

‘Trapped Reconciliation’: Examining the Contribution of Reconciliation in Post-conflict Peacebuilding - The Case of Sri Lanka Since 2009

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This paper contributes to both practice and theoretical development of how reconciliation can impact on “positive peace” as a significant peacebuilding effort of a post-conflict society. The study examines Sri Lanka as a unique case. In Sri Lanka, on the one hand, reconciliation is a national goal. On the other hand, it is an everyday need for mutual trust and healing of those affected by thirty years of war. It is debated how reconciliation, evident for six or seven years at grassroot and national levels, can contribute to post-conflict peace in the country. The research paper has prioritized how truth seeking, healing and justice are core contributory factors of reconciliation that impact the structural changes of the conflict that affected Sri Lanka. These structural changes are caused when using different peacebuilding approaches such as the “bottom-up approach” and the “top-down approach”. However, reconciliation has experienced a number of vital challenges to bringing about effective outcomes. These challenges are the complex nature of the process, diverse interests of people, politicized decision-making, policy gaps and many more. While investigating important empirical findings about the reconciliation process in Sri Lanka, the research critically examines the use of different reconciliation approaches and its contribution to facilitate effective outcomes. The study has utilized content analysis and a field survey for data collection. After careful investigation, the study arrives at the conclusion that using both grassroots reconciliation and national reconciliation, i.e., a unified peace approach, is suitable in achieving “positive peace”. The paper highlights that using both “bottom-up” and “top-down” approaches can result in some prominent structural changes of the conflict-affected communities. The discussion also reveals the complexities of such achievements unless economic reconstruction and social and emotional competencies i.e., trust, healing and forgiveness are fulfilled.

Keywords: Reconciliation, Peacebuilding, Positive Peace, Sri Lanka