

MAKING SENSE OF A VICTOR'S PEACE

*LOCAL LEVEL PEACE IN POST-WAR EASTERN SRI LANKA AND THE POTENTIAL
AND ACTUAL ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN PEACE-BUILDING PROCESSES*

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
CPA	Centre for Policy Alternatives
DDR	Demobilization, Demilitarization and Reintegration (program)
GA	Government Agent
GN	Grama Niladhari
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
HSZ	High Security Zone
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LLRC	Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MC	Municipal Council
PS	Pradeshia Sabha
PSC	Protracted Social Conflict
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SLA	Sri Lanka Army
TNA	Tamil National Alliance
UC	Urban Council
UPFA	United People's Freedom Alliance
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNP	United National Party

SUMMARY

Literature on peace-building is currently not sufficient to fully understand the dynamics of a post-war nation that has a strong state and has known a military ending of its protracted conflict. This research adds to the current body of literature by rethinking peace-building in the context of a victor's peace and by theorizing the workings of local government. It also provides a valuable addition to the, now slowly growing, knowledge on post-war Sri Lanka.

This research revolved around the question of how the victor's peace in post-war Eastern Sri Lanka is taking shape and what its impact is on the local level and has further explored the often cited assumption that local governments can play a vital role in the building of peace and the creation of a sustainable peace. Researching the potential and actual role of local governments via the following framework; establishing the context-dependent definition of local government, reviewing the institutional framework and distribution of power, and gaining insights into the network of political alliances – has provided information on the functioning of local government in general and in Sri Lanka. Local government bodies are inextricably connected to the central government and are, in Sri Lanka, highly dependent for their resources, capacity and functioning. The assumption of their potential added value rests on the premise that local governments have the administrative and organizational capacity to function in a somewhat autonomous manner, which is out of the question in a post-war society such as in Sri Lanka where authoritarianism and patronage games govern the political arena. In general, the potential and actual role local government plays in peace-building processes is very case-dependent and it is the central government that shapes and creates the playing field. Especially the latter is of great importance in a victor's peace, in which the post-war dynamics and post-war society are shaped and dominated according to the needs and desires of the victor; often the central government. This is very visible in the case of Sri Lanka. By reviewing the basic needs of access (political and economic), identity (social reconciliation) and security (militarization and demilitarization of society), the local impact of the central discourse and the central reconstruction efforts have been identified. A victor's peace is not defined by peace-building. It is stabilization and the institutionalization of the victory, rather than the building of a sustainable peace that seem to have the upper hand. Sri Lanka is currently in a state of negative peace but the question remains when and if the Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims will reach positive peace.

1. INTRODUCTION

If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences

William Isaac Thomas, 1928.

Peace-Building and Sri Lanka's Peace

During the last decades, literature within the field of conflict resolution has led to a revision of thinking about the complex dynamics of post-conflict peace-building. This includes the idea that effective and sustainable peacemaking processes must be based not merely on the manipulation of peace agreements by elites, but more importantly on the empowerment of communities torn apart by war to build peace from below (Ramsbotham et al, 2005: 215). It is now broadly accepted that in order for peace to be sustainable, it requires that long-time antagonists not merely lay down their arms (negative peace) but that they achieve profound reconciliation that will endure because it is sustained by a society-wide network of relationships and mechanisms that promote justice and address the root causes of enmity before they can regenerate destabilizing tensions (positive peace), as theorized by Galtung.¹

Knowing how to conceptualize peace makes it possible to further investigate how to conceptualize the building of peace. Since peace is not only the absence of warfare or violence, but also entails the existence of social justice and the absence of structural violence, peace-building is also more than merely activities aimed at putting an end to violence. Peace-building refers to "those initiatives which foster and support sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful co-existence and decrease the likelihood of an outbreak, reoccurrence or continuation of violent conflict. Ultimately, peace-building entails the strengthening or creation of structures that are democratic, fair and responsive to the needs and concerns of an entire population, from its weakest members to the most powerful. That is, institutions which protect and advance the political rights and responsibilities of the state and civil society, and which strengthen

¹ For more information on the concepts of negative and positive peace, see for example Galtung, J. (1969) Violence, Peace and Peace Research, *Journal of Peace Research* 6(3): 167-191.

human security through the promotion of robust and sustainable economic, judicial and social practices" (Bush, 2008: 108).

We can conclude that, according to a large base of literature, peace-building is:

All initiatives that contribute to building structures of peace and un-building structures of violence to create a situation in which violence, both warfare and structural social injustices, is absent.

Literature on discourses, policies and practices associated with peace-building in the post-war region are often confined to the debates of 'fragile states', international involvement or intervention and peace negotiations and settlements. There is an abundance of written work on the importance of peace-building in failing or failed states, on the rebuilding of governance after years of conflict, how foreign interveners can use aid conditionality for the advantage of the peace process and on how to implement the negotiated matters whilst focusing on reconciliation and keeping the warring parties in check. Besides this, policy based literature often focuses on the potential and importance of local governance or local governments in aiding the peace-building and reconstruction process. Local government institutions are said to be in the perfect position in society to stabilize inter-ethnic interactions and create social cohesion and community building and, as such, as institutions of peace-building, contribute to the sustainability of peace. Further, conflict resolution literature often states that "solutions cannot be imposed from above or from the outside, but must be legitimate to and adopted by local actors" (Goodhand, Hulme & Lewer, 1999; Lederach, 1995 in Orjuela, 2004: 19). These bodies of literature however hardly take other case scenarios into account, most noticeably the occurrence of military victories and the existence of strong states and a victor's peace.

Based on the lack of literature one would perhaps not suspect, but intra-national conflicts or civil wars most commonly come to an end via military victory rather than via negotiations. In internal conflict, little room for negotiations is left with conflict being the 'reason d'être' or sole concern of rebels. "On the rebel side, there is little possibility of trade-offs and compromise. Recognition is both their top and bottom line, with nothing in between to contribute to the give and take of negotiation and bargaining. There is nothing to give up but the rebellion and their commitment to their cause [...]. Each side contests the other's legitimacy, since to recognize the claim of the rebels to speak for their

population or of the government to speak for the entire country is to accede to their principal demand" (Licklider, 1993: 25-26). Without a mutually hurting stalemate, conciliatory leaders or obvious power dynamics, conditions for valid and effective negotiations are never ripe in intra-national conflicts. The optimal solution for these conflicts can be argued to entail some sort of political solution such as the redesigning of the political system to incorporate the rights of the minority. All too often, however, does the conflict result in the defeat of the insurgent party and a one-sided victory for the government: a victor's peace. A victor's peace can be defined as a peace that rests on a military victory and upon the hegemony or domination of the victor. It is a peace imposed by the victor without an accorded timetable or viable provisions for a transitional period or a referee who can mediate between the uneven contenders when problems arise. In these cases, the country can be a strong state, independent of foreign intervention or aid and political solutions are not on the table.

Despite the frequent occurrence of military victories and the impressive body of research and literature on issues of conflict and peace, the concept of a victor's peace shows a significant gap in the current knowledge base and a certain narrowness of the framework in which peace-building is often addressed. How a peaceful or stable society is built after a military victory and what impact this victor's peace has on a local level, is yet to be extensively researched. This research will zoom in on the situation in Sri Lanka, where the government has known a unilateral victory over the 'terrorist' Tamil Tigers in 2009.²

The protracted civil war in Sri Lanka clearly illustrates the problems of many contemporary violent conflicts, where the nature and borders of the state are challenged, conflict over power and resources has resulted in deep social divides, ethno-national mobilization plays a central role and civilians are increasingly the perpetrators and victims of violence. The war in Sri Lanka can be seen as a textbook example of a so-called ethnic conflict; economic, political and cultural deprivation and grievances of the Tamil minority have provoked a violent rebellion against the state, which the minority have come to see as representative of only the majority ethnic group, the Sinhalese (Orjuela, 2004: 16-17).

² The terms LTTE and Tamil Tigers will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

Years of collapsed peace initiatives, often mediated by international actors, mark the history of peace-building in Sri Lanka. The ethnic conflict, the violent rebellion, however finally ended by means of a military insurgency from the side of the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) in 2009. In spite of Sri Lanka's protracted war between the Government and the LTTE that ended after three decades in 2009, the country cannot be classified as a fragile state. The state has remained relatively robust and has achieved impressive socio-economic indicators. The island has achieved middle-income status and is not an aid-dependent country in which donor-instigated programs govern the peace-building and reconstruction process. In parallel with its military campaign, the Sri Lankan regime focused on building a strong domestic base and dealing with emergent threats to its rule (Goodhand, 2010: 346). Domestic policies have had primacy in the Sri Lankan context and government programs ruled over programs instigated by donor countries. It seems obvious that the way the war ended and the social, political and economic dynamics within the country play a vital role and have a defining influence on the way that peace is being pursued or build (Goodhand, 2010: 350-351) and on the potential and actual role of local government institutions in the post-war context. To investigate how peace and peace-building take shape in a post-war situation like the one in Sri Lanka, the situation should be viewed in light of the end of the conflict and the regime's authoritarian and oligarchic tendencies and cannot be sufficiently described by turning to traditional peace or policy based literature.³ It is however of utmost importance to understand the dynamics of a victor's peace and the post-war dynamics in Sri Lanka.

Significance and Aims of Research

As we have seen, military victories aren't that uncommon but a well-founded and thorough understanding of a victor's peace is lacking. There is often much stress placed upon the potential role of local governments in creating sustainable peace and aiding the peace-building process in policy and development discourses. Considering the lack of empirical evidence to corroborate these assumptions and the importance of understanding the local dynamics in a post-war society, this thesis is of significant additional value to the current

³ I use the term 'post-war' rather than 'post-conflict' because the end of a war does not necessarily mean the end of conflict. Many issues related to the conflict can still be very evident and present in the community in which case 'post-conflict' would be an inaccurate term.

body of knowledge and theory. The case study of Sri Lanka is further of extra interest because the 'Sri Lankan model' of ending the years of violence – counter-insurgency and stabilization – is being studied carefully by other states. The Sri Lankan victor's peace is often seen, mainly by other Asian states that are also troubled by violence and insurgencies, as the most effective and even the perfect way of putting an end to the turmoil. "Internationally, the defeat of the LTTE has also attracted attention from regimes fighting their own internal rebellions. Countries like Burma and Thailand have actively sought the GoSL's advice on counter-terrorism" (Economist, 2010). From 31 May to 2 June of this year, 2011, the GoSL has even invited militaries of fifty-four countries to attend the 'Defeating Terrorism Sri Lankan Experience' in Colombo (BBC, 2011). The website of the event states that "[t]he panel presenting the Sri Lankan Experience shared their knowledge on Counter Insurgency and enumerated contributory factors in military defeating the LTTE, *'The most ruthless terrorist organization in the world'* with emphasis on the predominance of the political effort, military effort, efficient politico military gearing and rapid resettlement as the core contributors to the success."⁴ The growing interest of the international community in Sri Lanka's methods as example for counter-insurgency efforts and instigating peace has created the importance of understanding the implications of Sri Lanka's peace and the local impacts of the Sri Lankan strategy.

This thesis is written within this context and has goals that are multiple and diverse, as society, perceptions and knowledge itself are multifaceted and diverse. First of all, this thesis attempts to be a valuable addition to the slowly growing knowledge base on post-war Sri Lanka and to provide insight into the dynamics of a victor's peace. Second, this thesis attempts to advance new theories by elaborating on the idea of the potential role of local government, elucidate the relationship of local with central government and advance the general understanding of the functioning of local government. As such, the concept of local government is theorized by combining policy based assumptions on its potential added value in peace-building with ethnographic case study material on its actual functioning. The current view of peace-building is expanded by broadening the somewhat narrow framework in which it is often addressed with the notion of victor's peace. Third, this thesis aims to give voice – to provide my research subjects with the opportunity to have their stories told and their worlds represented (Ragin, 2011: 35). The intention is not

⁴ Available online at: <http://www.defseminar.lk/>. (Emphasis in original).

to let one voice dominate, but to signify patterns in relationships and perceptions and, with this, increase the knowledge about micro-processes in Sri Lanka and enhance the visibility of local communities and their perspectives on the current situation.

Framework

The major issue at hand is understanding how the victor's peace in post-war Sri Lanka is taking shape and what its impact is on the local level; in Eastern Sri Lanka, the District of Trincomalee.

The Role of Local Government

To understand the potential and actual role of local government, we must acknowledge the fact that 'local government' is not to be automatically perceived as an autonomous body that functions in a democratic manner and has the power and resources to work towards social cohesion. Local governments are intrinsically linked to the central government under which they function and it is vital to assess their autonomy, democratic value and power next to assessing these aspects of the central government in order to fully understand the arena in which local governments function and to fully appreciate the peace-building potential within the government institutions of Sri Lanka. Local government can be defined as the legitimate and accountable layer of government – both the elected politicians and the administration – that represents the local community and provides public services to this local community (Klem & Frerks, 2008). This definition is very broad and covers a vast diversity of situations: systems and bodies may vary and so may the relationships with citizens or the loyalties to national governments. It is therefore of importance to establish the context-dependent definition of local government. In Sri Lanka, the local authorities are the equivalent of local government. Local authorities are the bodies of governance that operate at the lowest level – city or village – and consist of an elected Council. The administrative bodies of which the staff is appointed by the central government are not considered part of the local government system of the country. The focus of this research has thus been with the local authorities: the Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas (or Village Councils).

Important to note is that 'local government' differs from the concept of 'local governance'. While governance is the central function of the state, it is not the exclusive monopoly of state agencies. Non-state actors carry out significant public functions such as the provision of welfare, social services and economic support. Local governance entails both government institutions and these non-state actors such as NGOs or CBOs. Governance can thus be seen as a fusion of governance from above, governance through intermediation and governance from below.⁵ This thesis revolves around governance from below and the linkages between governance from above and governance from below. While recognizing the importance of NGOs, CBOs and other actors in society and in the peace-building process, the scope of this thesis is not broad enough to include all aspects of local governance.

I pose that to understand the functioning and role of local government, three factors need to be researched: [1] the institutional framework, the official structure of governance; [2] the distribution of power or the workings of governance; and [3] the network of political alliances, the importance of politics.⁶

The Local Impact of Peace – Azar's Theory of Protracted Social Conflict

To research the local impact of peace, Azar's theory of protracted social conflict provides an interesting perspective. For Azar, the critical factor in protracted social conflict or PSC, such as persisted in Lebanon, the Philippines, Sudan, Northern Ireland, Cyprus, Iran, Nigeria, South Africa but also Sri Lanka, was that it represented "the prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation" (Azar, 1991: 93 in Ramsbotham et al., 2005: 84). According to his theory, the role of the state is to "satisfy or frustrate basic communal needs, thus preventing or promoting conflict" (Azar, 1990: 10-12). At the core of the conflict, according to the PSC theory, is the "disarticulation between the state and society as a whole" (Azar, 1990: 7) and "how individual needs are mediated through membership of social groups" (Ramsbotham et al., 2005: 85-86). As such, the

⁵ Uyangoda, J. 'Local Governance in the Periphery: Towards the Deepening of Local Democracy'. Draft, cited with permission.

⁶ Terminology borrowed from Andreas Wimmer's theory on the making and unmaking of ethnic boundaries (2008).

deprivation of human needs can be indicated as the underlying source of protracted social conflict: “grievances resulting from need deprivation are usually expressed collectively. Failure to redress these grievances by the authority cultivates a niche for a protracted social conflict” (Azar, 1990: 9). Considering the needs and interests of individuals are mediated through membership of social groups, the societal needs of security, identity and access of the individual are of utmost importance. It is not my intention to use or even embrace the basic human needs approach as method of analysis in this thesis. I do not necessarily agree with all of Azar’s underlying assumptions and thus merely use the very valuable components of the theory in my thinking about peace.

Reading Hugh Miall’s diagram (Figure 1) from left to right shows Azar’s theory of the formation of protracted social conflict. The diagram can, however, also be read from right to left providing a means to assess sustainable peace: the reversal of protracted conflict. In this manner, the diagram suggests how patterns of conflict interact with the satisfaction of human needs, the adequacy of political and economic institutions and the choices made by political actors (Miall, 2004: 5).

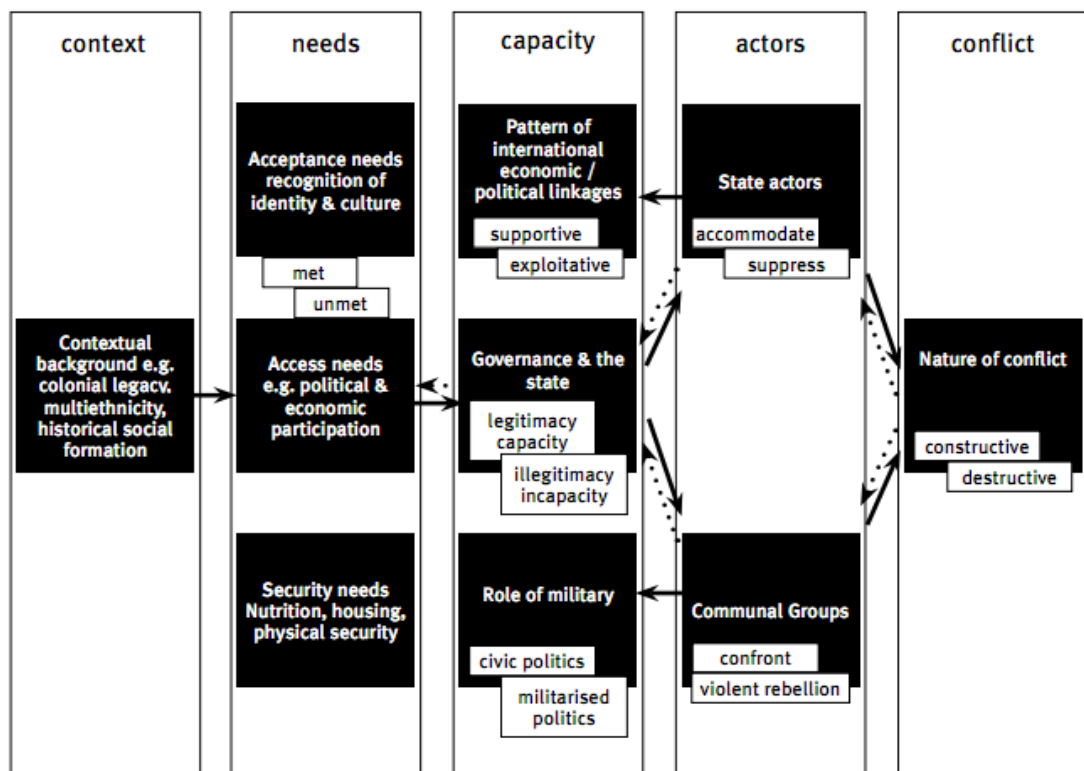


Figure 1: Transformation of PSC, adapted from Azar 1990. (Source: Miall, 2004).

The levels of 'actors' and 'capacity' will be addressed in chapter two, 'Winning the War'. What is left to assess the local impact of the victor's peace in Sri Lanka is operationalize and research the level of 'needs'.

The Basic Need of Access

To research the fulfillment of the basic needs that Azar poses, operationalization of the concepts and the formulation of indicators is a necessary prerequisite. First of all, access needs can be further conceptualized as [1] political, and [2] economic access needs. Starting from Azar's notion that human beings have the basic need for free and just allocation of participation in the 'superstructure of society;' social institutions such as political authority (1990: 9), 'political access needs' is thought to entail both access to equal political representation as well as access to equal and fair participation. I pose that indicators to assess the level or existence of equal political representation are [1] minority representation in government, and [2] perception of equal political opportunities and the possibility to voice opinions and grievances. In this thesis, the focus lies mainly on the political position of the Tamil minority population and their perception of having a voice or a way to politically address their grievances. The concept of equal and fair participation can be further broken down into [1] the occurrence and fairness of elections and voting procedures, [2] the involvement of people in the political arena or 'group consciousness'. In this context, group consciousness involves "identification with a group *and* a political awareness or ideology regarding the group's relative position in society" (Miller et al., 1981: 495. Emphasis in original). As a concept, it links issues of group identity with elements of political participation. Sri Lanka is a democratic republic in which elections are free and fair and political opportunities exist, at least on paper, for every Sri Lankan. An extensive debate is currently held within the country about the effectiveness and fairness of the electoral system, and changes seem to be underway for reforms. In order to not get bogged down in a discussion that is soon to be out-dated, this thesis mainly focuses on the second indicator of group consciousness and will elaborate on the political participation of minorities.

Indicators to operationalize the concept of economic access are [1] equal access to employment – both formal and informal, [2] equality in participation opportunities, i.e. free from favoritism on ethnic grounds, and [3] equal access to economic development. In this

thesis, the main focus lies on this third indicator, for the post-war discourse of the central government in Sri Lanka has been dominated by the notion of economic development.

The Basic Need of Identity

The manner in which Azar uses the term 'identity' is stating that the deprivation of 'distinctive identity' and of 'social recognition of identity' are associated with ethnic and communal cleavages and can, as such, emerge as the source of conflict. Ethnicity is used to refer to a specific type of identity groups that is of importance for it denotes a fundamental need (Azar & Burton, 1986: 29). In order to make the concept of identity and the notion of the basic need of identity useful tools to research peace, it is necessary to rethink the concept of 'identity' and find a way to operationalize the deprivation of distinctive identity and social recognition of identity. I pose that looking at these matters through the lens of 'social reconciliation' presents a useful tool of analysis, on which I further elaborate upon in chapter 3: 'Winning the Peace'. I will not present an overview of the scholarly debate and abundance of literature on social identity and reconciliation, but will focus on the case-specific meaning and importance of social reconciliation.

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The Basic Need of Security

In Azar's terminology, security can be at the basis of conflict when there is an "absence of security of culture and valued relationships" (Azar & Burton, 1986: 30). I would, however, argue that the security of culture and valued relationships are issues of the security of identity and identity groups. Nonetheless, I do believe that the basic need of security is of great importance for stabilization and the building of a positive peace in post-war societies.

Theories and literature on conflict prevention often highlight demobilization, demilitarization and the reintegration of former combatants into society – the DDR process – as critical steps in relapse prevention (Spear, 2002 in Höglund & Orjuela, 2011: 26). "In the longer-term, reform of the security sector and a demilitarization of society at large are deemed necessary for building a self-sustainable peace" (Themnér, 2011; Call & Stanley, 2003; Schnabel & Ehrhart, 2005 in Höglund & Orjuela, 2011: 26). The basic need of security in post-war (Eastern) Sri Lanka will be examined in this thesis by reviewing the dynamics of demilitarization and militarization in society, in light of the posed importance of the DDR process for sustainable peace.

Research Design and Methodology

This thesis is based on a combination of [1] literature research, [2] exploratory fieldwork in Sri Lanka and [3] qualitative content and discourse analysis of government policies and newspaper articles.

Literature research is used to provide an educated understanding of the background of the Sri Lankan conflict, frameworks and theories on peace-building and local government and as a means to triangulate collected data.

The fieldwork took place in Colombo and in Trincomalee. The two Sri Lankan cities sit in fierce juxtaposition: Colombo lies in the rich Western Province and is the hub of political and economic activity. The city is of interest for this thesis because almost all organizations and institutions have their head offices in Colombo and because of its mixed ethnic make-up. With exception of a range of (suicide) bombings, generally targeted at key military or political leaders but causing substantial collateral damage, the civil war has largely spared the Western Province. This and the wealth of the region have led to dramatically different post-war dynamics and sentiments compared to what can be seen in Trincomalee. The Eastern Province has been at the heart of the conflict, although often neglected in literature in favor of the high profile war-ridden northern part of the country. The city of Trincomalee is situated on the north-east coast of the island within the Eastern Province and was the proposed capital of the territory that the LTTE considered Tamil homeland or 'Eelam'. It is a region that has known a complex process of mixing and 'violent un-mixing' of people (Rajasingham, 2002: 60). Unlike most of Sri Lanka, Trincomalee District has a fairly equal proportion of the three main ethno-religious communities; Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims (albeit in distinct ethnic pockets). It can be argued that it is the place where the fulfillment of basic human needs and the building of sustainable peace has to begin and take hold because it is, more than any part of the island, a site for multicultural contestation and alternative ethnic futures (McGilvray, 2008: 1). In order to get a thorough grasp on the local dynamics of peace in the Eastern Province I have also conducted several interviews in the village of Muthur, a one hour drive below Trincomalee town in Trincomalee District and the site of horrible war-related events, most infamously the killing of seventeen local staff of the French NGO Action Contre la Faim (ACF).⁷

⁷ See Appendix 1 for a visual portrayal of the location of Colombo, Trincomalee and Muthur.

Understanding the dynamics in Colombo and Trincomalee District can therefore give a fairly balanced insight into the post-war situation and the local impacts of peace and peace-building in Sri Lanka.

The exploratory fieldwork consists of observations and three clusters of interviews and provides the bulk of the data used in the research project. In total, I conducted a total of 45 interviews over the course of the three months I spent in Sri Lanka.

The first cluster consists of interviews held with personnel from humanitarian organizations, policy think tanks and academic organizations; NGOs and INGOs, both locals (Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim) and foreigners. The institutions chosen are involved in critical policy analysis and/or relief and development efforts and know different levels of involvement and connection with governmental institutions. All have been operative in Sri Lanka for a substantial period of time. Examples are: the Asia Foundation, the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, ZOA Refugee Care, the National Peace Council, GIZ FLICT (Facilitating Local Initiatives for Conflict Transformation), the Social Scientists Association, and the Centre for Policy Alternatives. To this cluster I also ascribe the interviews held with staff from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, because the focus lay on their projects and funding of projects that have a reconstruction objective. In the District of Trincomalee, in the war-affected Eastern Province, examples of organizations interviewed are: GIZ PIP (Performance Improvement Project) and USAID/MSI/ARD; SuRG (Supporting Regional Governance).

The second cluster is comprised of interviews conducted with scholars, known for their expertise on Sri Lanka, post-war Sri Lanka and/or state structure dynamics in Sri Lanka. Examples are: Prof. Dennis McGilvray, Timmo Gaasbeek, Bart Klem, Prof. Kalinga Tudor Silva, Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda and Tressie Leitan.

The third cluster is comprised of interviews, mostly off-the-record, conducted with 'locals' (the man on the train, the housekeeper, the shop holder, the internally displaced or the teacher) and local authority personnel of whom the positions will not be disclosed to shield their identity.

All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner governed by an interview/topic guide to collect data in a purposeful manner and make systematic analysis possible. Considerable discretion in the sequencing and phraseology of the questions was however

exercised. In general, initial questions were designed to map out the context, eliciting basic information about the respondent and deciphering their stance in the peace debate. Later questions were often directed towards content mining, adapted to the context, position and socio-demographic background of the interviewee. Questions were thematic and invited the respondent to voice their personal, and in some cases their professional, opinions about particular topics related to the research.

The sampling method for the interview respondents in all clusters consisted of snow ball sampling as well as simple random sampling. Considering the often sensitive nature of topics touched upon, the snow ball sampling method proved useful to gain a level of trust and openness. In sampling respondents I have taken ethnic group, caste/class, age and gender into account in an attempt to diminish any bias that might be caused by these factors.

The discourse and content analysis of government policies and newspaper articles has been used to get a thorough understanding of the current leading discourse on issues such as development, peace, conflict and peace-building. It has further been useful to triangulate data collected from interviews and observations.

Limitations of Research

The main limitation of this research is that the data, on which the thesis is based, mainly stems from perceptions of individuals, persistent rumors, stories and opinions; many of which are very difficult to triangulate and concretize. In my view, however, this main limitation is also the main strength of the research. Basic human needs are for a large part defined by relative comparisons. As such, perceptions and opinions of people living in the post-war society can be argued to be of more value to assess the local dynamics than factual or thoroughly triangulated data. As William Isaac Thomas so beautifully puts it: if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences. What also needs to be said is that the scope of this thesis is very broad with limited space to expand on the manifold of interesting details the topics have brought forth. Luckily, more specificity can be found in additional literature (I refer for example to the work of Jonathan Goodhand and Bart Klem on boundary politics in Sri Lanka and to Camilla Orjuela for her work on the role of civil society organizations in peace-building). This thesis aims to provide a more broad

perspective on the local dynamics of peace in Sri Lanka in order to provide the reader with a sound grasp on the bigger, national, picture. Last of all, I would like to point out that although enlisting respondents did not prove to be a major barrier, the climate of secrecy and fear that persists in the Sri Lankan society and among scholars and NGO-employees has caused some vital restrictions on the use of data. Interviews with high-ranking officials almost always had to be completely off-the-record, I was sworn to secrecy even by renowned international organizations and the collected data often had to be presented entirely anonymous which of course has affected the significance and representativeness of quotes and comments throughout the thesis. This issue does bring forth the interesting question of whether this course of events is exemplary of dynamics within a victor's peace and constitutes an unavoidable limitation to research of this kind.

Chapter outline

This first chapter has provided an introduction to the important concepts used in this research project - peace-building, the victor's peace, local government – and a framework that can be used to conceptualize and analyze the local impact of the victor's peace in Sri Lanka. The chapters that follow will be an elaboration of this framework and aim to further explain the current dynamics in Sri Lanka and make sense of the victor's peace while assessing the potential and actual role of local government in peace-building and reconstruction.

Chapter two, 'Winning the War', examines the disputed end of the protracted social conflict in Sri Lanka in 2009. It will mainly focus on the overwhelming military victory of the Government of Sri Lanka on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In this chapter I shall further elaborate on the so important post-war dynamics and state structure or political arena by reviewing the institutional environment, the distribution of power and the network of political alliances in the country.

Chapter three, 'Winning the Peace', is mainly based on fieldwork observations and collected data and aims to provide a comprehensive description of the 'local peace' in Sri Lanka. The three realms of basic human needs as formulated by Edward Azar shall function as the building blocks to analyze and assess the sustainability and dynamics of peace.

'Access', 'identity' and 'security' are thus the headings under which the collected data and new empirical evidence shall be presented.

In the final chapter, 'Discussion and Reflection', the data and the theoretical framework will be combined to provide answers to the main question of this thesis; *how the victor's peace in post-war Eastern Sri Lanka is taking shape and what its impact is on the local level.*

2. WINNING THE WAR

The guerilla wins if he does not lose; the conventional army loses if it does not win

Henry Kissinger, 1969.

As the mist lifted on the morning of 19 May 2009, a soldier leaned down to a body on the smoldering and largely silent marshland battlefield. He tugged the slack shoulder to free it from the muddy patch in which it lay, and turned the corpse to face the sun. Like the hundreds of other troops inspecting the bodies strewn among the marshy tufts and sandy stretches of this desolate edge of the island, this soldier knew precisely for whom he was searching. Nevertheless, he must have been startled by the fleshy, mustachioed face that instantly stood out from the hundreds of other dead scattered among the mangroves, a face that stared back at him through dull, half-closed eyes, lopes barely apart as if to utter a final command. A bullet had pierced the forehead and the cranial cap was blasted away, but the otherwise intact figure of the corpulent founder and leader of the Tamil Tigers lay where he had fallen some hours ago. His brown face had been drained of blood, leaving a pallid waxwork that seemed to illuminate the oddness of this iconic figure lying in a mud patch.⁸

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Well over half of Sri Lanka's post-independence years have been scarred by armed conflict in which suicide bomb-blasts, road blocks, lawlessness, arbitrary arrests, police brutalities and fear had been the norm.

The Eelam Wars officially started in 1983 with the anti-Tamil riots in the streets of Colombo and had the country in its hold for almost three decades. On the morning of 19 May 2009, the death of the 'Supreme Leader' of the Tamil Tigers, Velupillai Prabhakaran, signaled the comprehensive military defeat of the Tigers and the end of the protracted war. Needless to say, the years of violence, fear and segregation have changed society; from day-to-day life matters to the core values entrenched in the socio-political and economic dynamics of the country. To get an insight into the victor's peace that took shape and the local impacts of peace, and to understand the role that the central and local government play in the

⁸ Excerpt from 'The Cage' by Gordon Weiss, 2011.

provision of basic needs to promote a lasting peace, it is of great importance to comprehend the background to which this has taken and is taking place; the GoSL – LTTE conflict and the military victory of the GoSL. In this chapter, I will give a description of what is known, albeit that 'known' is a somewhat fluid concept in this context, about the final stages and the end of the war. For more information on the course of the Eelam Wars, its root causes, triggers and actors, I refer to the wonderful and dense body of literature that has been written (Tambiah, 1986; Spencer, 1990; Rotberg, 1999; Bush, 2003; DeVotta 2004). Second, I will elaborate on the complicated state structure and the political dynamics in the post-war society of (Eastern) Sri Lanka that shape the playing field for local governments.

2.1. The Final War

A description of the Final War (2006-2009) needs to begin a few years prior to its onset, with the signing of a ceasefire agreement by the GoSL and the LTTE in 2002. All attempts to resolve the conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority by peaceful means had thus far failed. However, this interim ceasefire agreement that was signed on 22 February 2002 with mediation of the Norwegian government seemed to uphold. The guns fell silent, the fighting ceased, and the status quo of a de facto Tamil state in the north and east of the island was unofficially accepted. The atmosphere in the country was buoyant for a negotiated peace seemed to be at hand. Nevertheless, the illusion did not last long. The Tigers withdrew from the peace talks as early as April 2003 and a split within the Tiger cadres in April 2004 (which coincided with the political rise of Mahinda Rajapaksa) laid the foundation for a new hard-line stance towards the Tamil Tigers and peace negotiations; the period of 'no war, no peace' seemed to be coming to an end.

Rajapaksa's United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) coalition government that came to power in 2005 considered the LTTE to be the main obstacle to peace: a force to be defeated rather than negotiated with.⁹ In the Mahinda Chintana of 2005, Mahinda Rajapaksa's

⁹ It is important to note that the LTTE was already preparing for a return to war in late 2004, before the devastating tsunami hit the island and before Mahinda Rajapaksa's election campaign. The LTTE had spread the message that they would commence battle on January 14th, the Tamil harvest festival. The tsunami changed the dynamics and the break-out of war was 'postponed'.

presidential manifesto, the ceasefire of 2002 was revoked. The new government rejected all premises that were associated with the peace negotiations. Rajapaksa demanded the LTTE to abandon their claims to territorial autonomy and control in the Northern and Eastern provinces for the state was declared 'indivisible' and no concessions would be made (Lewis, 2010: 652). Rajapaksa aimed for "a single country unified under a single standard".¹⁰ The war effort was stepped up, the funding to re-equip and boost the forces was increased, and power was centralized within a small group composed of the Rajapaksa brothers and trusted advisors who mobilized around a nationalist discourse. In the Rajapaksa regime, the president's brothers Basil Rajapaksa, the de facto Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development, and Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the Minister of Defense; play central roles. The rearming took place on both sides and a resumption of violence and armed conflict was inevitable. The European Union's proscription of the LTTE as a terrorist organization in May 2006 confirmed its growing international isolation.

In July 2006, the Tigers disrupted the functioning of an irrigation system in eastern Sri Lanka,¹¹ cutting the water supply to 15,000 villagers and thousands of hectares of paddy land. This proved to be the perfect pretext for the government to instigate a major defensive to not only recapture the *anicut* or inlet weir but the entire LTTE-controlled territory in the Eastern Province (Gaasbeek, 2010: 179). Gaasbeek provides us with an interesting insight into these actions. He states that the counter-offensive from the GoSL was pre-planned, and the blocking of the sluice gates was merely an excuse: months before the siege was commenced, a slow but massive influx of troops in the area had been reported and the LTTE "had vigorously intensified its provision of compulsory military training to civilians" (2010: 179). Although the government would not formally abrogate the ceasefire until January 2008, Eelam War IV or the Final War had begun. The government had decided to continue the war until the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) had completely destroyed the LTTE, an aim that experts in Sri Lanka and abroad had deemed impossible considering the enormous strength, power and determination the Tigers had portrayed thus far.

¹⁰ Quote from Mahinda Rajapaksa, 'Address at the Victory Day Parade and National Tribute to the Security Forces Following the Defeat of Terrorism'. Colombo, 6 March 2009. Available online at: http://www.president.gov.lk/speech_New.asp?Id%75.

¹¹ They blocked the inlet of the Allai irrigation scheme, located across the Mavil Aru river on the border of Trincomalee and Batticaloa Districts.

The Final Siege

The struggle for the waterway developed into a struggle for territory that finally culminated in the battle for Vakarai, an historic stronghold of the LTTE in the Eastern Province. The battle resulted in the death of hundreds of civilians who had been taken hostage and used as a human shield by the LTTE and subsequently shelled by the government troops (Goodhand, 2010: 350). In July 2007 the LTTE cadres retreated to the Northern Province, leaving the east to be taken by the government troops.

After this victory, the armed forces turned their attention to the north and to the 15,000 square kilometers of the Vanni, the name given to the mainland area of the Northern Province, still held by the LTTE. The government troops had several large successes, such as the infamous victory of the Third Battle of Elephant Pass, when this strategic landmark was recaptured from the Tigers. The massive counter-strike by Prabhakaran and his Tigers that everyone expected never came. The extensive fighting led to hundreds of thousands of people to be displaced. The SLA finally forced the Tigers and remaining civilians into a small area in the north-east corner of the Vanni, now known as 'the Cage'. It was here where the

final siege would take place.

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Figure 2: Cartoon by Carlos Latuff. (Source: Groundviews: 'The Reckoning: Press Freedom in Sri Lanka,' 19 May 2011).

The course of this final siege that culminated in the defeat of the LTTE, the death of its entire leadership and the declaration of victory by Mahinda Rajapaksa and his SLA, is difficult to retrace. There has been a scarcity of objective reporting from the conflict area and, consequently, a lack of concrete or verifiable data. Thus far, information about the battle, the displaced, wounded and dead has mainly come from the side of the GoSL. The situation in the country was such that by 2009, international organizations had in large numbers

suspended their operations in the Vanni and had withdrawn their international staff, leaving the area void of international observers. Individuals who were critical of government action have been known to be 'blacklisted'; their names made public and they risked being beaten, killed or kidnapped (Weiss, 2011: 150). Similarly, violence against journalists mounted to a state of terror in which self-censorship and by extension, impunity of the government was the status quo. Horrible stories of disappearances of people who, fallen out of favor with important persons or institutions, being taken away by white vans and found dead or beaten and in police custody are overwhelmingly available (UN Panel Report, 2011; Ropers, 2010). The repression of the independent media was such that at least fourteen journalists have been reported killed since Mahinda Rajapaksa became president in 2005.¹² The level of intolerance toward independent media was so high that Reporters Without Borders ranked Sri Lanka as one of the most dangerous democracies for journalists in 2008. In 2009 it ranked only ahead of Kazakhstan among those states which have elected governments.¹³

The lack of independent organs or supervisory bodies in the country to oversee the actions of military strategists, the lack of independent press and a functioning judiciary combined with the almost absolute power of the Rajapaksa-clan ensured the government the debated position of being the provider of the dominant narrative. The government's main line about the final siege was that the army was performing a "hostage rescue operation"¹⁴ with a "zero civilian casualty policy"¹⁵ with the goal of saving civilians who were being used as human shields by the LTTE.

'We did not attempt to respond to the terrorists in their own language. When the terrorists were calling for war, we responded with a humanitarian operation. Our

¹² Amnesty International USA, 'Sri Lanka Human Rights.' Available online at: <http://www.amnestyusa.org/all-countries/sri-lanka/page.do?id=1011241>.

¹³ See Reporters Without Borders, 'Press Freedom Index 2008' at <http://www.rsf.org/en-classement794-2008.html> and 'Press Freedom Index 2009' at <http://www.rsf.org/en-classement1003-2009.html>.

¹⁴ The Daily News, 24 April 2009: 'Sri Lanka writes glorious chapter.'

¹⁵ Statement by the President, Sri Lankan Government website: www.priu.gov.lk, 'We give highest priority to civilian safety: President Rajapaksa', 5 January 2009: "Mr. Rajapaksa expressed satisfaction that his 'Zero Civilian Casualty Policy' was implemented perfectly by the armed forces [...], [t]hey would continue to implement this policy in all their operations."

*troops went to this operation carrying a gun in one hand, the Human Rights Charter in the other, hostages on their shoulders, and the love of their children in their hearts*¹⁶

*'It is truly a miracle to go to a battlefield where civilians have been turned into human bombs, and carry on the battle without shedding the blood of civilians'*¹⁷

To any accusations of increasing lawlessness or its authoritarian dismissal of parliamentary principles, the government reacted by either denying its involvement, announcing investigations or by declaring that tactics this robust were necessary in their important battle against terrorism (Ropers, 2010: 6). The number of civilians present in the Vanni and the Cage and the number of casualties were obscured, while Tiger force, power and killings were stressed, highlighted or exaggerated. The lack of international reaction to this explosive situation can be understood in light of this lack of extensive evidence of any wrongdoings, the emerging primacy of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) debate with its emphasis on sovereignty and power of decision for the state, and the international community's focus on eliminating global terrorism in the War on Terror.¹⁸ The governmental discourses of zero casualties and the humanitarian nature of the operation were powerful and influential.

Luckily, some educated guesses about what occurred in the final months can be made due to the information now released through the UN Panel Report,¹⁹ via satellite imagery of the battle locations and through the Indian intelligence network.

¹⁶ Quote from address by President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the ceremonial opening of Parliament, Sri Jayawarhanapura-Kotte, 19 May 2009.

¹⁷ Quote from address by President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the ceremonial opening of Parliament, Sri Jayawarhanapura-Kotte, 19 May 2009.

¹⁸ The GoSL emphasized the similarity between its counter-insurgency strategy and the Western rhetoric of the War on Terror to justify its military strategy and campaign. As one of the people I interviewed stated: *'This is all a result of the war on terror in a way. What happened was that the government took on the strategy, and that helped them so much that probably the LTTE never realized the enemy they were dealing with. It wasn't only the government they were fighting, it was also the international community'* (Sinhalese man, Colombo, 20-03-2011).

¹⁹ On 22 June, 2010, The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, has appointed a panel of experts to investigate the matter of accountability in Sri Lanka and advise him on the implementation of the joint commitment issued by Mahinda Rajapaksa and Ban Ki-Moon at the

It has become clear that by all indications, the death toll was extremely high, although no accurate number has been determined to this day (UN Panel Report, 2011: 1). It is reported that the LTTE lost 22,000 fighters during Eelam War IV (Samarasinghe, 2009: 437). In the final stages of the war, roughly 160,000 SLA soldiers are thought to have faced off against a force of around 2,000 to 5,000 Tamil Tiger fighters who were “seeded amidst a civilian population of some 330,000” (Weiss, 2011: 193-194). The final siege lasted for about sixteen weeks and is most commonly estimated to have caused the death of between 10,000 and 40,000 people, mainly Tamils. Further, some between 270,000 and 300,000 persons are estimated to have been displaced from the battle zone – several times higher than the government’s official estimation of the population residing in the area – and were interned in closed camps under military control and without freedom of movement (Samarasinghe, 2009: 437, UN Panel Report, 2011: 49). Approximately 14,000 people, often badly wounded, were evacuated from the Vanni by the ICRC (UN Panel Report, 2011: 1).

In the UN Panel Report, the investigators state credible allegations can indeed be made against the LTTE that “refused civilians permission to leave, using them as hostages, at times even using their presence as a strategic human buffer between themselves and the advancing SLA”. The LTTE is also said to have implemented “a policy of forced recruitment throughout the war” and contributed to “blurring the distinction between combatants and civilians and exposing civilians to additional harm” (UN Panel Report, 2011: iii). Like in all wars, however, there are two sides to the story – a second perspective that in this case has been obscured by the central government. In stark contrast to the government’s zero civilian deaths policy and the apparent humanitarian nature of the operation, the UN Panel found credible allegations, which if proven, “indicate that 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). The Panel states that “[b]etween September 2008 and 19 May 2009, the SLA advanced its military campaign into the Vanni using large-scale and widespread shelling, causing large numbers of civilian deaths. This campaign constituted persecution of the population of the Vanni. Around 330,000 civilians were trapped into an ever decreasing area [...] The Government shelled on a large scale in

conclusion of the Secretary-General’s visit to Sri Lanka on 23 March 2009. In this joint statement, the President of Sri Lanka agreed to take measures to address grievances and acknowledged the importance of an accountability process. The members of the panel are Marzuki Darusman (chair), Steven Ratner and Yasmin Sooka. Their report came out on 31 March 2011. The panel and its report have been openly and fiercely rejected by the GoSL.

three consecutive No Fire Zones [...], it shelled the UN hub, food distribution lines and near the ICRC ships that were coming to pick up the wounded [...]. Most civilian casualties in the final phases of the war were caused by Government shelling” (UN Panel Report, 2011: ii). There is also some evidence the GoSL knowingly denied aid personnel access to the besieged population in the Vanni, leading to a lack of medicines, shelter and food for the people in need. Humanitarian operations by the ICRC or UN for example were on some occasions delayed, spoiled, slowed down or blocked by the outright refusal to allow certain kinds of aid or access to the area (Weiss, 2011: 196, UN Panel Report, 2011: 49). These matters sketch the picture of a final siege marked by human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The war in Sri Lanka ended tragically, marked by bloodshed and amidst controversy. Sri Lankans of all ethnicities and beliefs were relieved to see the twenty-seven years lasting conflict come to an end. In May and June of 2009 there were massive celebrations around the country. “Sri Lankan flags were hoisted on public and private buildings and outside most homes, while massive cut-outs and banners honored President Mahinda Rajapaksa and the soldiers who had secured the victory” (Orjuela, 2010: 9). Many people were however simultaneously fearful of what would come next. The war had been fought, in part, over the wish of marginalized minorities to be recognized by the Sinhala dominated government and state; the same state that had used brute force to secure this overwhelming victory. For people who belonged to the Tamil minority, the relief of the end of the violence was overshadowed by the grief for their dead or wounded and the anger of massive displacement and remaining lack of freedom of movement. The question of whether or not this peace would vanquish their voice and their rights was predominant.

2.2. The Political Arena

Understanding how government actually works in Sri Lanka is quite the challenge

Bart Klem, 2011.

The turbulent end to the twenty-seven year war led to dramatic changes in Sri Lanka. The organization and dynamics of power are difficult matters to research for ‘power’ is an

elusive concept and can be argued to come in many shapes and forms; formal, informal, subtle or even subconscious. As Orjuela frames it: "sometimes power is not clearly visible in terms of who influences whom. An analysis of power that only looks for it in the concrete situations of decision-making will miss the more subtle workings of power" (2010: 12). When we start from Foucault (2000), who argues that power does not work on people but through them, through values and systems of knowledge and that, in this, identity position plays a significant role; an attempt can be made to describe and research the power dynamics that are present in post-war Sri Lanka. Power works through values and systems of knowledge; dynamics in society are thus guided by dominant discourses, the prevalent notion of what is right and wrong and the formal and informal structures in which decisions are taken. "Your ability to influence depends on your structural position in society – whether you have access to political or economic decision-making within your family, community or nation-state may depend on your age, gender, class, background, education, ethnic or religious identity and a range of other factors that position you as more or less powerful in a specific context" (Orjuela, 2010: 12).

Power relations in Sri Lanka have been immensely influenced by the overwhelming military defeat of the Tamil Tigers by the force of the government. One party to the conflict was annihilated; a determining factor on which peace and the structure of post-war society now rests for it has led the political arena to transition towards a more personalist, triumphalist and authoritarian system. DeVotta proposes that the best way to think of the island's ongoing politics is within the context of 'soft authoritarianism', directly related to Sinhalese Buddhist ethnocentrism (2010: 332). "While authoritarianism can be 'hard' in that it represents a dictatorship in certain spheres or moments in time, it can also be 'soft' in that a regime may allow its citizens ample freedoms provided they do not challenge certain institutions representing the state or become hypercritical of the ruling elite" (Illarionov, 2009: 71 in DeVotta, 2010: 333). Of this, the violence against journalists in the time of war is just one example. Under the reign of Mahinda Rajapaksa, Sri Lanka can be characterized by a patronage system, most commonly defined as a structure in which political patrons link aid and favors to electoral loyalty and, as such, is marked by a hierarchical system of reciprocity. In Sri Lanka, this system is highly politicized and ethnicized. While symbols and the outer-shell of democracy are being maintained, i.e. through free and fair elections that mask the structures of domination, the democratic system is in fact highly illiberal and authoritarian in nature.

'The system of governance that we have will always be the majority and autocratic rule. It's very unlikely that we will have a Muslim or Tamil as a president or even as a prime minister'²⁰

The framework for rebuilding the country after the war; both physical reconstruction and the building of peace, was solely determined by the victor and has been fully dependent on the hegemony and domination of the GoSL. In order to make sense of this victor's peace and gain understanding into the post-war dynamics in society, it is of importance to have a more thorough grip on the complexities of Sri Lanka's state structure and its authoritarian political system.

Unitary State

Sri Lanka's constitution, made up in 1978, expressly states that 'The Republic of Sri Lanka is a Unitary State'. While there are many definitions of 'unitary state', it is generally meant to describe a state that "centralizes sovereignty and power in a single institution or level of government. Federations, which involve the sharing of sovereignty and power between multiple orders of government, are traditionally understood to be the conceptual opposites of unitary states" (CPA, 2010-a: 11). Sri Lanka is the archetypal unitary state, in which legislative power is exercised by parliament, the courts hold judicial power and the president is the head of state and holds executive powers. The 18th Amendment to the Constitution,²¹ approved in September 2010 under the reign of Mahinda Rajapaksa, shows some of the remarkable powers of the office of president. In the Amendment, term limits on the executive presidency are abolished and restraints of presidential power that were established in the 17th Amendment through reform campaigns undertaken by civil society are negated. The absence of fixed terms, combined with comprehensive personal legal immunity and an inadequate checks and balances system creates an executive presidency that is entrenched and unrestrained, is a consolidation of authoritarianism and lacks significant democratic value. The 18th Amendment to the Constitution exemplifies the

²⁰ Author's interview with local INGO staff-member, Trincomalee, 29-04-2011.

²¹ Sri Lanka's constitution as well as the 18th Amendment to the Constitution can be read online at: <http://www.priu.gov.lk/Cons/1978Constitution.html>.

political landscape after the military victory for it denotes its growing tendency towards authoritarianism and centralization of power. In the wake of the armed conflict, having rid the country of terrorism and violence, Rajapaksa's power and popularity has only grown.²²

Institutional Environment

In the unitary state of Sri Lanka, the central government has the highest power. Any sub-national units such as administrative divisions or local government bodies, in theory and in practice, only exercise powers that the central government chooses to delegate. This is reflected in all aspects of the structure of government administration (see Table 1 for a simplified reflection of this structure and Appendix 3 for a more detailed representation).

	Central Tier	Provincial Tier
Level	<i>Administrative Bureaucrat</i>	<i>Elected Body</i>
<i>Province</i>	Governor	Provincial Council & Chief Minister
<i>District</i>	District Secretary	None
<i>Division</i>	Divisional Secretary	Local Authority (MC, UC, PS)
<i>Village</i>	Grama Niladhari	None

Table 1: Simplified reflection of the structure of government administration.

The governmental system of Sri Lanka can be divided in two tiers: the central and the provincial tier. The central tier consists of administrative bodies: the central government with at the top the President, the Cabinet, the Parliament and central Ministries. Administratively, Sri Lanka is made up out of 9 Provinces that consist of 25 Districts. The Districts can be further divided into Divisions. At District level, the District Secretariat is the

²² His popularity, however, mainly comes from the Sinhalese majority population of the country. In the 2010 presidential elections, Rajapaksa only secured 24,75 per cent and 27,31 per cent of the votes in respectively the Northern Jaffna and Vanni Districts, as against 63,84 per cent and 66,88 per cent of the votes secured by his opponent (General Sarath Fonseka). Similar results were reflected in the Eastern province of Batticaloa District where Rajapaksa obtained 26,27 per cent of the votes in contrast to his opponent who secured 68,93 per cent of the votes (Daily Mirror, 28 January 2010, A9-12: 'Presidential Elections 2010').

main actor with at the head the District Secretary or Government Agent. At the Divisional level these are the Divisional Secretariat and the Divisional Secretary. The lowest level within this central line is the Grama Niladhari or the Village Headman.

The provincial tier consists of elected people's representatives and can thus also be seen as the political tier. At the top we find the Provincial Council with its Chief Minister, who is the leader of the party that has won the majority in the Council, and the Governor who is directly appointed by the President. "While it would seem that by virtue of being democratically elected and accountable, the Board of Ministers and the Chief Minister should be the pre-eminent body within the Province, this is not straightforwardly the case because of the substantive (rather than merely symbolic) powers of the Governor" (CPA, 2010-a: 45). In the unitary state, the executive power of the people "shall be exercised by the President of the Republic" as stated in Article 4(b) of the Constitution. Because the Governor is appointed by the President and "holds office in accordance with Article 4(b)", as stated in Article 154B(2), the office and the powers of the Governor are an extension of those of the President. "The effect is that there is no provincial executive power as such, but an extension of the central executive power to the Provincial Councils" (CPA, 2010-a: 45).

At the local level we find the local authorities; bodies that are often referred to as local government: the Municipal Councils (MCs), the Urban Councils (UCs) in small cities or villages and the Pradeshiya Sabhas (PSs) in rural areas. Administratively, the local authorities fall under the Provincial Councils. Their main functions lie with village road development, garbage collection, public markets and public utility functions. Local government institutions in Sri Lanka thus have very different focal points than local governments in say, the Netherlands. Functions that are often deemed to belong to the local level, such as social services, housing issues, police or energy distribution, are centralized or privatized in Sri Lanka.

'The Provincial Council is responsible for the local authority in the sense that they are the guide, friend and provider'²³

²³ Author's interview with local authority staff-member in the Eastern Province, 11-05-2011.

The Distribution of Power: Devolution

The Provincial Councils were established in 1987 as a result of the Indo-Lankan agreement in an attempt to respond to the growing autonomy demands from Tamil nationalists and provide a solution to the ethnic conflict.²⁴ The agreement made it essential for the government to devolve powers to the provinces. Two pieces of legislation, the Provincial Council Act and the 13th Amendment to the Constitution provided the legal instrument of such devolution. The first official elections for the Eastern Provincial Council were held in 2008, following the defeat of the LTTE in the East in 2007. Up until then, the Eastern and Northern Provinces were merged and in no position to organize safe, free and fair elections. In 2008, the expectations were high that “provincial devolution in the post-LTTE and significantly multi-ethnic East would prove to be a show case of provincial devolution and democratic governance in a post-war, post-LTTE Sri Lanka set firmly in the path of peace, reconciliation and unity” (CPA, 2010-a: 5).

In essence, devolution is an interesting concept in the context of peace-building in Sri Lanka. Devolving powers to the lower levels of governance could, potentially, enable the minority population to “live with dignity and self respect in their native land” (ICES, 2006: 4). Especially within the context of the dominating state and authoritarian tendencies of the executive presidency, devolution could create possibilities for local governments to address local or minority grievances and counterbalance the political culture of centralization. The full implementation of devolution could provide the Tamil community the constitutional settlement through which the social, economic and political goals which they tried to achieve through war can be reached. Devolution is coupled with an accommodation of ethnic diversity for it can redress the imbalance in the relationship between the different ethnic groups. By territorially defining power, alternative sites of authority than the (predominantly Sinhalese) central government could be provided.

²⁴ On July 29 1987, the Indo-Lankan agreement was signed between the Indian Prime Minister at the time; Rajiv Gandhi (later to be assassinated by the LTTE) and the Sri Lankan President Jayawardene in an attempt to find a solution for the ongoing Sri Lankan conflict. The devolution of powers, the withdrawal of SLA troops from the north and the disarmament of the LTTE were among the main agreements. Important to note is that neither the LTTE, nor any other Tamil representative, were included in the talks. The agreement led to a temporary positive change; but ended up igniting a confrontation between the LTTE and the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force), present on the island to provide military assistance to the SLA and oversee the implementation of the accord.

'Devolution is the larger part of the answer and we think it is absolutely necessary because given that different communities and different people have different needs and a different sense of what is important to them, devolution is the one way in which the people in the local level can decide for themselves or at least have some decision power'²⁵

Devolution in Sri Lanka has been set out in the composition of three lists; the Central List on which subjects are stated that fall under the sole responsibility of the GoSL, the Provincial List with subjects that have been exclusively devolved to the Provincial Councils, and the Concurrent List on which subjects are stated that can be exercised concurrently by the GoSL and Provincial Councils but are subject to the supremacy of the centre in case of conflict. In reality it appears that the subjects on the lists tend to overlap, are vaguely described and that all subjects can be absorbed by the central government as it sees fit. Devolution has thus not been implemented in a successful manner and does not seem to have many far-reaching consequences.

The Distribution of Power: Center versus Local

Although measures for decentralization or devolution of powers are to be found in many unitary states these days, the central government remains the pre-eminent level of government and retains the power to revoke any devolution or decentralization unilaterally (CPA, 2010-a: 11). This is certainly noticeable in Sri Lanka. The dominance of the center is embedded in the very design of the system of devolution. The practice of devolution which entails direct interference by a range of central authorities and indirect control through the allocation of funds and political pressure has reinforced this dominance. The prevailing reality of having the same political party controlling both the central and provincial governments tend to make the provincial authorities routinely look to the center for guidance instead of being assertive and cater to the specific needs of the provinces (ICES, 2010: ix). My interviews with local government officials, scholars and NGO-workers in the Eastern Province underline this statement and sketch a very bleak outlook for the functioning of grassroots democracy.

²⁵ Author's interview with the executive director of an NGO, Colombo, 05-04-2011.

*'What has really happened is not devolution, it is more centralization that has taken place. That is what's governing the country'*²⁶

*'Nowhere in this country does a devolved structure work as it is supposed to. [...] You have the situation in which nothing happens unless central government orders it'*²⁷

The institutional framework in Sri Lanka is such that local authorities formally have the power and the position in society to address local grievances and thus the potential to add value to the process of building a sustainable and positive peace. What we see in reality however, is the immense influence that the distribution of power and the network of political alliances have on the functioning and the fulfillment of potential of the local government.

*'The culture of governance in this country is entirely centralized. So any government is basically central government'*²⁸

*'You cannot research the role of local governments in Sri Lanka because the local government entities, the Pradeshiya Sabhas, Urban and Municipal Councils, are a part of the central government. They don't function autonomously'*²⁹

*'Local authorities have limited powers. They are dependent for their resources. They are dependent on the Provincial Council that is dependent on the central government. The government has super strength'*³⁰

Local authorities are very dependent on the Provincial Council and thus on the central government for their resource base. The resources local authorities receive are, however, barely enough to cover their recurrent expenditures. The fact that practically no additional funding is given, is one of the main grievances of the local authorities I spoke with in the

²⁶ Author's interview with the chairman of the Board of Directors of an NGO, Colombo, 05-04-2011.

²⁷ Author's interview with the overall coordinator of programs at an NGO, Colombo, 25-05-2011.

²⁸ Author's interview with the overall coordinator of programs at an NGO, Colombo, 25-05-2011.

²⁹ Author's interview with local staff-member at the Asian Development Bank, Colombo, 26-05-2011.

³⁰ Author's interview with local staff-member at an international NGO in Trincomalee town, 25-04-2011.

Eastern Province. The system in place provides local authorities with the possibility to raise funds and the responsibility to collect taxes to increase their revenue base but mechanisms to do so appear to be very limited. On top of this, local authority staff are said to lack capacity, will and interest to actively pursue the matter.

'Where there are powers given to them through statute, they don't have the capacity to build upon these powers'³¹

'Local authorities in the East and North especially have no financial capacity. They have no money to even meet the recurrent expenditures that is the salaries to the staff, the maintenance of roads, garbage collection, all those things. So, they have no money to even meet that, maintenance services. The thing is, what happens is that the central government provides the funds. They collect a little revenue but that is not enough so the central government provides funds to the local authorities, that attacks than the autonomous nature of the council; it is compromised. Than, there is opportunity for powers to interfere with the governance of local authority'³²

'Local authorities have the potential to generate money but they don't use this potential'³³

Local politicians are said to be inexperienced and interested in personal gain, rather than searching for the small windows of opportunity they have to function as the local pillar of democracy.

'Political offices are being used to promote narrow individual and group interests that contribute to tensions. The newly elected Council members are young and very inexperienced'³⁴

³¹ Author's interview with the overall coordinator of programs at an NGO, Colombo, 25-05-2011.

³² Author's interview with high-ranking local staff-member at an international INGO, Trincomalee, 29-04-2011.

³³ Author's interview with local staff-member at the Asian Development Bank, Colombo, 26-05-2011.

³⁴ Author's interview with local staff-member at an international NGO, Trincomalee - Muthur, 04-05-2011.

'The central government has the power of the purse. What happens is that they use these local government structures as kind of training grounds for their politicians to move up the ranks: patronage politics'³⁵

The Network of Political Alliances

This lack of engagement in local politicians can be in part traced back to the network of political alliances that is of great importance in Sri Lanka. The power of the unitary state is such, that being on the right side of politics has consequences. Some of the local authorities run by opposition parties disclosed that they feel they are being mistreated and get secondary treatment from the Provincial Council and the central government. Stories of opposition figures switching alliances to the ruling party are abundant – only within the central frame will you have access, resources and power to actually achieve something. Patronage politics, party politics, and clientelism are fairly significant factors in political alliances and the distribution of resources and power.

The influence of the center in local level politics could easily be recognized during the last local elections in March 2011. Election themes revolved around national issues, rather than local issues. The political battle was being fought between Rajapaksa's UPFA, the TNA and the main opposition party, the UNP in an attempt to garner the support of people at grassroots level.

"Local Government elections in general in this country in recent years have taken the form of a national referendum on the ruling party with little relevance to local issues. Big parties use local elections as a means to test their popularity and local issues are mentioned if at all only in passing"³⁶

'Local elections are not about local issues in the end. It becomes about national issues and also this time the government went on this theme that you have to vote for us

³⁵ Author's interview with the overall coordinator of programs at an NGO, Colombo, 25-05-2011.

³⁶ Daily News editorial: 'Local Government Polls,' 21 January 2011. Available online at: http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/01/21/main_Editorial.asp.

*because we are in power and if you vote anyone else than you won't get development.*³⁷

*'It is the same parties that contest at all levels. This election in particular was also seen as a test of the government's popularity. Many of the issues that were discussed were not about roads, sanitation, etc - but cost of living, corruption, resettlement, these issues. In that sense they are not clearly separated. Also the government itself made that link saying that if you want something done locally, then you need to make sure we get elected because we are in charge. If you vote in opposition you won't get anything done. People are realizing that unless you have a link to the center you're not going to get your road fixed'*³⁸

The same dynamics can be seen in the local government elections of 2006 and Provincial Council campaign in 2009. In 2006, the focus lay with voting for Mahinda Rajapaksa in order to "strengthen his hands and his government to bring peace to the country."³⁹ Voting for the government party at the local elections was thus represented as a patriotic duty of the people. According to Uyangoda, the opposition launched a similar campaign, based on national sentiment, against the government. Uyangoda states that "the ruling party as well as opposition parties viewed the local government election primarily as an integral component of their national political agendas. Leaders of national parties visited local areas, addressed local rallies, and appealed to the voters primarily on national issues and agendas. Political leaders from Colombo came to villages in distant areas and told local voters how important their voting would be to the political future of the nation."⁴⁰

In the last local government elections of March 2011, the President went round the country explaining to the people the services rendered and being rendered to them by the government. He highlighted the benefits accruing to the people from infra-structure

³⁷ Author's interview with local staff-member at an NGO in Colombo, 05-04-2011.

³⁸ Author's interview with local scholar, Colombo, 19-03-2011.

³⁹ Uyangoda, J. (2011). Local Governance in the Periphery: Towards the Deepening of Local Democracy. Draft version, cited with permission.

⁴⁰ Uyangoda, J. (2011). Local Governance in the Periphery: Towards the Deepening of Local Democracy. Draft version, cited with permission.

development and welfare measures being implemented under Maga Neguma⁴¹ and Gama Neguma,⁴² fertilizer subsidy schemes, etc. Rajapaksa has been reported to have attended meetings held in support of UPFA candidates contesting in the local government elections. “The President told the crowd to rally round the Government” asking the people: “win for me the village; I’ll win for you the country.”⁴³ I feel it is safe to say that when the President of the country goes to rural villages to campaign for the ruling party in the elections for a Pradeshiya Sabha – political dynamics are out of perspective.

A thorough grip on the complex state structure of Sri Lanka as well as an understanding of its political system, both formally and informally, is important to assess the potential and actual role of local governments in the post-war dynamics of peace-building and reconstruction. In Sri Lanka, the ending of the war has had an immense influence on the power-relations and the distribution of power in the country. Despite the presence of an extensive system of local government and the formal promises of devolution, I can conclude that the actual powers of local government institutions remain very limited for various reasons. The political analysis of the island has shown that it is centralization and patronage games that govern the arena, rather than local empowerment and devolution.

⁴¹ Maga Neguma is the name given to the rural infrastructure expansion plans highlighted in the Mahinda Chintana, 2010 that are part of Gama Neguma.

⁴² Gama Neguma is the name given to the agriculture and rural development plans highlighted in the Mahinda Chintana, 2010 that are to empower the rural economy.

⁴³ Daily News ‘President tells voters: win for me the country I’ll win for you the country’, 12 March 2011. Available online at: <http://www.dailynews.lk/2011/03/12/pol01.asp>.

3. WINNING THE PEACE

Peace is the only battle worth waging. It is no longer a prayer, but an order which must rise up from peoples to their governments – the order to choose finally between hell and reason

Albert Camus, 1945.

Azar's theory poses that structural inequalities and differential political power lie at the heart of protracted social conflict. "When these inequalities and power differences are expressed through distributional inequalities, such that certain social groups get more or less of a society's rewards, the seeds for PSC are sown" (Fisher, 1997: 83). Inequalities in this sense and, as such, the occurrence of social conflict is thus linked to social or group identity and the delivery and distribution of basic human needs – making the identity group the unit of analysis.

We are led to the hypothesis that the source of protracted social conflict is the denial of those elements required in the development of all people and societies, and whose pursuit is a compelling need in all. These are security, distinctive identity, social recognition of identity, and effective participation in the processes that determine conditions of security and identity, and other such developmental requirements. The real source of conflict is the denial of those human needs that are common to all and whose pursuit is an ontological drive in all (Azar, 1985: 60. Emphasis in original).

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Following this line of thought, it is argued that conflicts will arise when one group decides to fight the cause of their (perceived) discrimination "that comes from the denial of identity, an absence of security of culture and valued relationships, and an absence of political participation to remedy this victimization" (Fisher, 1997: 84). Azar further highlights the fact that the deprivation of needs and denial of access are often rooted in group dynamics; in a refusal to recognize, accept or accommodate the identity of 'the other', the disadvantaged group. The state is seen as the provider of needs satisfaction and is often monopolized by the advantaged group or the dominant community "who maximize their interests at the expense of marginalized groups" (Fisher, 1997: 85). In the prior chapter, we have already gotten a glimpse of these dynamics in Sri Lanka. The authoritative governance structure in the country has been known to favor the Sinhalese majority group

over the marginalized minority groups, in concurrence with Azar who argues that “the policy capacity of the state is limited by a rigid authority structure, which responds to the dominant groups rather than the needs of all constituents” (Fisher, 1997: 85). These dynamics have great influence on the state’s capacity and willingness to address basic needs, potentially adding to inter-communal cleavages.

In this chapter, the fulfillment of basic needs in Sri Lanka will be examined in order to provide an insight into the local impacts of the post-war situation and further grasp how peace-building and reconstruction occur in a victor’s peace. If the assumption that the denial of identity, the absence of security and an absence of political participation stand at the root of conflict is accepted; these issues can also be put to use to analyze and assess positive peace. The question that guides this chapter is thus what the impact of the victor’s peace is on the provision of the basic needs of access, identity and security on the local level.

3.1. The Basic Need of Access

In this thesis, the basic need of access is thought to entail both political and economic access needs. Political access needs will be researched by focusing on the indicator of ‘group consciousness’ and the political participation of minorities. By focusing on the equal access to economic development, the need of economic access will be explored.

Political Access

With the war ending in Sri Lanka, a situation of negative peace was reached. Without an incentive to make radical changes by international pressure or for example a peace accord or treaty, the victor’s peace is still marked by the unresolved underlying conflicts, issues and power struggles that had led to the conflict. As Orjuela states: “[t]he uneven power relations that characterized war-time Sri Lanka – between ethnic and religious groups, between rich and poor, men and women – continue to shape Sri Lanka’s society as the country faces its post-war future” (2004: 10).

The way the war ended has had a lot of influence on how peace has been given shape. The decisive victory has created a post-war context that substantially differs from the situation which the theory and practice of peace and conflict prevention has normally been applied to. With the LTTE in place, the Tamil minority community had some political leverage and stood a chance for bringing about change in the relationship between state and society or, to be more precise, between state and minority groups. Any hope of finding a political solution for the casus belli has, however, fled with the death of Prabhakaran and the defeat of the LTTE. Although the LTTE may not have represented all Tamils, the organization did provide the minority population on the island with the chance of representation and participation in the political arena for it represented 'the other side', with which the future was to be negotiated with. The military victory has, however, left the state and the government in the hands of powerful Sinhalese politicians and influential Buddhist monks; individuals who are not showing any interest in political reforms or the full implementation of power sharing mechanisms such as the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.

'The war ended unilaterally with a victory for the state. So it is very difficult for us to expect a state that won a war against a secessionist minority by military means to explore political solutions. I think that the window for a political solution is over now. The peace is the political solution – the victor's peace is the political solution'⁴⁴

'The government is not attempting to provide any political solution. Government is denying there is a need for a political solution. They have won the war, so there is no problem'⁴⁵

The current political system can be denoted by triumphalism, centralization and Sinhalese domination. This situation is maintained by the majoritarian position of the Sinhalese community: politicians can afford to solely rely on their Sinhalese constituency for the Sinhalese make up approximately 75% of the population. Politicians do not need the minority vote and thus have little to gain from addressing minority issues. As such, there is a great inequality in access to political power and representation amongst identity groups.

⁴⁴ Author's interview with local scholar, Colombo, 01-06-2011.

⁴⁵ Author's interview with high-ranking local staff-member at an international INGO, Trincomalee, 29-04-2011.

Politicization of the ethnic identity has been a central part of the conflict dynamics and has remained important in the post-war political arena. The claim to power on the basis of a particular identity is a central feature in many contemporary conflicts (Kaldor, 1999 in Orjuela, 2004: 23), and is very present in the Sri Lankan case.

'At the moment, unfortunately, we have the government that is strong with the Sinhalese majority support alone. So it doesn't need ethnic minorities at this stage. So it has no need to listen to them. Because it can satisfy the Sinhalese population and be strong, have a strong majority in Parliament. Perhaps, when the time comes when this government is like Mubarak's of Ghadaffi's, then there will be a coalition of opposition forces across the spread of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims all coming together and it will then oppose and try and get rid of this government. And then, for them to stay together and solve problems they have to make the accommodations which will lead to de facto power-sharing. I don't think we will have a model that we have worked out and implemented'⁴⁶

This situation has left many Tamils with the political awareness or group consciousness of relative subordinate position in society and the sense of a lack of voice. Many individuals I spoke with mention feelings of a lack of power, influence and possibilities for change.

'We are still treated like animals'⁴⁷

'There is no one to tell our problems to here. The local government cleans the beach but does not solve my problems'⁴⁸

'The government is not making change possible. The government needs to change before my heart can change'⁴⁹

'People are silent because of the war. They still have the feeling that anything can happen and they are mentally framed to keep quiet. There is need for empowerment

⁴⁶ Author's interview with the executive director of an NGO, Colombo, 05-04-2011.

⁴⁷ Author's interview with Tamil widow, Trincomalee town, 21-04-2011.

⁴⁸ Author's interview with Tamil widow, Trincomalee town, 21-04-2011.

⁴⁹ Author's interview with Tamil widow, Trincomalee town, 21-04-2011.

*of people to get sustainable peace. We need to build peace in every mind of every person*⁵⁰

Local governments are, in theory, the perfect institutions to address this lack of voice or perception of lack of voice. On paper, local authorities can tend to minority grievances and provide the political space for diversifying political power. "Local government is generally seen as the site where 'more democracy' is available to 'common people' at the 'local level'" (Kumar, 2006:297). "Local government allows many more people to participate in the process of representative government (as elected representatives) [and has the] capacity to facilitate and enhance participatory democracy. [...] Local government is closer to citizens and deals more directly with the issues that impinge on them. Consequently, local government is more accessible and its institutions are easier to engage with" (Pratchett, 1999; Stoker, 2004 in Pratchett, 2004: 3). In reality, however, the system of local governance is highly affected in its functioning by the dynamics of the victor's peace as we have seen. In Sri Lanka, as probably in most other cases, the opportunities for local political representation appear to be inextricably linked to the effectiveness of higher level democracy.

What is lacking for the authorities to function effectively and in a valuable manner for sustainable peace, is not only resources, capacities or power but also the connection with the constituency, the grassroots. There seems to be a separation between the political and social sphere on the local level; a detachment of citizens and local bodies of governance. The local authorities are isolated, detached and alienated from their people. What strikes me as odd is the fact that it is the central and not the provincial tier of governance that has village level officers (in the shape of the Grama Niladhari). Local authorities are supposedly the local tier of political functioning but lack direct grassroots officers, a fact which can be argued to be a defining factor in creating a gap between local government institutions and the local community. This gap is reflected in the low level of political participation of the community. The system of public participatory institutions is in its infancy and people don't seem to have faith in the current governance system.

⁵⁰ Author's interview with Tamil political functionary, Trincomalee District, 12-05-2011.

'The government will look after you, what does that mean? During the war, the government shelled the people in the Vanni and thousands of people were injured; children, women, thousands of people. The Red Cross wanted to help and the bloody GA stopped them! He said, you better go and help the Sinhalese people. So, government is useless'⁵¹

People's participation in the local political arena is limited to election and voting procedures; local politicians are not subsequently held responsible for their duties, nor are the government institutions used as local conflict mediation apparatuses. The level of local democracy can consequently be classified as low.

'Communication between the people and the local authorities is very less. The people's participation ends at the election, they just cast their vote'⁵²

'There is no real connection between the local authorities and the grassroots. The community does not go to their local authorities. There is a separation between the political and social sphere; the citizens and the local bodies are detached. The local authorities are isolated from the people. Isolated, detached and alienated'⁵³

When reviewing the indicators of 'group consciousness' and the political participation of minorities, the image of great inequality among identity groups in the political area, the widening gap between the government, local and central, and the grassroots communities as well as the minority group consciousness of powerlessness and a lack of voice lingers. In Sri Lanka, all is politics. Politics govern the country and politics are governed by the Sinhalese; leaving the minority population seemingly unfulfilled in their basic human need of political access.

⁵¹ Author's interview with Tamil man, Trincomalee: 29-04-2011. The quote refers to the situation in which the ICRC ('them') wanted to open a clinic in Trincomalee District to treat wounded evacuees from the Vanni and the plan was refused by the Government Agent of Trincomalee.

⁵² Author's interview with high-ranking local staff-member at an international INGO, Trincomalee, 29-04-2011.

⁵³ Author's interview with local scholar, Colombo, 01-06-2011.

Economic Access

'Like the way we raged war against terrorism, we are now raging the war for economic development'⁵⁴

A second way in which we can operationalize and conceptualize the basic need of access is as equal access to economic participation. The dominant government discourse in the post-war situation revolves around 'equal economic development' or as Jonathan Goodhand reformulates: "an 'economic war' for 'nation-building'" (2010: 351). As we can see in the Mahinda Chintana of 2010 – Vision for the Future – the sole focus of the GoSL's plans for the post-war years lies with reconstruction and development, which is to be done in a regional equitable manner to benefit all. Rajapaksa "appears to believe that reconstruction will obviate the need for devolution [and] development is viewed as the shortcut to security" (Goodhand, 2010: 360). The main plans, especially in the Eastern Province, can be grouped under three headings; tourism development, industrial development and infrastructure development.⁵⁵ The UPFA seems to believe that "the key to peace is prosperity" and "that reconstruction will obviate the need for devolution;" development is thus "viewed as the shortcut to security" (Goodhand, 2010: 354, 360). I shall therefore focus on the indicator 'equal access to economic development' to assess the fulfillment of the need of economic participation in (Eastern) Sri Lanka.

Equitable development

Although it is the President's vision for the future, what we see in reality is not necessarily equitable development. During my interviews, several harsh statements were made about the economic plans of the government. Some people for example state that development is polarizing the West and the rest of the country or that equitable development is, in essence, not equitable. An even distribution of attention over all regions – North, East, South and West, leads to inequalities. Development should, they say, be divided according to a needs analysis. The North and East have suffered a great deal more, also in the economic sense, in comparison to the South and West. For development to be equal, its

⁵⁴ Author's interview with the overall coordinator of programs at an NGO, Colombo, 25-05-2011.

⁵⁵ A number of initiatives have been formulated by former governments and are now being executed under the reign and vision of Rajapaksa.

distribution should consequently be unequal. These statements are difficult to triangulate or support with hard data with the information now available. I strongly feel, however, that in matters such as these, perceptions are often of more importance than the facts. Even if development is locally received in an equal manner; the perception of inequality prevails and stands in the way of it having a clear peace dividend.

'The inequality is growing. There are figures given by the central government that inequality is being reduced, but our perception is not that. People we talk to seem to say that they are getting poorer. And the government propaganda machine is so strong, we can't tell because we don't have the surveys that say that poverty is increasing. One reality check is that when you travel from Colombo to Batticaloa for example, the main road is in perfect shape. Just go off the main road and see what is happening, that is the thing. Development is taking place, roads are being built, bridges are constructed but not how the locals want it per se'⁵⁶

Development: Grievances and Fears

'People are bystanders in a huge transformation of their homeland and natural habitat and they are wondering what is going on. The notions of inclusion and participation are totally lost'⁵⁷

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More complaints are being made about the large development plans by the central government. As sources wishing to remain anonymous told me, local development was and is being 'hijacked' by the central government. Instead of involving the local level bodies which make up the official local development arm of the government, in designing and implementing development plans; the government has created supra-national institutions to do the job. Programs such as NECORD and NEHRP were in charge of the physical reconstruction of the North and East. These are harsh statements that, if confirmed by data, represent the centralization of economic development. What I can state based on the data I collected, is that people and local authority personnel in general don't have a sense of ownership or meaningful participation in the reconstruction process of their area. People feel detached from the program design, the implementation phase and the dividends and

⁵⁶ Author's interview with the executive director of an NGO, Colombo, 05-04-2011.

⁵⁷ Author's interview with the overall coordinator of programs at an NGO, Colombo, 25-05-2011.

there seems to be a gap between the wanted solutions at the top-level and the grievances felt at grassroots level. Data collected by CPA underlines this observation. In their survey, “an overwhelming majority (90,3%) of the people state that they have not been consulted by the Government/Provincial Councils/Local Authorities in the development of the area. The in-depth discussions that were carried out also confirm that most of the respondents were not consulted by the above government authorities in decision making. Some affirm that it is the politician who makes the decisions in development” (2010-c: 23).⁵⁸

‘There is no harmonizing between the national and the local priorities. You must say in your thesis that the national interest should always take into account the local priority and try to accommodate them and that that is not being done in such a manner’⁵⁹

‘The thing is, in a project there are stages. One is at policy level. Who designs the policy? The government. Do they consult the people? No. Then, the design level. Who designs? The government. Then at implementation level, for some projects, small projects, they ask the local authorities. But even then, they are carried out by other agencies approved by the central government. Where is the village in the village development plans?’⁶⁰

‘I wouldn’t say development has an ethnic component. The roads in the north are being built. Similarly, the southern highway is being built. The question one needs to ask is who is being employed in these construction sites. The local community? I don’t think that is happening. The contractors take their own people, Indians and Chinese’⁶¹

One of the grievances that was often formulated by respondents considers the major tourism plans by the GoSL. It is rumored that private land and houses along the Eastern coast are being taken by the government to make room for new and big tourist

⁵⁸ The question remains whether this is a downward trend or has always been the status quo.

⁵⁹ Author’s interview with high-ranking local staff-member at an international INGO, Trincomalee, 29-04-2011.

⁶⁰ Author’s interview with high-ranking local staff-member at an international INGO, Trincomalee, 29-04-2011.

⁶¹ Author’s interview with the chairman of the Board of Directors of an NGO, Colombo, 05-04-2011.

accommodations. The development of tourism in for example Uppuveli and Nilaweli in Trincomalee District is presumed to create enormous economic benefits and job opportunities for the local population in the area. What is said to be occurring, however, is that employees are not attracted from the surrounding towns and villages but are brought in from other parts of the country. The general impression among the population of Uppuveli, Trincomalee, for example, is that the locally well-known Chaaya Blu hotel resort is primarily staffed by Sinhalese. Similar concerns about the up-scale hotels in Trincomalee District have been expressed by various members of local and international NGOs, operating in the area.

*'Tourism is a big issue. Job opportunities are very high but people are invited from outside areas, investors and staff. This is in [...] Trinco District. Workers, staff, come from other sides of the country'*⁶²

*'The Eastern Revival Plan at the end of the day is largely based on tourism. Large chunks of the coastline are being given out to tourism. There isn't sufficient attention paid to how these people are going to participate in this great tourism. Where are the people coming from? Outside. That means ethnic colonization'*⁶³

Facts or perceptions as these can be linked to the long-standing fear of Sinhala domination and colonization; land is scarce and remains a sensitive issue. In the post-independence era, several governments have initiated a number of land settlements projects in areas including the North and East of the country in order to provide livelihood opportunities for people from across the country. These areas are, however, traditionally inhabited by Tamils who perceived these government-sponsored projects as "state-driven colonization projects which favored the Sinhalese from outside the Province, and dramatically impacted the demography of the region" (CPA, 2010-b: 26).⁶⁴ Similar claims have been made by Tamils

⁶² Author's interview with local staff-member at an international NGO in Trincomalee, Muthur, 04-05-2011.

⁶³ Author's interview with the overall coordinator of programs at an NGO, Colombo, 25-05-2011.

⁶⁴ It was the goal of the then UNP-government to 'break' the Tamil homeland with colonization schemes; Sinhala pockets were to drive wedges in Tamil dominated areas. Although the colonization schemes in the 50s were relatively 'ethnically innocent', from the 70s on this changed dramatically. The Mahaweli project, for example, has been executed under the supervision of Israeli advisors who shared lessons from the colonization of the West Bank with the Sri Lankans. For more information, see Gunaratne, M.H.(2009).

and Muslims from the Eastern Province in the post-war period in which many returned to their lands. As stated in the CPA report: "it is difficult to dismiss the claims outright as in a number of cases there appears to be a partisan role being played by the central government. There have been allegations that certain actors within the central government are playing an active role in facilitating new Sinhala settlements or in assisting Sinhala returnees to evict Tamils and Muslims occupying land" (2010-b: 31). The widely-held perception among the minority population is that "the government favors the Sinhala community and under the guise of development is attempting to increase the Sinhala population in the East" (CPA, 2010-b: 26).

Although the development plans and programs do not seem to have a clear ethnic component, there are some cases that people in the Eastern Province repetitively reference to in order to demonstrate the powerful hand and dominating position of the Sinhalese in the economic development plans. Of this, the building of the Hambantota harbor is the best example. Hambantota, a rural District in the South of the island, was chosen by Mahinda Rajapaksa in the Mahinda Chintana as a focus area for development and it was to become the new economic hub of the South. An international airport, a cricket stadium, the Hambantota Industry Port and the Southern Express Way are built, being build or planned to uplift the region. The case of the Hambantota port is noteworthy for two reasons. First, Hambantota is the home District of President Rajapaksa and is therefore rumored to receive a disproportionate level of attention, funding and development. Second, Trincomalee has the fifth largest natural harbor in the world and has been operative as industrial port. This unlike Hambantota, where no harbor or supporting facilities and infrastructure existed; making the selection of this region for the build at least remarkable.

'Most programs are in the South of the country. I will recall, some time back, there was a World Bank team on a new mission and there was a proposal to improve the natural harbor in Trinco, the best harbor in all of South-East Asia. The government didn't want to improve it. In Hambantota there is no harbor. They have dug out land inside and then connect it to the sea; it was artificially created. But here there is a natural harbor but they don't want to develop it. So there was a discussion. The World Bank asked the Minister why the government is not favoring improving the

*Trinco harbor. They said they wouldn't do it because it was on the wrong side of the map*⁶⁵

*'An example of the increased politicization is the build of the Hambantota harbor. Why are they building there? When there is no infrastructure? It is such a small, small island. Do we really need another harbor? We have Trinco! Why Hambantota? It is all politics*⁶⁶

The big economic development plans of the government thus do not appear to be winning the war for nation-building but in fact, appear to be widening the gap between communities causing grievances and fears. An example I would like to cite in the context of grievances caused by major development is the Sampur case for it can show the local impact of national programs.

Under Emergency Regulations, the Sampur area that was of great strategic significance for the LTTE during war-time was declared a High Security Zone (HSZ) in 2007.⁶⁷ This declaration meant that the vast area, encompassing eleven Grama Niladhari divisions, was deemed unfit to inhabit for security reasons and people were prohibited to enter or reside within the HSZ. As can be imagined, this decision threatened to prevent about 15,000 people returning to their homes and lands. In 2008, the HSZ was reduced to cover four GN divisions. According to CPA data this reduction of the area still meant that around 6,000 people were driven off their lands, needing to reside in 'transit camps' or with host families in neighboring cities in Trincomalee or Batticaloa (2009: 4).⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Author's interview with individual, Trincomalee, 29-05-2011.

⁶⁶ Author's interview with government official, Trincomalee, 28-05-2011.

⁶⁷ Sampur was used by the LTTE as a basis from where they executed attacks on the Sri Lankan Navy Base in Trincomalee harbor and was considered an 'LTTE hub'. The fall of Sampur in 2006 after extensive battle was seen as an important strategic victory for the GoSL, because it was the first important LTTE base that was captured.

⁶⁸ Interestingly, the area that remains HSZ was partially populated by people who migrated from Valvettiturai (Prabhakaran's birth village) about 100 years ago, and who still had social links with their relatives in Valvettiturai until at least the 1970s. This information combined with the fact Sampur was the main LTTE base throughout the war, explains why the question to what extent the HSZ/SEZ is a ritual form of revenge is being asked by various actors.

What is interesting about this case is first that the necessity of the establishment of a High Security Zone after the violence and war had ceased is questionable. Whether or not the area was indeed unsafe or if the action was symbolical of the GoSL victory over the LTTE remains unclear. Second, the fact that a large part of the HSZ has been transformed into a SEZ: a Special Economic Zone. "That such a large tract of land, both private and public, could be taken from its original inhabitants is a critical issue. The overall process being followed raises concerns whether, under the cover of national security and then economic development, the inhabitants of Sampur are being dispossessed of their land" (CPA, 2009: 4).

Officially, the area still carries the label of HSZ. This causes a lot of confusion about the nature and scale of the SEZ and the two terms are often used interchangeably, even by government officials. "It is speculated that if the Government goes ahead with creating an exclusive SEZ, the land will be acquired and turned over to private and international companies for industrial purposes" (CPA, 2009: 11), which is exactly what has been happening. The government, the Ceylon Electricity Board and a Government of India Enterprise NTPC have signed an agreement to develop and construct a coal power plant, a port facility and a transmission line, within the SEZ declared area.⁶⁹ Construction has not yet started as latest reports state, but the plans are apparently still on the table. The coal power project can have potential benefits by providing employment for locals and improving the infrastructure in the region. The project has, however, also been fiercely critiqued by various actors. The site choice is sometimes said to have been heavily influenced by political reasons; there is a significant lack of consultation and transparency; and the economic benefits are said to be slim for the project needs skilled laborers for construction and maintenance who are not well-represented in the local area. In light of the centralization earlier described, decisions related to the HSZ in Trincomalee are "being taken by the central government and its agents rather than in consultation with and the involvement of local level actors including the IDPs themselves and the Eastern Provincial Council" (CPA, 2009: 7). A complicating factor in the matter is the fact that the GA in Trincomalee and the Governor of the Eastern Province are close 'friends' or allies of the Rajapaksas. The problem of a lack of information and public consultation is prevalent in this matter as it is in so many others. Interesting to note is that this case can serve as an

⁶⁹ For a visual portrayal of the site, see Appendix 4.

excellent example of how the large government economic development plans are causing major grievances on grassroots level. Statistics of IDPs in Trincomalee District as reported by the UNHCR based on Divisional Secretariat/Grama Niladhari records as of 28 April 2011 report a total of 3,900 IDPs in the Muthur Division that are staying in transit sites in Kilivetti, Pattithidal and Manatchenai or with host families in Kaddaipaichchan or Santhosapuram. Another nineteen persons are staying with host families in various GN Divisions in Kuchchaveli. There is a lack of precise data on where these IDPs are coming from, but it can safely be said that at least a large percentage is displaced because of the HSZ in the Sampur area. The lack of data and the lack of access to the area make it difficult to sketch the entire picture and the full scope of the effects of this project. The GoSL's economic development plans are intended to contribute to sustainable peace and nation-building. Without transparency, public participation and local ownership, however, the effects and side-effects of development can be detrimental to the unity of the state, the boundaries between identity groups and individuals.

Economic development as peace-building mechanism

Economic development is a necessary step to take in the peace-building or stabilization process, and is wanted by many. A survey executed by the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) to assess the public perspective on the Eastern Province recovery post-war provides interesting insights in this matter. When questioned about their perceptions of the political and economic climate in the Eastern Province, respondents of all ethnic groups assigned significant precedence to development needs such as the improvement of roads, transport, job opportunities, electricity services, health facilities and housing over security and human rights protection (2010-b: 4). Even internally displaced persons responded to the question of what they need and want with '*economic development; roads and a postal service*'.⁷⁰

Listening to people talking about development along the lines of the government discourse made me think of Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs, as first described in 1943 (Maslow, 1943, 1954). In his theory, Maslow created a hierarchal order of needs. It is not until after the most fundamental needs are met an individual desires the fulfillment of higher level needs. In Maslow's theory, the most fundamental needs are physiological of

⁷⁰ Author's interview with IDPs in several IDP-camps in the Muthur area, Trincomalee District, 04-05-2011.

nature and entail matters such as food, water and sleep. The higher or secondary levels of needs consist first of security, then love or belonging and esteem needs with at the top the need for self-actualization. A similar dynamic can be seen in the case of Sri Lanka.

*'The people in the North and East are so war-weary, the only thing they are concerned about is getting their day-to-day lives together'*⁷¹

"Local communities are supportive of development which could improve their standard of living and their access to facilities. Too often, the GoSL assumes that national development and local development are one and the same and dictates terms" (CPA, 2009: 10)

A person needs roads, a job, health facilities and means of communication to get his life back in order after years of war. As the first quote shows, people are concerned about practical matters and desire normalcy. What worries me is what will happen after the development plans have brought progress and change to the war-ridden areas and this most basic level of needs has been fulfilled. In the context of Sri Lanka with its centralized mechanisms and state discourse of economic development, the question of the potential relationship between access and identity needs or, in Maslow's terminology, the relationship between basic and secondary level needs is an interesting one. Can the economic development or economic access bring forth reconciliation in the minds of individuals and as such contribute to a sustainable peace? When only economics is getting the government's attention and the basic human needs of identity, security and political access remain unfulfilled – the *casus belli* remains intact and renewed violence is always a possibility. Negative peace plus economic development does not equal positive peace. Economic development and access to economic participation cannot stand alone although this does seem to be the GoSL's policy to stabilize and reconstruct Sri Lanka.

*'Economic development is a necessary condition, but not an adequate condition'*⁷²

Development interventions should focus not only on improving the general economic climate in the country, but also support measures to "improve the legitimacy and

⁷¹ Author's interview with the overall coordinator of programs at an NGO, Colombo, 25-05-2011.

⁷² Author's interview with local scholar, Colombo, 01-06-2011.

effectiveness of the state” (Bigdon & Korf, 2004: 4) and a healthy social climate. The introduction of participatory and empowerment approaches into project work can facilitate sustainable development and the promotion of democratic structural stability. This notion is also valid in societies in which the state is the sole provider of development and it is the local government or local actors that are in need of empowerment and a voice in development. In the context of Sri Lanka, however, it is hard to imagine how development programs can function as such and avoid being ethnically biased – with the unequal distribution of resources and economic opportunities as well as the risk of economic colonization by Sinhalese firms with government connections and the government itself.⁷³

3.2. The Basic Need of Identity

In civil wars the members of the two sides must live side by side and work together in a common government to make the country work. How can this be done? Civil wars produce hatred which does not end with the conflict. How do groups of people who have been killing one another with considerable enthusiasm and success come together to form a common government? How can you work together, politically and economically, with the people who killed your parents, your children, your friends, your lovers? On the surface it seems impossible, even grotesque (Licklider, 1993: 4).

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As I have noted, the war in Sri Lanka can be typified as the textbook example of an ethnic conflict in which ethnic identity, ethnic colonization and ethnic domination have played a major role. Conflicting parties have used issues of ethnicity and identity to mobilize people around nationalist ideologies that resulted in a social world divided into ‘us’ versus ‘them’ – a world of racially defined groups in stark opposition to each other. Understanding the social world, the position of marginalized identities and the fulfillment of identity needs in the current post-war situation requires attention.

According to social psychology theories, people have the universal and fundamental need to belong, categorize the social world, and the need to a secure sense of the self; the need for identity. The individual’s need for identity is connected to the level of collectivity, “such

⁷³ Also see: International Crisis Group, 2010: ‘Sri Lanka: A Bitter Peace.’ Asia Briefing 99.

that violations or repressions of identitional expression have consequences for individual and collectivity” (Jabri, 1996: 122). The basic human needs approach addresses this need for identity from the perspective of the individual, who is thought to be easily mobilized for collective action once the need for identity is recognized as unfulfilled. In concurrence with Jabri, I pose that this approach does not fully recognize the relationship between the individual and the collectivity when it comes to the need of identity and that ‘social identity’ can be a useful level of analysis to thoroughly explore the matter. As posed in social psychology literature, social identity can be defined as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981: 63). Considering that “an individual’s social identity is clarified through comparison with other individuals and groups” (Jabri, 1996: 124), I pose that in order to understand the current dynamics of ‘identity’ and identity groups and to make a careful and preliminary evaluation of the fulfillment of identity needs in Eastern Sri Lanka in the post-war environment, the lens of ‘social reconciliation’ can be used to assess the matters.

Reconstruction is usually seen not only as economic development and the re-building of physical infrastructure but also as ‘social reconstruction’ or social reconciliation (Schultz & Peiris in Herath, 2010: 25). Social reconciliation can be characterized as the reintegration of groups in society that functioned benevolently in times of war and the concept is related to elements such as trust, social capital, friendship and justice (Schultz & Peiris in Herath, 2010: 26). According to Kumar (1999 in Herath, 2010: 58-59), social reconciliation in the general understanding refers to “a process of re-establishing the broken relationships between social groups”. Social reconciliation and the basic need of identity are very much interlinked with the basic human need of access. Without social justice, equal access of political and economic ‘goods’, the building of wide-spread and cross-community confidence in any shared future is arguably very difficult. Thinking of what we have learned thus far about post-war marginalization of minority groups and reading the quote of Licklider at the beginning of this section makes one wonder, however, if this conceptualization of social reconciliation is realistic in post-war societies such as Sri Lanka. In a context that knows and has known social injustices and ethnic violence for decades, re-establishing broken relationships might be a task too great to endeavor upon. In concurrence with Kumar (1999 in Herath, 2010: 60), I feel that it is safe to state that it is thus necessary to explore an appropriate meaning for social reconciliation in post-war Sri

Lanka and review the current situation with an open mind, rather than via the paved ways of existing theories.

In Sri Lanka, two matters seem to be of great importance when thinking of social reconciliation: [1] top-down violence: the relationship of the state with the minority population that, in part, stood at the core of the conflict, and [2] bottom-up violence: violence that is embraced by ordinary people (Keen, 2000: 25) or, as I rephrase, the inter-communal tensions and grievances that have been caused by the country being at war. Reconciliation initiatives around the world tend to be national-level and top-down approaches: truth and reconciliation commissions, legal processes and legal reforms, public apologies, etc. (Bloomfield, 2006: 25). The government in Sri Lanka, however, does not seem to recognize the importance of identity politics – the importance to address these distorted relationships in the quest for a stable and peaceful society and top-down violence remains largely unaddressed.

'The people, the minorities, want to feel that they are being recognized in this country as equals. They want to be able to claim that this is their country. After thirty years of war and ethnic polarization, reconciliation is very, very crucial. Reconciliation means for the majority and minority communities to feel that they have an equal right to live in this country. They are equals irrespective of numbers. We don't seem to be having this'⁷⁴

The dominant discourse after May 2009 has been that the conflict is now solved and that hence there is no need for reconciliation. The problem that caused the violent conflict – terrorism – had been eradicated with the defeat of the LTTE (Höglund & Orjuela, 2011: 23). The central government is addressing the matters of identity and identity politics by enforcing a 'no minorities' discourse and policy. As far as the government is concerned, minorities and thus minority issues ceased to exist with the end of the war. When announcing the victory over the LTTE, President Mahinda Rajapaksa famously addressed parliament stating that:

'We have removed the word minorities from our vocabularies. [...] No longer are there Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and other minorities. There are only two peoples

⁷⁴ Author's interview with local scholar, Colombo, 01-06-2011.

*in the country. One is the people that love this country. The other comprises the small groups that have no love for the land of their birth. Those who do not love the country are now a lesser group*⁷⁵

Patriotism and the ignoring of identity issues thus seem to dominate the popular post-war discourse while economic development is put forth as the sole solution for any post-war problematic. Although there has been no strong counter-discourse articulated by the minority population (Höglund & Orjuela, 2011: 25), the sense of marginalization and ethnic boundaries are still, as we have seen, very real on the local level. These are aspects standing in the way of the feeling of acceptance and the full recognition of group identity for the minority population – of minorities believing that there are indeed no minorities, only Sri Lankans. Sadly, local governments are apparently not up for the challenge of promoting social cohesion and changing the mind-set of individuals within the Sri Lankan context.

Rethinking the concept or definition of social reconciliation thus appears to be vital to gain understanding in the basic need of identity in Sri Lanka. The western notion of reconciliation and its importance in a post-war society is based on western liberal values; there seems to be a general agreement that reconciliation requires addressing the past and providing accountability for committed human rights violations (see the UN Panel Report issued by Ban Ki-Moon). The GoSL's stance is, however, clearly the opposite. The question that rises is whether in the case of Sri Lanka the past needs to be addressed before the future can be build and how any of these processes will take shape in a victor's peace. A victor's peace is not marked by the elimination of perceived incompatibilities between opposing parties through negotiation by their representatives and, as such, a conflict resolution process. Root causes are thus often still present in society and it is interesting to research how reconciliation is given shape in a country where no quest for minority rights, justice or accountability is taking or has to take place.

The GoSL appears to believe in looking forward whilst appeasing the international and, in part, the local community by formally addressing justice and accountability issues via the LLRC (Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission). The LLRC is an intra-national

⁷⁵ Address of President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the ceremonial opening of Parliament, 19 May 2009 (via <http://www.priu.gov.lk>).

commission of inquiry that was appointed in May 2010 by President Rajapaksa after strong international pressure for an investigation into controversial events of last phase of the war between 2002 and 2009. In concurrence with the UN Panel Report's findings that "the LLRC fails to satisfy key international standards of independence and impartiality as it is compromised by its composition and deep-seated conflicts of interest of some of its members" and that "the work to date demonstrates that the LLRC has: not conducted genuine truth-seeking about what happened in the final stages of the conflict, not sought to investigate systematically and impartially the allegations of serious violations on both sides of the war, not employed an approach that treats victims with full respect for their dignity and their suffering, and not provided the necessary protection of the witnesses, even in circumstances of actual personal risk" (2011: v), I must conclude that the GoSL is politicizing reconciliation and not genuinely interested in addressing past wrong-doings to heal the distorted state – minority relationship. As stated in the report, "the need for such dialogue is illustrated by the large number of people, particularly victims, who have come forward on their own initiative and sought to speak with the Commission" (UN Panel Report, 2011: v). I have also personally encountered symptoms and expressions of this need in the field. The relationship between the state and the minority population on a grassroots level seems to be at least distorted and still present in society. Informal interviews I held with individuals in villages in the Eastern Province often touched upon the fear many still felt towards the state, the central government and its officers. As one individual expressed: 'things may look better, but they feel worse'. An issue I have already touched upon in the section on the basic need of access is that there is a lack of trust in the central government among minorities and minorities express feelings of being treated 'like dogs', or 'like animals'.⁷⁶ The top-down violence that stood at the core of the conflict is thus perceived to still be an issue in the current societal dynamics in Eastern Sri Lanka.

Second, I want to address the presence of inter-communal tensions and grievances that have been caused by the country being at war or the bottom-up representation of violence as a factor of social reconciliation. I went to Sri Lanka with the assumption that the bridging of ethnic boundaries was essential for peace to exist and be sustainable; that interaction was the first step towards inter-ethnic dialogue which stands at the core of social reconciliation. During the course of my research, I began to question this assumption and

⁷⁶ Author's interviews held informally with Tamil individuals in Trincomalee and Muthur, May 2011.

learnt that an increase in interaction is not automatically a positive step towards positive peace. An example of this is the notion that inter-communal tensions are often said to rise when areas are 'ethnically mixed'. In multi-ethnic settings, increasing fears of 'the other' and suspicions of changing demography or, in this case, Sinhalese colonization, have been reported (CPA, 2010-b). In Trincomalee District and Trincomalee town, the three ethnic groups (Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese) are more or less equally represented in the population.⁷⁷ If anywhere, this is the region in Sri Lanka where inter-ethnic interaction is an everyday occurrence and the identity dynamics can provide interesting insights into the positive effects of interaction and the future of social reconciliation. In this context it is interesting to remark that ethnic identity groups in Trincomalee town live geographically segregated in mono-ethnic quarters.

*'Here in Trinco town you have the different quarters. If you go from here (Alles garden, Uppuveli – author) for example you see the segregation. Here in the beginning everything is Tamil. And then you come suddenly in a small Muslim community, you see that immediately. Right afterwards there is a Sinhalese area, you see that immediately. Then again Tamil. Within Trinco city, in the town, you have also a small Muslim area. So, I would call it quite segregated'*⁷⁸

*'We can see that mixed communities are still not living together'*⁷⁹

What I learned was that the assessment of integration or segregation and ethnic boundaries depends on the level on which you look at the communities. At District level, Trincomalee is the multi-ethnic District in which all ethnicities are represented. On town or village level, however, we see an entirely different picture. In Trincomalee town people live segregated; Muthur and Kinniya have a disproportionate large Muslim community where Kantale has a Sinhalese majority: villages in Trincomalee that have a more mono- than multi- ethnic demography. The representation of Trincomalee as the truly multi-ethnic District is thus somewhat of an illusion which shows the importance of looking beyond the macro to the local or micro dynamics in the country to obtain the full story.

⁷⁷ 40.4% Tamils, 37.6% Muslims and 21.6% Sinhalese according to 2007 census figures.

⁷⁸ Author's interview with Jakob Lindemann, GIZ PIP, Trincomalee town, 27-04-2011.

⁷⁹ Author's interview with local staff-member at an international NGO, Trincomalee, Muthur, 04-05-2011.

The spatial segregation I encountered is also reflected in social relationships. The interviews I conducted in villages and towns on the East coast (Trincomalee and Muthur) have led me to believe that interaction between members of different ethnic groups occurs almost solely on a pragmatic basis and that relationships based on friendship and mutual trust are rare. A social structure for inter-group tolerance is lacking. Ethnic groups in these post-war times appear to still be marked by social closure rather than boundary widening or flexibility. Group boundaries are theorized to entail both a categorical and a social or behavioral dimension. The categorical aspect refers to acts of social classification and collective representation whereas the social aspect refers to everyday networks of relationships (Wimmer, 2008: 975). Social classification is, despite the 'no minorities' discourse of the GoSL, very present in society and has a clear effect on social interaction. People state to still be cautious in dealing with 'others'. Further empirical research needs to be conducted to vouch for this assumption and to investigate whether or not this is the case for all layers of society – independent of caste or class.

3.3. The Basic Need of Security

Demilitarization and Militarization

Next to the basic needs of access and identity, the basic need of security is of great importance for stabilization and the building of a positive peace in post-war societies. Theories and literature on conflict prevention often highlight demobilization, demilitarization and the reintegration of former combatants into society – the DDR process – as critical steps in relapse prevention (Spear, 2002 in Höglund & Orjuela, 2011: 26). "Basic security is required to move forward with other processes such as political and social reconciliation, and economic development. [...] In the longer-term, reform of the security sector and a demilitarization of society at large are necessary for building a self-sustainable peace" (Themnér, 2011; Call & Stanley, 2003; Schnabel & Ehrhart, 2005; Call, 2007 in Höglund & Orjuela, 2011: 26). In this section, the dynamics of demilitarization and militarization will be examined in order to provide an insight into the fulfillment of the basic need of security in post-war Sri Lanka.

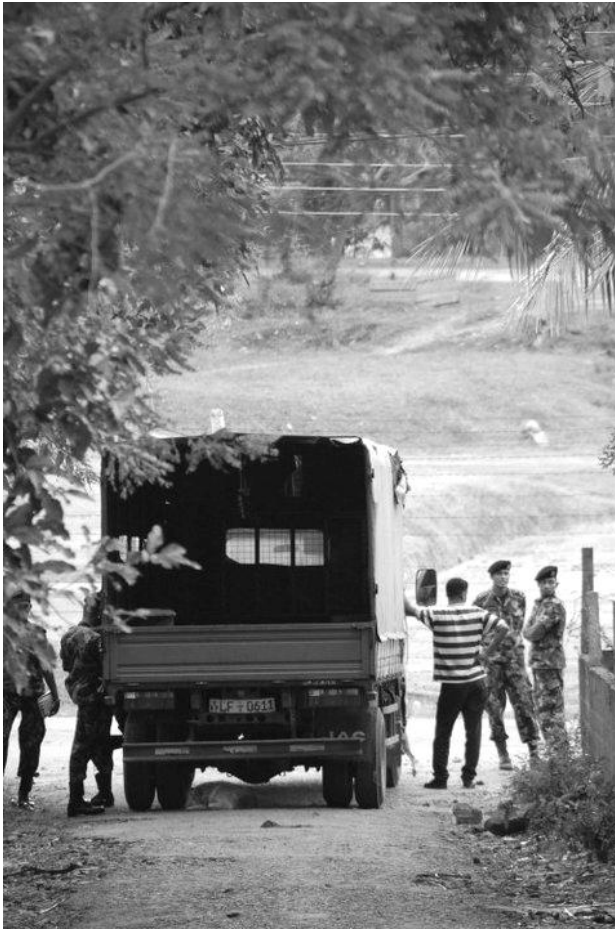


Figure 3: Photograph taken by author: Military personnel at army camp in Trincomalee town, Orr's Hill. April 2011.

Post-war Sri Lanka is first of all marked by significant challenges for DDR reforms. Thirty years of violent armed conflict have created a highly militarized society. As we can see in the development indicators issued by the World Bank (2009); Sri Lanka had 213,000 armed forces personnel in 2007 which comes down to 1,065 active duty personnel for every 100,000 Sri Lankans.⁸⁰ The comparable ratio for India was 229, Pakistan 569, Bangladesh 139 and Nepal 368, making Sri Lanka the most militarized country in South Asia (Samarasinghe, 2009: 437). Many thought that the ending of the war in 2007/2009 would be the start of demilitarization and demobilization.

This might have been the case concerning the Tamil militants, but the opposite is true for the victorious other conflict party – the GoSL and its SLA. In the government's first post-war budget proposal in 2009, the defense allocation reached record levels. The total amount destined for military or defense expenditures reached 202 billion rupees; 26 billion more compared to the prior year. This exceptional high amount is remarkable considering the fact that peace had dawned on the horizon and Sri Lanka had no known external enemies for whom they might need an extensive military force. Perera further points out that "[t]he defense budget is so massive that it dwarfs the other ministries of the government, especially those that are directly related to the welfare of the

⁸⁰ Considering the fact that the army is almost entirely Sinhalese, around 1,000 armed forces personnel for every 100,000 means 1,000 for every 75,000 Sinhalese which comes down to one for every twenty Sinhalese families.

general population. The allocation for health has been reduced by Rs 5 billion to Rs 53 billion, while the allocation for the Ministry of Resettlement is a mere Rs 3 billion" (Perera, 2010).

The presence of the military in the former warzones is highly felt and has been known to cause tensions, fears and problems in communities for various reasons. First of all, military personnel is being deployed to assist in development efforts such as physical reconstruction work. Second, there are the allegations that police and military personnel are involved in the before mentioned 'colonization schemes'. Sinhalese returnees to areas in the Eastern Province for example are often said to turn to Sinhalese actors for help. Where bureaucrats and local authority personnel are most often of Tamil or Muslim origin; the military and police force is (almost) 100 per cent Sinhalese. In their extensive report on policy, politics and conflict concerning land issues, CPA states that "[i]n certain areas these armed actors will provide protection and even act unilaterally and inform the relevant authorities of the needs of the community, without necessarily playing a neutral role" (2010-b: 33). Third, there are reports that the military is occupying lands and properties in the East and North. As one of the people I interviewed stated:

'I am a Tamil from Jaffna. In my compound, in a particular area in Jaffna, that is my wife's compound and of her sisters and parents. Part of the compound is occupied by the army. We thought they would leave once the war was over, but they are still there. (Interviewer: What do they say, why are they still there?) They are not responding. They are not paying rent, nothing. This is militarization'⁸¹

During the war, private properties have regularly been occupied by military forces. The end of war did, however, not signal their complete withdrawal. In 2009, for example, "[i]n Eastern Trincomalee, it was estimated that 500 private properties were occupied by the military" (CPA, 2010-b: 43). Military camps and naval bases are still very present in the area and there are no signs of plans to diminish their presence. If we are realistic, however, the government does not seem to have another option. There is no alternative employment available in the country for soldiers and quick demobilization of the SLA is something the government cannot afford.

⁸¹ Author's interview with Tamil man, Trincomalee town, 29-04-2011.



Figure 4: Photograph taken by author: Soldier standing guard, Galle, March 2011.

Militarization can be felt in more aspects of society and daily life. People I spoke to revealed that the presence of soldiers reminded them of the horrors of the war and with so many trauma victims living on without psycho-social guidance,⁸² the vastness of this problem seems potentially enormous. Rumors of soldiers raping young girls and that this type of gender based violence is nowadays a large problem in, for example, the Vanni, can be heard from different sources, who occupy different positions in society. Another example that raised commotion during the last month of my stay in Sri Lanka, is the government's implementation of the 'Leadership Training and Positive Skills Development Programme' for new university students; in newspapers often referred to as a 'boot camp'. The three-week residential training program at military camps around the country is mandatory for new university undergraduate students and is aimed at boosting their leadership qualities. There has been much debate and disapproval among concerned parties regarding the necessity, its relevance and the manner of implementation of the program. Critics state it is a military training, put in to place to glorify Mahinda Rajapaksa and his victory and as an attempt to militarize education. As cited on Tamilnet, a leading news website popular among Tamils, although from 2007 on increasingly representing a hard-line Tamil nationalist discourse:

⁸² One of the post-war measures of the GoSL is that psycho-social work is in many cases prohibited.

*“The compulsion on all new entries to the universities to go through the hands of the genocidal military of Sri Lanka is a symbolic act marking the stage where militarisation of state now becomes militarisation of the society, commented media circles in Colombo. Besides militarisation of state and society, the ‘training’ programme is a particular intimidation and a show aiming at subjugation of the student generations of the nation of Eezham Tamils, is the opinion of Tamil university students”.*⁸³

In informal interviews, people I spoke with have also voiced their concerns for this new measure. Bringing the military into the schools, would be like bringing the children to the battlefield, some said.

It is interesting to note how political access and marginalization of identity groups interlinks with this militarization of society. Remembering the state structure of Sri Lanka; the positions of Governor (who stands at the head of the elected, Provincial tier) and of GA (the Government Agent, also known as District Secretary: the highest function within the public administration of the state) in Trincomalee are both fulfilled by Sinhalese ‘military men’. Both men can be considered extremely influential in the District. NGOs, for example, have to answer to the GA for the design and implementation of any project. The influence of the ex-military GA of the District appears to be very strong which seems to have led to a reduced space for civil society activity and debate. In interviews with local authority personnel and NGO staff-members, the position and personality of the GA almost always came up.⁸⁴

‘Basically everything that is going on in this area is under the watchful eye of the GA. The GA in Trinco is particularly problematic. People fear him. Literally. He used to shut down projects, force people from the international community out who are persona non grata because of him. We have to change the language of our programs. You can’t say ‘peace-building’, he would say ‘what? We have peace’. You can’t say ‘human rights’. If you do, he will shut you down. He is a military person, a long term

⁸³ Tamilnet, ‘Colombo defies court request, proceeds with obligatory military course to undergrads’, 26 May 2011. Available online at: <http://tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=33997>.

⁸⁴ These comments are very valid for Trincomalee District. In other Districts and in other Provinces, however, the GAs are different. It should thus be noted that Trincomalee is perhaps not representative of the situation country-wide.

*military person, and he has been here for four or five years already. He is under a particular mandate of the government that is to basically watch everything that is going on here. He has very close linkages to the president. He is very intimidating and people are afraid of him. He is not afraid to shut down international organizations or local organizations and he does it with the full support of the government*⁸⁵

Drawing conclusions about the fulfillment of the basic need of security when focusing on demilitarization and militarization of society is a difficult thing to do. Sri Lankan society appears to be highly militarized, with a clear presence of military personnel in people's daily lives and an army that is relatively the largest in all South Asia. What needs to be understood, however, is that the situation has also improved enormously since the end of the war. The checkpoints have to a large extent disappeared and there are clearly less soldiers with guns on the streets. In the light of the colossal unemployment problem in the case of rapid demilitarization, it is necessary to be realistic. Hence, I feel that the final conclusion on the security situation in the country deserves to be postponed. Change is necessary, but unfeasible in the relatively short time-span Sri Lanka has been 'at peace'. What seems to be occurring in Sri Lanka is the enforcement of the ritual of the victor of which the 'boot camps' is one example. Another example is the military parades that are held in the streets of Colombo to celebrate the victory of the GoSL, in which an amazing number of military vehicles and equipment is put on display.⁸⁶ The emphasis of the GoSL has not been with the provision of a sound DDR process, but rather with a 'DDD' process: first the Demilitarization of the LTTE (but not of the SLA), then the process of Devolution (which has been poorly executed, as we have learned), and Development, on which all emphasis now lies. In conclusion, it seems that the securitization agenda of the central government with its emphasis on national state security is overshadowing the so important human security. The very legitimate concerns of people who seek security in their daily-lives remain unaddressed. As explained in the UNDP Report on Human Development (1994: 22); human security is "protection from the threat of hunger, disease, unemployment,

⁸⁵ Author's interview with employee at international NGO, Trincomalee, 24-04-2011.

⁸⁶ During my stay in Sri Lanka, the second 'anniversary' of the military victory took place with a military parade in Colombo. All my attempts to get a glimpse of the actual festivities were, however, futile for they were invite-only for the Sinhalese and international elite. It struck me as odd that festivities to celebrate the freedom of the country and 'one Sri Lanka' were held in such a shielded fashion.

crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards. [...] Human security is not a concern with weapons, it is a concern with human life and dignity.”

This chapter has attempted to provide an answer to the question what the impact is of the victor's peace on the provision of the basic needs of access, identity and security on the local level. What can be concluded is that perceived inequalities based on ethnic group remain present in the political and economic arena. The central government does not appear to be effectively addressing matters of identity boundaries and marginalization and minorities still perceive themselves as minorities, rather than as an equal part of society. Combining this knowledge with the concept of human security brings forth the conclusion that in Sri Lanka, there is a large 'performance of security' but not a true secure situation in which people feel safe and secure (Goodhand, 2010: 351): a negative peace, but not a positive peace.

4: DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

Peace and stability, like development, are not value-neutral terms. Rather, they are hegemonic projects at the heart of which lie questions of politics and power and whose definition of peace and stability prevails
Jonathan Goodhand, 2010.

The aims of this thesis have been multiple and diverse. It has attempted to provide insights into the dynamics of a victor's peace from a local perspective, to be a valuable addition to the knowledge base on post-war Sri Lanka, to advance new theories by elaborating on the idea of the potential role of local government in peace-building and thus, expand the current view of peace-building. In addition, the research design and execution were such that the aim to give voice and provide my research subjects with the opportunity to have their worlds represented could be achieved in an attempt to increase the knowledge about processes on a micro level and enhance the visibility of local communities and their perspectives on the current situation. In this chapter, the achieved results shall be discussed and reflected upon. Rather than drawing definite conclusions on these matters, this chapter is meant to highlight important findings and reflect upon what lessons can be learned and what issues and questions remain of importance for further research.

It is my hope that this thesis has contributed to generate an *understanding of how the victor's peace in post-war Sri Lanka is taking shape and what its impact is on the local level; in Eastern Sri Lanka, the District of Trincomalee.*

The Dynamics of a Victor's Peace – in Sri Lanka

This thesis has provided insights into the workings and dynamics of a victor's peace. A victor's peace rests on a military victory and upon the hegemony or domination of the victor. It is this victor, often the government, who imposes and defines the conditions for peace. In situations as these, the question of how and if a positive peace is given shape is pressing. For positive peace to be established not only should long-time antagonists lay down their arms but they should achieve profound reconciliation that will endure because

it is sustained by a society-wide network of relationships and mechanisms that promote justice and address the root causes of enmity. In a victor's peace, however, there is no pressing concern to address the root causes of conflict, nor are there immediate incentives for the victor to facilitate positive relationships, reconciliation or social justice. The victor dominates the post-war dynamics and can shape post-war society according to its needs and desires, without any interference from the former insurgents or approval from the grassroots. As has been demonstrated in other contexts and case studies, "the post-conflict moment frequently is seen by the victors as an opportunity for radical change – to institutionalize the gains made through war and to make them irreversible" (Goodhand, 2010: 359).

These dynamics are very visible in the post-war society of (Eastern) Sri Lanka. The dominant discourse after the military victory has been completely dominated by the victor – the central government. A political solution for the root causes of the conflict has, in the post-war context, not been considered or addressed as a viable option and enmities between both the state and the minority population (top-down violence) and among ethnic identity groups (bottom-up violence) are still very real two years after the open violent conflict has ended. The sole focus of the government has been on economic development, rather than on facilitating positive relationships, true reconciliation and social justice. The soft authoritarian state is making efforts to consolidate centralization and is focusing on physical reconstruction and economic development of the island. As Höglund and Orjuela argue; "while such reconstruction is clearly required to alleviate the hardship experienced by the people in these areas, there is great risk that these initiatives – due to their centralizations and further domination and marginalization of minorities – will serve to exacerbate or create conflict in Sri Lanka, rather than serve as a vehicle for trust" (2011: 34). The powerful position gained by President Rajapaksa and his government by the defeat of the LTTE 'terrorists' has been further institutionalized by the 18th Amendment to the Constitution and structural inequalities between identity groups remain or are at least perceived to be present in society. According to Azar (1990), the role of the state is to satisfy basic communal needs in order to prevent future conflict. Based on the analysis of the local perception of the fulfillment of the basic human needs of access, identity and security, I have to conclude that the government, both central and local, is not adequately living up to this responsibility. An interesting follow-up research that could be executed based on these findings would be the analysis of the role of NGOs and CBOs in Sri Lanka's

post-war dynamics. It is possible that civil society organizations are filling the peace-building gap that is left by the inactions and misguided actions of central and local government.

The post-war context often creates opportunities for further development of democracy and a resolution of root causes, bringing together former warring parties and stabilization. What we have seen, however, is how democracy in Sri Lanka has taken illiberal forms, root causes remain present in society, and how reconciliation issues are not addressed in a constructive manner. Sri Lanka is a strong state, independent of foreign aid or mediation and appears stable. People of all ethnicities are content the war is over and the fighting has stopped and currently, with the organized voice of the marginalized minority wiped out, there are no signs of renewed violence in the near future. What remains necessary, however, is to conduct thorough research into the influence of the diaspora in fuelling, aiding or suppression potential uproar. The question that is of interest is for how long this stability and lack of opposition will hold in a state in which structural inequalities and injustices or the structures of violence remain present. Negative peace was reached in May 2009; when and if positive peace will be reached is, up to this day, questionable. This case study has shown how incredibly influential the victor can be in defining the post-war arena and in setting the stage for all other actors to operate within. Any research executed on or within a victor's peace needs to take these dynamics into account. A victor's peace as in Sri Lanka is not defined by peace-building. It is stabilization and the institutionalization of the victory, rather than the building of a sustainable peace that seem to have the upper hand.

Currently, the notion of peace-building is often addressed within the context of the fragile state debate, international interference, aid conditionalities and negotiated settlements. We have seen, however, that peace-building in a victor's peace cannot be explained within the existing body of literature and the existing framework for it is often independent of foreign intervention and marked by the hegemony of a strong state. An expansion of the somewhat narrow frame of peace-building can thus be deemed a necessary development within peace literature and research. In this thesis the dynamics of peace in Sri Lankan society on a local level have been signified in an attempt to create an elementary understanding of the possible peace dynamics after a military victory and begin a new and more thorough knowledge base on peace and peace-building. What can be learned from this case study is foremost the importance of looking beyond the macro to the micro-level.

Even in the case all perceptions, opinions and rumors my respondents have voiced turn out to be factually false; they do represent the local impact of the victor's peace in Sri Lanka and signal the importance of changing the mind-set of individuals and investing in relationships and trust besides matters of stabilization and physical reconstruction. The voice of the victor may drown the voice of the common man, leaving civil unrest, social injustices and unsolved root causes of conflict to simmer and remain unnoticed by the international community. As Galtung once theorized; a society-wide network of relationships and mechanisms is necessary before destabilizing tensions can regenerate. In a victor's peace, this network and these mechanisms of peace are not constructed in a self-evident manner. While society is marked by tensions, grief, anger and perhaps fear, the victor is defining the dynamics of peace without any real incentive to instigate structural changes that go against its hegemony.

Local Government and Peace-Building

In Chapter three we have seen that one of my interviewees said that it is necessary to build peace in every mind of every person. In theory, local governments or in Sri Lanka's case, local authorities, are in the ideal position to provide a valuable addition to this process. A bulk of policy based literature refers to the perfect position of local government in society, rooted in the community with political linkages to the top-level, to function for the benefit of local grievances and issues. Local governments are argued to be of value to the process of promoting social cohesion, community building, and resolving local disputes. These thoughts and assumptions are, however, exactly that: thoughts and assumptions without a body of empirical knowledge and case study evidence to substantiate and corroborate them. In this thesis, an attempt has been made to elaborate on this assumption of the potential role of local government, to advance the general understanding of the functioning of local government and in fact theorize the concept of local government by combining these policy based assumptions with ethnographic case study material on the actual functioning of local governments in a post-war context.

In Sri Lanka, local authorities have a clear subordinate position in society and in the hierarchy of state functioning. The bodies are inextricably connected to the central government and are highly dependent for their resources, capacity and functioning potential. Formally, the distribution of power is such that local authorities could, in theory,

function somewhat autonomously. Informally and in reality, however, the tendency for centralization and hegemony of the ethnicized political arena is not providing local authorities with any local autonomy, local democracy or local power. In this victor's peace, the assumption of the potential role of local government in peace-building processes thus needs to be rejected. Local authorities can play no role in any peace-building processes for which an autonomous position or deviating perspective is of crucial importance. The assumption on local government rests on the premise that local government has great and significant administrative and organizational capacity and has the freedom to function in a somewhat autonomous manner. What has become clear, however, is that local government in essence does not function autonomously but is always dependent and connected to the functioning of the central government and the democratic values in society. The local cannot be viewed in complete juxtaposition to the national, as many scholars and policy specialists seem to do. As Uyangoda so rightfully states: "this dialectic of the local and the national – blurring of boundaries as well as desire to reclaim the boundaries – [...] cautions us against privileging and romanticizing politics in the local in opposition to the politics at the level of national and central government. In brief, local is only local in a relational sense."⁸⁷ Although very present in a victor's peace, the limits of local government are not bound to the dynamics of post-war or post-military victory societies. I therefore pose that before one can assess or study local government, the relationship between governance from below and governance from above is essential to grasp. As such, this notion and the elucidation of the relationship between the central and the local governance arenas can provide the basis for new, empirically based theories on the functioning of local government in a more generalized sense.

I suggest that, in order to research the position and functioning of local government in other case studies, the following factors or steps need to be taken into account: [1] it is necessary to establish the context-dependent definition of 'local government', [2] the formal institutional framework needs to be assessed to define the formal distribution of power and power relations, [3] besides that, the informal distribution is of equal importance for it provides information about the level of local autonomy, local democracy

⁸⁷ Uyangoda, J. 'Local Governance in the Periphery: Towards the Deepening of Local Democracy'. Draft, cited with permission.

and the actual level of potential there can be found on the local level, and [4] it is necessary to establish the network of political alliances to get a clear image of the functioning of the political arena. By following these four steps, governance from below can be thoroughly investigated and the linkages with governance from above can become clear. Only then can one assess the potential and actual role of local government in peace-building processes.

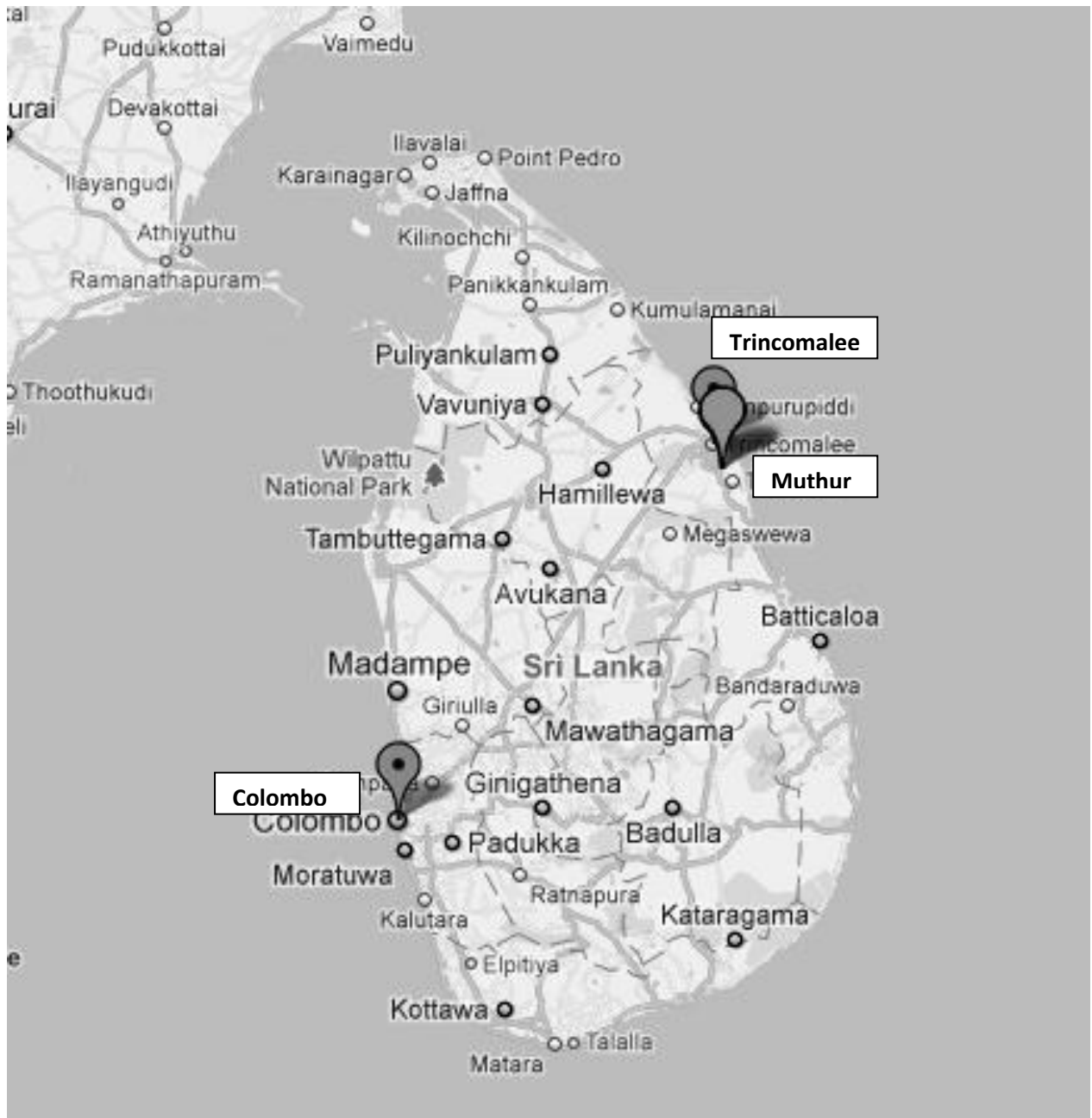
Following this framework has provided interesting insights into the functioning of the state and local government in Sri Lanka. Local authorities, the island's form of local government, make up an extensive and relatively well-organized system of governance. They are embedded in the formal structures of power and a system of power devolution and democratic governance is in place with the establishment of the 13th Amendment and the Provincial Council Act. The importance of also taking the central government into consideration is especially valid in the case of a victor's peace as well as in the case of a unitary state such as Sri Lanka. In a unitary state, the central government has the highest power – formally as well as informally. Sub-national units such as local government bodies, in theory and in practice, only exercise powers that the central government chooses to delegate. In Sri Lanka, these dynamics have led to local governments being burdened by a lack of independent resource channels, a lack of capacity, a lack of experienced and capable personnel as well as a lack of autonomous decision-making power. The political arena functions as such that politics are governed by a patronage system and the hegemony of the central government, thus creating a situation in which a deviating voice from the grassroots level is nearly inexistent and local issues remain unaddressed. Local governments are at the mercy of the central and can thus not execute their potential role of solving local conflicts, building the community and creating an atmosphere of social cohesion. In order to find out whether or not the anecdotal evidence and verbal accounts of the functioning of the local government in Sri Lanka in this thesis paint the entire picture or if, in fact, the praxis differs and local maneuvering space exists under the central governments' radar, is a subject matter for further, more protracted research.

Whilst conversing with local government personnel in the villages of Eastern Sri Lanka, the thought that the potential of local government is not a clear-cut assumption that can be made in a general sense formed in my mind. In an attempt to research the actual role of local authorities in matters of peace-building, I was in fact researching the potential of the local bodies to act in a responsive manner for their community and their constituency. I

reckon that not only the actual role, but also the potential role of local governments in building towards a sustainable peace is very case-dependent and that the assumption in general needs to be recognized as flawed or fit for a narrow world. I conclude that the assumption needs to be rejected in the case of Sri Lanka and, most probable in case of any victor's peace. It is however of interest to assess whether this cluster-specific conclusion is valid, or if indeed, the assumption is fit for a narrow world; the world of western, liberal democracies in which the premise of capability and autonomy of local governments could perhaps hold. In order to make any significant conclusions on this matter, more research and more empirical evidence on different case studies is a necessary precondition. This thesis has, however, provided an interesting starting-point and perspective to execute future studies.

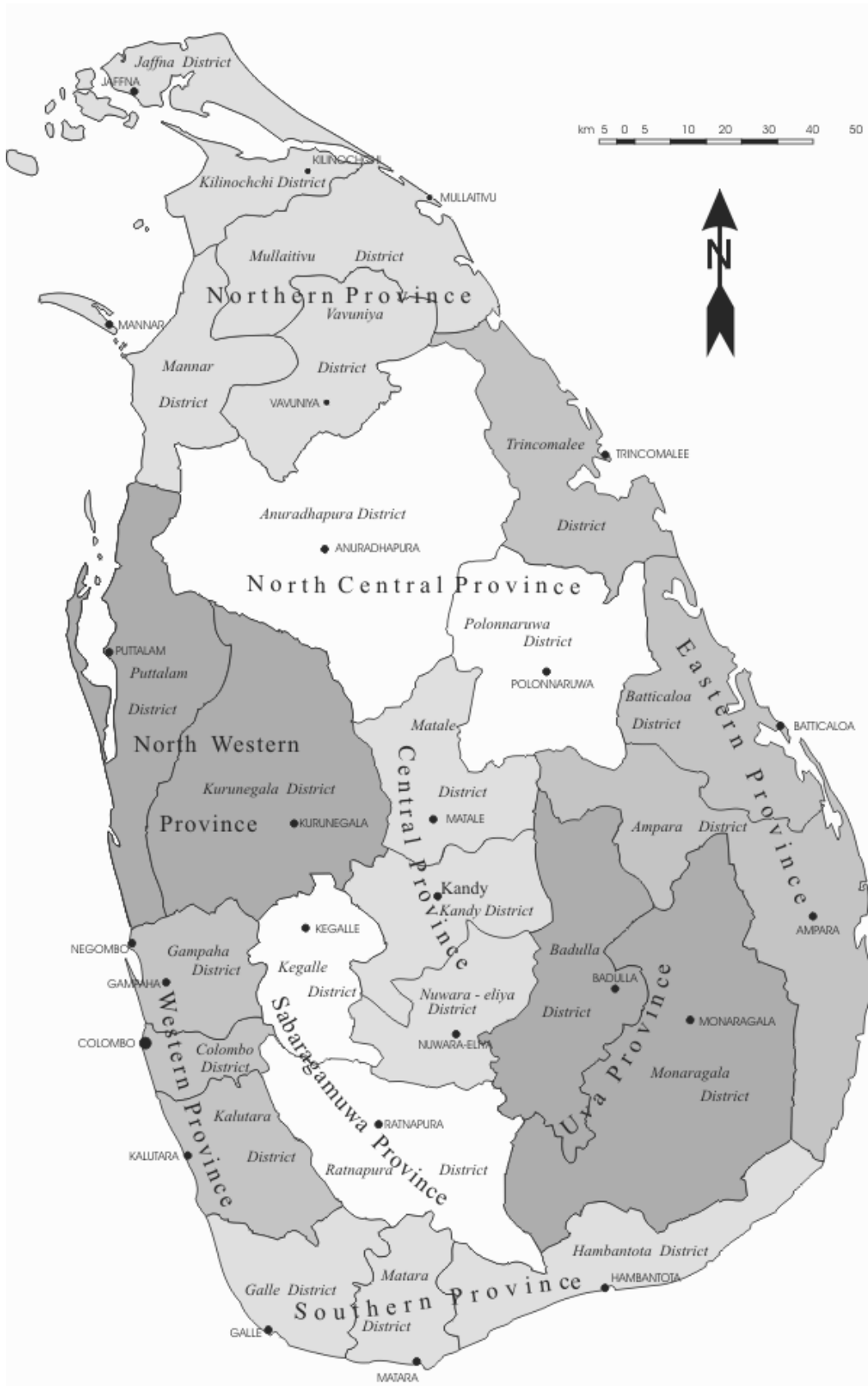
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Fieldwork locations



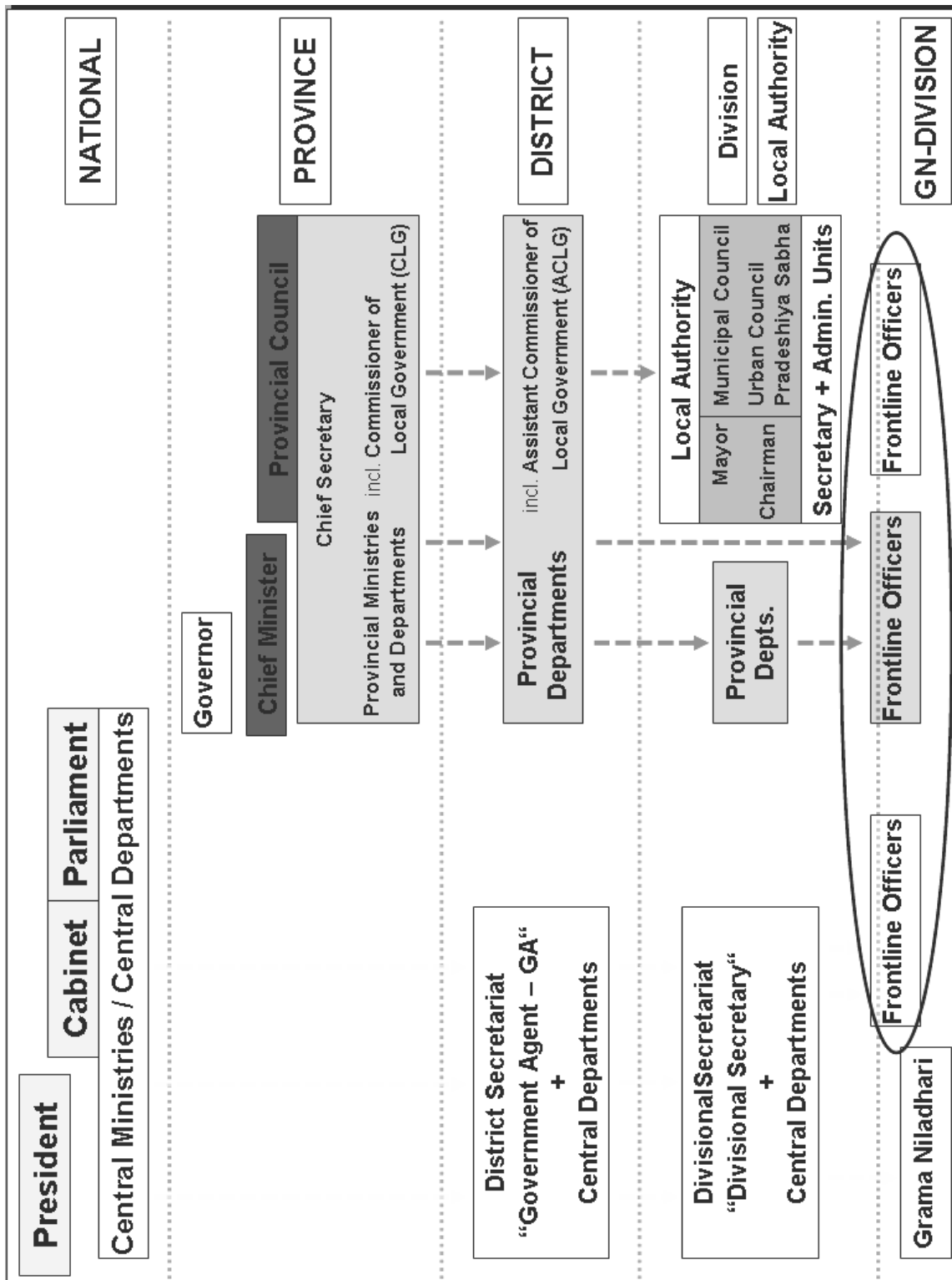
Location of Colombo, Trincomalee town and Muthur, Sri Lanka. (Source: Google maps).

Appendix 2: Provinces and Administrative Districts



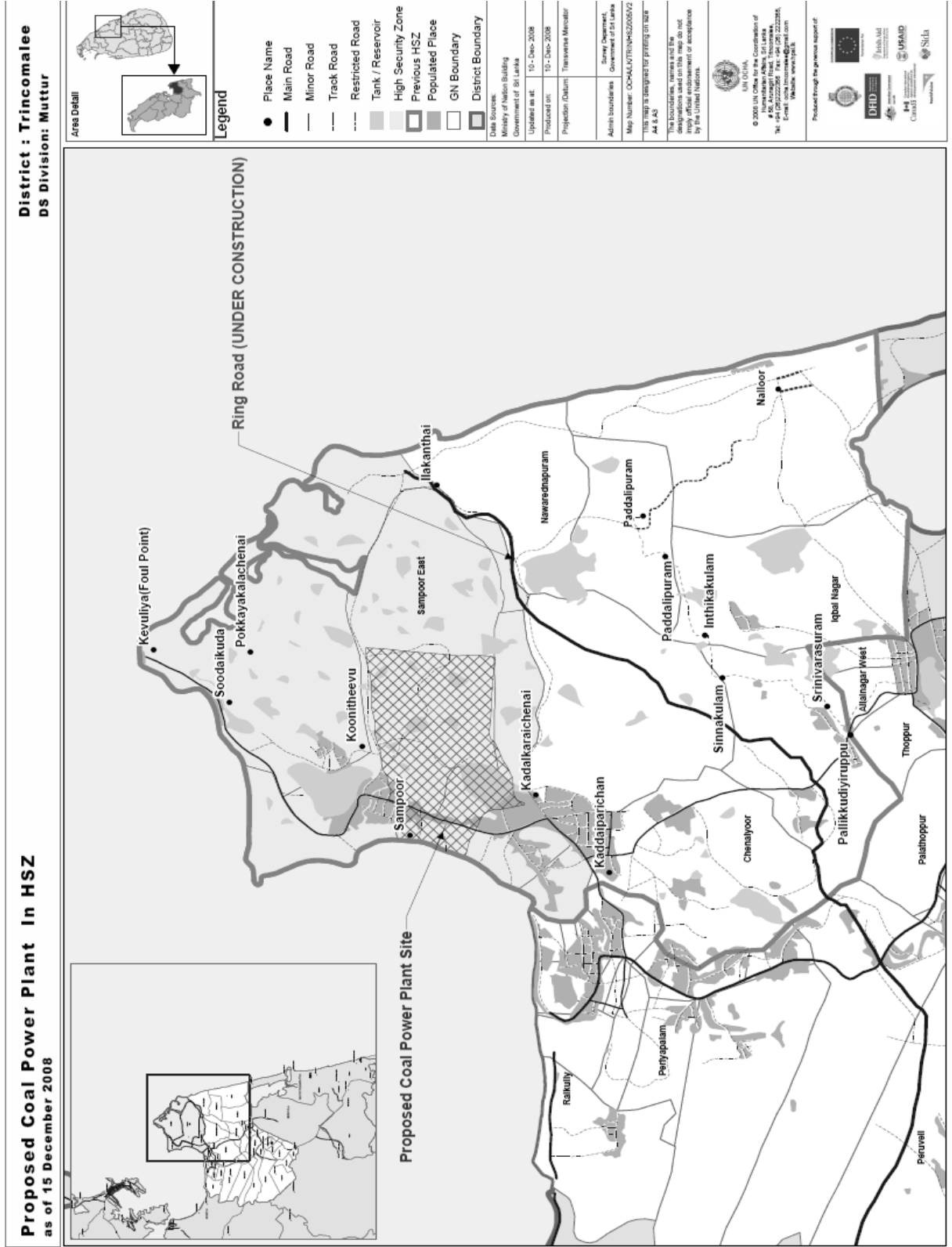
Visual portrayal of Provinces, Administrative Districts and main towns of Sri Lanka. (Source: ICES).

Appendix 3: Portrayal of Government Administration



Visual portrayal of the structure of government administration. White scale represents the central tier, grey scale represents the provincial tier. (Source: Jakob Lindemann, GIZ Trincomalee).

Appendix 4: Sampur, Location of Proposed Coal Power Plant



Visual Portrayal of the Sampur area HSZ with the proposed Coal Power Plant site (Source: UNOCHA).

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