up to alleged human rights violations. Later on in this section we will find out that the perception of the organisations interviewed suggest that the government is against any international interference in the process. Therefore, they believe that taking a tougher line will encourage the GoSL to create space for international organisations to enter the sphere and help further the reconciliation process. Organisation A also helps in strengthening the link between the diaspora Tamil's and Sinhalese and providing an apolitical voice for diaspora concerns, with their work done in Britain, Canada and Australia. They believe that they have helped the reconciliation process from the outside by facilitating dialogue between the diaspora Sinhalese and Tamils.

Organisation B focuses most of their energy on the youth of Sri Lanka because their main aim is to impact the “war generation”, i.e the generation that was born into the war, who will be the decision makers of Sri Lanka in the near future. Their activities focus on inspiring the next generation to see what's possible, to understand the mistakes that were made and not make those mistakes again. They do this through various activities that target the young leaders of the country , i.e prefects and sports leaders of schools. They do not believe in being a “Colombo-centred” organisation; trying to assume that they understand the rest of the country whilst sitting in the capital. Their input will add value to this research project because it brings an insight into the first hand experiences and opinions of the people in the North. As they say,

“We want to know the pastoral people, not just the people who are suffering in the North but also understand the mind set of the Sinhalese people (Participant B).

They have also contribute to the reconciliation process by visiting schools across the country conveying the message of reconciliation and peace in order to create a united Sri Lanka. They have also implemented programmes to train and educate war-affected youth and to get them into employment. Finally, they believe that by telling the stories of the common man, Sri Lanka can get ahead in the reconciliation process.

Organisation C is an arts and theatre organisation whose main aim is reconciliation through art. Their team consists of multiethnic people and perform their drama acts in both Sinhala and Tamil. Even during the war and continuously after the war they have performed forum theatre on social integration. After 1983, the connections between Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim artists in every form of media were broken, and still there is a gap between them, thus this organisation was established as an example of how art can be used to develop cultural coexistence. Organisation C was also involved in a joint project with the Ministry of Social Integration and Government Information Centre (GIC) to carry out the message of integration. However, as we will soon find out in this section many government initiated programmes tend to be left off incomplete, as is what happened to this project.

Organisation D provides legal services and helps people access government information. They also advocate for minority language rights and against land grabbing for militarisation.

Organisation E does language training to overcome language barriers among the communities that speak Tamil and Sinhalese. They also encourage religious harmony and tolerance through interfaith dialogues. Added to that, they organise various celebrations for religious festivals, sports activities, exchange programmes and cultural programmes in the hopes of promoting diversity and unity in Sri Lanka.

5.2 Importance of Reconciliation to Post-war Sri Lanka and the Progress of the Reconciliation Process

We will start by discussing the importance of reconciliation to Sri Lanka. All participants agreed that reconciliation is the most important thing right now. Three out of the five participants believe that it is important to prevent Sri Lanka from relapsing into conflict. As participant A points out, even though there was a complete military destruction of the separatist group in Sri Lanka, all the ingredients for a conflict to arise are there. As participant A stated:

“most people living in the North now have no stake in the Sri Lankan state whatsoever and there is not much talk about independence but there is certainly no love of the government either. And you know, war will come back unless a peaceful solution is found.”

However, although this argument makes an assumption that democracy is missing in the North, it can be countered by the fact that the first provincial council election in 25 years will be held in the North on the 21st of September 2013 (Daily Mirror 2013), showing that there is some progress in finding a political solution. On the other hand, participant B argues, the reason for the war is below the surface, “so we need to attack it soon before something reemerges. It may not be a war as such, but it will be a divided society.” Participant E contributes to this argument by pointing out that a majority of the country is still holding on to the “war mentality”. This is openly promoted by nationalist political parties and extremist Buddhist fractions. As participant E stated: “there is a highly charged tension among different ethnic/religious groups which can easily be fuelled towards violence.”

Added to that, participant B believes that reconciliation is a priority to the new generation because “we don’t want to have another generation inherit what we inherited; inherit such a strong rooted hatred and an anger and animosity of injustices done by one community to the other and vice versa”. Participant B further argues that the Sri Lankan society has come to a place where one community thinks that a suicide bomber was not doing the wrong thing but merely protecting his/her community. And another percentage of the community think that it is not wrong to burn down houses of minority groups or justify heinous crimes. Therefore, as participant B sums up well:

“I think there is so many important things that needs to happen after war but this is just not one of those things, this is *the* most important thing. We have to make sure that there is a Sri Lanka where there is healing and that we break away the roots of war.”

We will now examine the progress of the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka from the perspective of the NGOs interviewed. According to the participants, there have been a few

positive initiatives by the government to further the reconciliation process, as stated by participant B:

“I think there has been some bold and progressive statements been made and some even strong initiatives that have taken place that have looked very good on paper.”

Firstly, the majority of the participants agree that the government has started development projects in the North and East of the country. For example, participant A stated:

“In terms of infrastructural development and this idea of economic development as reconciliation, they’ve done pretty well”.

However, almost all participants agree that this is not the answer for reconciliation. As participant A states:

“it is a complete misnomer, the idea that purely economic development counts as reconciliation. And in terms winning the peace and political progress, really, very little progress whatsoever.”

What is missing in this equation is the idea of human feeling and emotion as discussed in the I.r (section 2). Whilst roads and airports are being built, the feeling of mistrust and hurt is deepening in the hearts of the victims. A strong statement by participant D outlines this dilemma:

“The premise on which ‘reconciliation’ is based is flawed. Where there should be sensitivity there is force and mistrust, where there should be dignity there is contempt.”

Similarly, participant E highlights that there has been no progress in terms of finding a political solution, investigating human rights violations or civilian disappearances and there is no programme in place to heal those who are suffering from trauma or to help those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Added to that whilst the infrastructural development is good for the country in terms of attracting tourists etc, “local people in the North and the East are not favourable to the development programs that focus on attracting tourists, as they fear these can threaten their culture” (Participant E).

Nevertheless, the participants seem to be in agreement that the implementation of the LLRC was a step in the right direction. And the recommendations made by the LLRC were a “really

good idea and would really help” (Participant A). Participant B also stated that the LLRC took up some of the harder issues that the country had to face, and although there were serious critics of the LLRC there were also those who were not overly critical because the LLRC spoke about the hard issues such as human rights violations. Furthermore, there has been implementation of policies regarding integration, such as the discourse on secretary language, “making sure that we become a trilingual Sri Lanka” (Participant B). There has also been progress on the rehabilitation of LTTE ex-combatants, so that they will be reintegrated into society. Added to that as Participant E stated:

“cross cultural activities, interfaith programs and youth exchanges are encouraged and being implemented by both government and nongovernment sectors.”

Accordingly, there have also been recommendations on education policy and there have been many government meetings and planning session taking place regarding this.

Participants B and E raised the subject of resettlement, where those who were displaced during the war and were held in camps are not resettled into society and their homes. Although it has taken quite a long while to complete the resettlement of IDPs, there has been initiatives to help in certain elements of resettlement and rebuilding. As stated by Participant B, whose organisation spends a majority of their time in the conflicted areas and who have lived among the IDPs for long periods at a time, stated:

“The resettlement process was done pretty fast in the sense of Manik Farm, one the IDP camps that had thousands of people. We felt that it was mismanaged initially but later on there was quick progress to get people out of there... Here and there we have heard reports of certain resettlement areas that have been cleared”.

The resettlement of refugees from India has also been noted and although there has been a few setbacks, these organisations observed that the resettlement process is almost complete. However, a majority of the participants have argued that there has been a complete failure to provide housing for those who have been resettled. As Participant B questioned :

“Was the answer just to get the people out of there or was it make sure that they went into habitat, that they could actually live and they had a livelihood?”

Participant B added , it is not enough to get people out of internment camps, it is the responsibility of the government to guide these citizens to resume the life they left behind because of the war. Participant E further observed that no compensation has been given to the people that were affected by the war and no steps are being taken by the government to build a livelihood for the resettled people. And, although people are being resettled, as Participant E also observed, it is not in their own land, which leads us to the next issue about land rights.

As outlined in the I.r., there is an ongoing battle by those who lost their lands during the war and have still not got it back. There have been many problems regarding land grabbing and, as emphasised above, there are organisations helping those affected by this dilemma; even though this issue is far from resolved. As participant B observed, there are those who were given their land and houses back, but there are many who have not. This dilemma cannot be summed up better than when stated by the participant:

“I have been to these areas where people lost their land. It’s sad because this is ancestral property for many and you feel their hurt, and you feel their pain. You try to put yourself in their shoes and you admire them for their patience, you admire them for their resolve. I’m pretty disappointed for some of the people who are still struggling four years after the war, they still don’t have their deeds, they still don’t have their land. Some of them have been told, ‘sorry, you are not going to get your land back, because it has been taken over’. That is not the step in the right direction, it’s almost ignoring all the recommendations when it came to land policy rights...”

Another issue concerning the reconciliation process is the tight military presence in the North. During the war and also during the first few months after the war, there were many high security zones, not only the North and East but also in the rest of the country. However, it has been observed by participant E that “tight law enforcements related to security procedures have been relaxed, and road barriers are opened. There is also slight relaxing in high security zones”. However, on this not all participants agreed. Other participants have

observed that there is a general feeling of fear in the North mainly because of the obvious military presence, even four years after the end of the war. According to the TNA - a Tamil political party - there is one army personnel for five Tamils in Jaffna (Participant E). Participant A, for instance remarked that, there are military checkpoints everywhere in the North and that there have been reports of army personnel dropping in on houses for random checks. As stated by participant A:

“Everyone lives in terror of the army, that was certainly true in 2010, and from what I hear it’s even more true now... Everyone is kind of guarded, watching what they are saying and who is watching. Because they know that there will be repercussions from the military if they are seen to be stepping out of line.”

This tells us a different story about the level of security in Sri Lanka than the one offered by the government. Furthermore, what has really hindered the LLRC’s hearings from victims and witnesses is the rumours of refugee returnees being interviewed by top level government officials, which has discouraged the people to come forward and give witness accounts. However, it is also important to point out that this argument was countered by participant A to an extent. Participant A stated that the LLRC hearings were overwhelmed by the amount of people who wanted to give witness accounts, even if they were afraid, they were desperate to be heard. However, participant B admitted that: “it was definitely the bold and the courageous who did that”.

Although it has been established through the I.r. that the government has taken a laid back approach to the reconciliation process, participant B observed that on civil society level there has been many initiatives taken to further the reconciliation process. An example of this would be the work done by the organisations outlined in section 5.1. However, “its success will only be seen if they are able to even persuade the policy makers and the administration to realise what the pulse of the masses are changing towards.” Whilst there are many Sinhalese and Buddhist extremist showing a resistance to reconciliation, the majority of the country is longing for true peace and reconciliation.

The common consensus among the participants seems to be that the overall process of reconciliation is a failure. Participant A stated: "I think in many ways its gone backwards actually. In many ways things are as bad as they were in 2009." And according to participant E, "to begin with, we feel a genuine reconciliation process was not started at the end of the civil war in May 2009". Correspondingly participant B stated:

"overall I would say that we have failed. I'm not saying that we have failed 100% or that we have done nothing, I think we cannot ignore the work that has been done. Some may accuse it of being just window dressing for the international community or to keep people quiet. I would like to give people the benefit of the doubt and s a y maybe they were partially intentional, serious efforts that were not implemented well, like many things in Sri Lanka,"

The fact that many programmes or projects that have been started have been left off without completion either due to lack of interest or lack of resources is an ongoing issue that has been mentioned by all participants at some point. . This was also stressed by participant C who mentioned that a policy by the Department for National Languages and Social Integration was approved by parliament but have not been implemented due to the lack of facilities. Overall, whilst it appears that good recommendations have been made by the LLRC, the question remains as to when they will be fully implemented. So, even though it was recognised that important steps have been taken, lack of resources, as well as an inability to comprehend what reconciliation involves, seem to be two of the main issues when it comes to the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka. A majority of the participants believe that the concept of reconciliation has been misunderstood by Sri Lanka. As participant D observed, there is no effort to acknowledge the grievances of the Tamil civilians, which is articulated through the "the great trumpeting and victory speeches of the government" (Participant D). Comparing the Sri Lankan reconciliation process to the South African TRC, participant A stated:

"It is not for the perpetrators to say when we can move on, it is for the victims to say when we can move on and that's what the Sri Lankan's do not get."

Added to that, the fact the courts in Sri Lanka are not independent, and the failure of separation of powers caused by the 18th amendment to the constitution "completely drives

coach and horses through the idea of independence of institutions which are meant to be implementing reconciliation” (Participant A).

Added to the inefficiency of the administration as mentioned above, lack of resources, and the misunderstanding of the true concept of reconciliation, some of the other reasons for the failure of the reconciliation process from the perspective of the participants are outlined below .

5.3 NGO's Views on the LLRC and their Recommendations

Whilst we have understood the general opinion on the reconciliation process so far, it is also important to fully know the views of NGOs about the body that is instrumental in the reconciliation process: the LLRC. From a first reading, what we can see is that there is a divided opinion regarding the members of the commission. Participant B agreed that the members of the LLRC was appointed by the GoSL because they believed that they had insight, wisdom and maturity and that they had something to offer.

“Their wisdom and maturity has led them to make suggestions like this which I think are crucial, for people to feel that they belong in the country; to have their freedom, to have their legal rights and all of that and to be fully aware that they are a part of the Sri Lankan fabric and they are equal citizens.”

However, participant E disagrees because it believed that none of the members had a good understanding about reconciliation and many of them were considered political appointments. Furthermore, participants E points out that a genuine effort was not made to listen to the grievances of the people and follow a proper procedure to record them and act on them. Participant E further stated: “most sessions were conducted in Colombo with very few visits to war torn areas... Most of the grievances that were recorded were never investigated”.

Nevertheless, although there was a general consensus about failure of the reconciliation process, most of the participants also commented on the positive attributes of the LLRC.

These include the recommendation on language rights, land rights, education policy and also the recommendations on the militarisation of conflict affected areas, to name a few. Some of the good recommendations were summed up by participant D who stated:

“The LLRC expressed horror at the practice of disappearances; it recommended the credible investigation and punishment of the guilty. It recommended the full implementation of language rights. It recommended the speedy disposal of cases against those suspected of being LTTE cadres. These measures would build trust and convey that the state was serious about reconciliation.”

This was also backed by participant E who praised the final 285 recommendations presented to the President in November 2011:

“The most useful recommendations we see are on investigation of human rights violation and finding a political solution for the ethnic conflict. These recommendations will address the ‘justice’ in the reconciliation process.”

Added to this, as mentioned above education policy recommended by the LLRC has been extremely positive as articulated by all the participants. To an extent, this also addresses unemployment among Tamil youth. Improving education barriers and language barriers will help increase employability of the Tamil youth who were for so long deprived of this due to the conflict that ravaged the North.

Nevertheless, whilst the participants agree that there are many great recommendations, one of the resounding criticisms about the LLRC is the lack of enthusiasm to make sure that the recommendations are implemented. Participant E stated: “if the recommendations can be implemented, it will be a big step in the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka,” clearly implying that at present they are not or only minimally put into operation as participant A observed. Participant A stated that only a third of the recommendations have been called to be implemented, when all of them should have been implemented by now. On the same note, participant A criticised the LLRC for giving the army the job of investigating itself and also implementing some of the recommendations:

“The army shouldn't be leading the reconciliation process because the army is part of the problem, not the solution.”

Another criticism resounding through the opinions of all participants is how the GoSL is opposed to any involvement of international bodies or local NGOs, either to help implement the recommendations or to monitor the implementation. An example of this is pointed out by participant A who stated:

“What has been really notable is how incredibly aggressively the Sri Lankan government has opposed any involvement from the UN in monitoring the implementation of the recommendations.”

This is clearly a very negative thing from the perspective of NGOs, which find themselves shut out of the reconciliation process, thereby hindering their ability to make a difference and push the process forward. According to them, the government has a negative attitude towards NGOs hence the prospects for NGOs to enter the reconciliation process is minimal.

This issue has been summed up well by participant E:

“There are several NGOs doing independent work to promote interfaith dialogue, inter-cultural/religious programs and exchanges to bridge the divided communities as a step towards post war reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Some NGOs are also doing development programs in the war affected areas. Yet there is very little space for them to talk about a political solution or human rights.”

However, it has to be pointed out that this is not completely accurate about the GoSL because there has been evidence by participant B of the Ministry of Education inviting their organisation to be a part of the advisory council for integration in the school system. As participant B stated:

“we were amazed at how respectful they were, and how impressed they were and how serious they seem to be on implementing a lot of what we were saying about what needs to get done.”

From the discussion above, we have furthered our understanding on the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka and why it is important to effectively implement the recommendations made by the LLRC. Thus, now we will discuss how the current recommendations made by the LLRC can be implemented effectively, from the perspective of the participants.

5.4 Opinions on how the Current Recommendations by LLRC can be Implemented Effectively

Most participants believe that, firstly the GoSL should put some genuine effort into implementing the recommendations that have been made. As participant B stated:

“after going through what we did for 30 years I think our enthusiasm to get the job done should be more. We should be more passionate, more eager and half-hearted work is not going to help heal the wounds that are so deep and so age-old...”

Secondly, a majority of the participants suggested that the GoSL should involve organisations outside political affiliation and outside the administration in the reconciliation process. Participant B suggested that these organisations should be given freedom and autonomy to implement “exactly word for word” the recommendations in the LLRC report. This should also include having independent, non-political appointees leading, and given freedom to run the programmes. Having the government and civil society join hands to implement these recommendations will see much more progress in the reconciliation process.

As participant A, B and C agree, one of the major elements missing in the whole process is accountability. Participant A stated:

“if the culture of impunity is still there then the cycle of violence will continue because impunity will allow people to continue to very literally get away with murder and so these things will continue to happen.”

Added to that, participant B suggested that there needs to be a structure of accountability where the government needs to be transparent in what they are doing towards reconciliation and report to the people every six months on what they have achieved and the opportunities they have. Being transparent will not only ensure accountability but will also gain the trust of the people, especially those in the North.

Furthermore, participant A believes that the LLRC needs to be tougher in order to affectively and efficiently implement the recommendations. As participant A stated:

“if there was a proper process in which everyone came out and told the truth, the really tough process of investigating the violations to make sure there was no impunity, and then the victims decided to offer forgiveness and say ‘we can move on’, that would work in Sri Lanka.”

And more than anything, as also pointed out above, for all of these to take place, there needs to be real investment and this is what is lacking in Sri Lanka. The GoSL cannot be fully blamed for this because all of this costs a lot and there has been some progress seen from the side of the government, therefore allocation of resources and personnel effectively may help in furthering the process more. However, the question still persists, how can funds be allocated if the government does not have these funds available?

Added to the solutions presented above, we will now look at other recommendations that the participants make in order to achieve a reconciled nation.

5.5 Further Recommendations

Whilst the participants agree that all the recommendations made by the LLRC are good and is the right step towards a peaceful Sri Lanka, they also believed that there are many more recommendations that could further the reconciliation process. Many recommendations were made by the participants; a few are discussed below.

Firstly, many of the participants believe that reconciliation has to be done through the grassroots in Sri Lanka. The common understanding is that no civil society or non-profit organisation can have all the solutions for reconciliation, it should come from the top. However, a successful reconciliation process should begin from the bottom-up. As participant B stated:

“Just because you get an administration overnight who decides, you know, reconciliation, justice, equality, that is what is going to happen, you can’t shove it down people. You have to win the masses.”

Whilst there should be a system of policy and administration to make decision regarding the process, the administration should also encourage the masses to work towards a peaceful solution, and that can only be encouraged with active change on the part of the administration.

Secondly, tied to the concept of narrative incorporation by Susan Dwyer (2003), as discussed in section 2.1.1, participant A suggests that Sri Lankan's outside of Sri Lanka, i.e either settled diaspora or recent diaspora (post-2009) need to be involved in the reconciliation process. This is because, as Dwyer mentions, the many narratives regarding the war that exists between different societies need to be incorporated and made into one narrative. When there are many different narratives that clash it will be near to impossible to achieve reconciliation, and that is why the diaspora needs to be involved too.

Thirdly, participants believe that the administration needs to make more progress in terms of giving people their deeds and lands back, initiating civil leadership in the region, creating jobs and ensuring a livelihood for people in the area that was most affected by the conflict. This will ensure that the administration gains the trust of the people in North, which is another positive step towards reconciliation.

Furthermore, a recommendation that most participants believe is extremely important is an independent investigation into some of the most serious violations that took place. As participant A stressed, "Independent means in no way linked to the executive or the army". Both participants A and B agree that the LLRC should have recommended an independent investigation with international oversight of human rights issues and the recommendation made. However participant B also argued that:

"Somebody who is not here might say, 'yes, do that and everything will be fine', but you have to understand what will this lead to? How will people react to it? If certain high ranking individuals are taken into international courts of justice and they are prosecuted, how will the common man react? Will there be riots all over again? Is that what we really want? How do we balance this out? How do we make sure

that it is a long term sustainable process of restorative and healing elements of justice.”

Thus, perhaps, introducing a concept of restorative justice, where justice is not used as a tool of revenge but as tool for victims to be able to say what was done to them and forgive and move on, this kind of justice done in a way that does not “further isolate the community” will help the reconciliation process tremendously.

This links to the approach taken by the TRC of South Africa. Although the LLRC provided a platform for victims and witnesses to speak about what happened to them, participant B believes that in order for the healing to take place there needs to be an opportunity for victims to speak out without being afraid of reprisals. Participant B stated that “right now, some will say that there is no such reprisal, but it needs to be such a safe and secure atmosphere in the country that they can say this happened to me.” In addition to the truth being heard, participant B suggested Sri Lanka’s own hybrid of the TRC where after truth telling has taken place injustices needs to be owned up to and the consequences for perpetrators to be decided. Finally as participant B sums up quite effectively:

“Your dealing with the emotions of traumatised people, your dealing with the emotions of a traumatised nation and it has to be handled with care, it cannot be done haphazardly... It has to be done with a pure intention of seeing the country heal, seeing the country progress and seeing a solid foundation laid for the next generation.”

6. Conclusion

As a way of concluding, we will reflect critically on the opinions offered by NGO representatives as analysed here on the impact of the recommendations made by the LLRC in the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka. Although the general consensus of the participants is that the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka is a failure, they have also greatly commended the LLRC for the recommendations they have made to achieve reconciliation. In particular, there seem to be agreement about recommendations on language rights, land rights, education policy and integration. However, what we have also come to understand is that the process of reconciliation is not as simple as it seems to be. In order for the process to be a success there needs to be a lot of determination, enthusiasm and hard work by the parties involved. Furthermore, whilst economic and infrastructural development may be positive, ignoring the people and their basic needs for a prosperous livelihood and the healing of emotional wounds, will not help further the reconciliation process.

As we discovered from the discussion in the previous section, most participants thought that the recommendations were not enough and that reconciliation would not be successful if there is no strategy of implementation in place. They, furthermore, all stress the importance of the involvement of third parties, such as civil society groups and NGOs. However, as the participants of the research also suggested, the GoSL is not keen on getting NGOs involved or getting the international oversight and monitoring of the UN. This is because many hardcore Sinhala factions and nationalist political parties believe that the UN or international NGOs are against Sri Lanka for “drumming up false allegations of war crimes” (Aljazeera [online] 2013), therefore it is believed that the government would want to please these parties not only to secure their votes, but also to prevent riots and uprising in the country. . Nevertheless, whilst holding on to their sovereignty and right to self-determination as a nation state is important and a principle recognised by international law (Steinberger, 1987), refusing the help of the international community outright seem less about reconciliation and more about the pride of the state and about wanting to have autonomy over their decisions, this has also been discussed in section 2.3 in a point made by Høglund and Orjuela (2011).

As a participant of the research suggested the LLRC should have invited independent monitoring by the UN in order to ensure best practices and highest standards of the reconciliation process, so that Sri Lanka can stand tall and be proud of a nation that has reconciled despite the many traumatic situations it had to face. Nevertheless, having the international community interference is something the GoSL is not ready to accept, because as participant B pointed out this might stir a negative reaction by the common citizens, especially the Sinhala nationalists, which would lead to the current government losing the strong political support they currently hold. However, having both local and international NGOs could in fact enhance the process of reconciliation and make it more effective. NGOs were helpful in the Bosnian and South African reconciliation processes as revealed in a study by Simpson (1997) which was also discussed in section 2.4. The research conducted for this project further establishes that NGOs do care about working towards a peaceful solution for the community of Sri Lanka, as participant B stated: "We're about trying to help unite the country", on the same note, participant A stated: "I think the reason the [name of NGO omitted] exists is we think Sri Lanka is heading back towards war". Thus, having NGOs and civil society groups involved will further enhance the efficiency of the implementation of the good recommendations that have already being made by the LLRC.

APPENDIX 1 - Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Full Name -
Organisation-
Post -

Winning the Peace through Reconciliation

Section 1: Progress of the Reconciliation Process

1.1. In your opinion has Sri Lanka made any progress in the reconciliation process from the end of the civil war in May 2009?

1.2. Through your observations in what areas has/has not Sri Lanka progressed in terms of reconciliation?

1.3. Can you give me some examples of this?

1.4. In the Lessons Learnt and the Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) report there are many recommendations concerning 1) land rights; 2) the returning of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their homes; 3) the giving back of their legally owned land (4) Investigating alleged disappearances etc. What is your opinion and/or observations concerning these recommendations? Are these helpful? In what ways?

Section 2: NGOs actions to assist and support the reconciliation process.

2.1. In what way(s) have you/your organisation promoted and helped the reconciliation process?

2.2. Has the LLRC or the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) approached you/your organisation in any way to seek help in promoting the reconciliation process and/or implementing the recommendations? *If 'yes' how? If not, why do you think they have not?*

2.3. How important is reconciliation to Sri Lanka right now from the perspective of your organisation? Why?

Section 3: How can the reconciliation process move forward?

3.1. Do you think the recommendations made in the LLRC report adequate or do you think other recommendations could have been made?

If 'other recommendations should have been made' go to question 3.2 if not go to question 3.3

3.2. In your opinion and that of your organisation what other recommendations should have been made?

3.3. What do you think is the most effective and efficient way in implementing recommendations made concerning reconciliation?

3.4. Do you think a South African style Truth Commission will assist Sri Lanka in moving towards sustainable peace? If yes, why and how? If not why not?

APPENDIX 2 - Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Date:25/06/2013

Title of Research Project - Winning the Peace through Reconciliation: A Case Study of Sri Lanka

Purpose of the research

To establish how Sri Lanka can achieve sustainable peace and development through reconciliation.

Objectives:

- To understand the recommendations made by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) for reconciliation in Sri Lanka.
- To determine if the LLRC has made any progress in terms of implementing the recommendations by looking at opinions and actions of NGOs that have been working to achieve sustainable peace in Sri Lanka.
- To make further recommendations in how Sri Lanka efficiently can move towards true reconciliation and sustainable peace.

What is involved in participating

An interview will be conducted either in person or via email correspondence with pre-planned questions, which can be provided to you on request.

Benefits and Risks

Benefit: By taking part in this research and giving unbiased and expert opinion in the reconciliation progress of Sri Lanka, the participant will be contributing to the bigger picture of helping Sri Lanka move towards sustainable peace and reconciliation.

Risk: Since the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka is quite new and the subject matter is sensitive, the participants views may involve strong political opinions, therefore the risk of upsetting one or more parties involved will be a possible risk.

Terms for withdrawal:

- Participants have a right to withdraw at any time without prejudice and without providing a reason
- Upon withdrawal existing, already provided, data will be deleted on the request of the participant.

Usage of the data:

- The data will be collected in the form of digital recordings and written notes.
- The data will be used in the analysis and discussion sections of the dissertation.
- There is a possibility that the dissertation or parts of the dissertation will be published on a professional level.

Strategies for assuring ethical use of the data:

- The data collected will be safeguard with the use of a password protected computer and password protected folders within the computer. The same goes to any backups held of the data.
- If requested by the participant results of the research will be anonymous where necessary, especially in relation to data archiving, and will remain anonymous in the final outcome of the published research.

Details of the research:

Sponsoring institution: Department of Sociology, City University London

Name of project: Winning the Peace through Reconciliation: A Case Study of Sri Lanka.

Contact details of Researcher:

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APPENDIX 3 - Consent Form

Consent Form for 'Winning the Peace through Reconciliation' Research Project

<i>Please tick the appropriate boxes</i>	Yes	No
Taking Part		
I have read and understood the project information sheet dated __/__/__.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in the project. Taking part in the project will include being interviewed and recorded (audio)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of the information I provide for this project only		
I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Please choose one of the following two options:</i> I would like my real name used in the above I would not like my real name to be used in the above.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Please choose one of the following two options:</i> I would like the name of the organisation I work for used in the above I would not like the name of the organisation I work for used in the above	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
Use of the information I provide beyond this project		
I agree for the data I provide will be saved password protected by the researcher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of participant Signature Date

Researcher Signature Date

Project contact details for further information:
Name: Natasha De Silva
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