Reconciliation without Introspection? On Post-war Sri Lanka

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Jayadeva Uyangoda and Neloufer de Mel (eds), *Reframing Democracy: Perspectives on the Cultures of Inclusion and Exclusion in Contemporary Sri Lanka*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Social Scientists' Association, 2012, 485 pp., LKR 800, ISBN: 9789550762088

Dhammika Herath, Michael Schulz, Kristine Höglund and Kalinga Tudor Silva (eds), *Post-war Reconstruction in Sri Lanka: Prospects and Challenges, International Centre for Ethnic Studies*. Sri Lanka: Kandy, 2010, 272 pp., LKR 400, ISBN: 978-955-580-132-4

Minna Thaheer, Pradeep Peiris and Kasun Pathiraja, *Reconciliation in Sri Lanka: Voices from Former War Zones*. Colombo, Sri Lanka: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2013, 178 pp., ISBN: 9789555801409 (Price: not mentioned)

The political history of the twentieth century is shaped by guilt and its long deep shadows. The terrible crimes committed by the Nazi party in Germany between 1933 and 1945 and the subsequent trials are now a parameter of the modern limits of the power of the state. 'How much a state can do to its people', has framed notions of power, trust and violence, pushing and redrawing the boundaries between the people and the state. The state, once unquestionable and unaccountable, is now quite human-like, in being put on trial and posed uncomfortable questions about past actions and future plans. To the modern public, the idea of the state as a wilful and violent institution is quite unacceptable if not outrageous. Yet, just about 300 years ago the political thinker Hobbes (2010) portrayed

the state as a Leviathan, a biblical monster, greater and more equal than the people it governed. To Hobbes, the state is an inhuman and inhumane creature, necessary to maintain peace between equal and rivalling men. The Leviathan's monstrous strength was solicited precisely because the strength and power it wielded elevated it above the fratricidal equality of men. Solicited and invited, the machinery of the state stamps out and curtails rebellions and insurgencies. For Hobbes, the demonstration of the state's authority and unquestionable power was framed by the English Civil War (1642–51). Quite simply, the only way for peace is the exercise of insurmountable power of the state.

For Sri Lanka, it is the three-decades-long battle between the state and the rights of the Tamil minority, which began its quest for political recognition in the early 1950s but was pushed and devolved into a vicious terrorist enterprise by the 1980s. The bloody three decades were marked by suffering and trauma, and swift mutations on both sides. For the Tamils, the *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (LTTE) took over the Tamil demand for self-determination, wiping out other strands within the ideological framework for more peaceful ways of coexistence. The Sri Lankan state too, experimented from allying with the Indian state in wiping out the LTTE in 1987 to leaning on Norway to broker peace between the two much later. By the early 1990s, the LTTE was running a parallel government in the north and eastern provinces of the island state. As Thaheer et al. note in *Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*,

> The LTTE maintained an institutional structure similar to that of a *de jure* state for a long period ... it included parallel institutional arrangements comprising a courts system, police force and banks. Income tax was collected ... local and international civil society groups either reported or consulted with the LTTE. (p. 98)

Drawing on the enormous sources of the state, the Sri Lankan government eventually wiped out the LTTE cadre and leadership in 2009, leaving an uncomfortable silence on the voice and legitimacy of the Tamil demand for recognition and respect in a Buddhist Sinhalese state. The contested sovereignty followed by the military victory of the Sinhalese-dominated government has produced what Uyangoda poetically terms the 'twin solitudes' (2012) with neither community able to understand the other's language, tone and intent. The end of the rebellion is a relief for the absolutist state, but perhaps it is from the time the war ends that peace acquires a prickly feel to it. In 2009, the state launched a 'reconciliation' process, which is the starting point for these three books under review. Like other post-conflict societies, once blood has been spilt, mopping it

up leaves stains and bloody stains are hard to stamp out. When the omnipotent state turns to reconcile, much tact and sensitivity is required to heal the affected and hurt.

The works under review are revealing of life within such a state, at once indispensable and cruel. Foes and friends, judging the state is perhaps the hardest for those on the right side of history. The privilege of the historian and the academic becomes a thorny crown when asked to judge one's own history and past, imbued with blood and violence. The books are united in the sympathetic sprit to come to terms with the unpleasant task of confronting the past. They are symptomatic of a malaise in society, to avoid the popular term 'risk', uncomfortable to face the complicity in war. What is the moral framework within which activists and academics operate when analysing a state responsible for its unaccommodating, illiberal and violent excesses? What is the language and vocabulary deployed to decipher a state one belongs to and yet disagrees with?

Living with the Leviathan

It is impossible to discuss these three books on the postcolonial, post-civil war, pro-reconciliation state of Sri Lanka without returning to Hobbes' *Leviathan*. The work remains a matter of fact explanation for the necessity of the brutally violent state. Brought into force and spirit by the consent and desperation of equal men, the state represents a higher force, armed against those who defy it, and armed to protect those who brought it into being. And yet, for a political treatise on the social contract between equal men to create the state, the etching on the cover of Hobbes' *Leviathan* is devoid of people. Instead, the state is represented as a looming gigantic man, emerging from the sea. The Leviathan, a biblical monster believed to live in the darkest parts of the ocean is at once strange, protective and lethal. Armed with a sword and a crosier, looming above a tiny town, the disproportionate size of the state/man conveys the larger than life yet less divine than god. For Hobbes, the state was the perfect marriage of ecclesiastical and political power. The repeated invocation of violence is to stress the violence as an available tool to maintain peace, for as Hobbes reminds us, 'covenants without the swords are but words' (2010: 85).

In this wake of inevitable Leviathan, it is significant to sift through the three books, and the political implications they represent. In the case of Sri Lanka, words have preceded swords, operating as threats and

warnings to the minorities. In 1972, the constitution was rewritten to give a special place for Buddhism, and ostensibly for its followers. Four years later, J. R. Jayawardene, the nationalist leader who led the United National Party, defeated the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, positioning himself as part of a long lineage of Buddhist rulers from ancient times to the modern. Much like the Leviathan, armed with the crosier, Jayawardene imagined Sri Lanka as the golden island of Theravada Buddhism, one marked by political freedom unknown for 2500 years, where people of every caste and race mingle freely. Five years after his accession to power, the island was witness to one of the most vicious pogroms against the Tamils. As Krisna points out, 'Terrorism ... raised its ugly head in the North and East, and some Tamils joined them to press for separation. In 1980 these activities increased and the killing of Sinhala security forces in the North in 1983 were followed by Sinhala-Tamil riots throughout the island' (1999: 45). Like most pogroms, these were conducted systematically, often in the presence of the Sinhala-dominated police and armed forces, Krisna goes on to note. This is very much the Hobbesian world, unrepentant about the use of violence and rather, defending it stoically. This is the birth of the modern state, invoked by the democratic consent of citizens and legitimising its brutality. Violence is reconfigured into a hired hand, symbolic of the privileges of those who constituted it, breathing life into a monster.

The LTTE was no less a Leviathan, a parallel one with vengeance, challenging the Sri Lankan state's will and sovereignty, and supported by the consent of various social fragments within Tamil society. By the 1980s, the LTTE which began as a Tamil secessionist group devolved into a terrorist organisation, no less than a state. The LTTE had an international presence and 'consulates' across the world, collected tax, considered its people citizens and printed currency. In spirit, will and substance the LTTE was a state. Like two boxers enclosed in a ring, the two brought about the bloody decades of the 1980s and 1990s, with attacks on civilians and the military alike. There are no official numbers on the dead, but rough estimates suggest that close to a 40,000 people lost their lives. At the end of it, each was no different from the other, each mirroring the others brutality, lethality and sheer will to survive. For instance, in northern Sri Lanka, by the end of January 2009, up to 35 civilians were dying from government bombs and shells every day. It is rare to find a government official who sees like the state and the insurgent too. A Mullaitivu district government official, Emelda Sukumar, told Reuters, 'When people occupy particular places, the LTTE sends shells from that area, and then the army also targets the same area'

(Hoole 2012: 281). This is the 'dual callousness' of 'a long-running, unspeakable aspect of the Tamil saga' (Hoole 2012: 281).

When academics turn to writing history and a prognosis for a failed state torn by extremists, violence and terrorism, and tiptoe around 'history', it remains unclear for whom such works are written and produced. Each begins with the morning after the war. Thaheer's *Reconciliation in Sri Lanka: Voices from the Former War Zone* is an 'effort at understanding the post-reconciliation process as experienced by the different communities in the war affected villages of the North and East of Sri Lanka' (p. vii). Uyangoda and De Mel's *Reframing Democracy: Perspective on the Cultures of Inclusion and Exclusion in Contemporary Sri Lanka* is compelled by a seemingly innocent question: 'Does Sri Lanka's local democracy provide space for extremely marginalised caste communities in the democratic process as equal citizens with other members of rural society' (p. 29). The contributors to Uyangoda and De Mel's volume seek out the 'the local, the peripheral, the marginal, the excluded in order to learn what they have to teach us about democratic models and achievement' (p. 28). Finally, *Post-war Reconstruction in Sri Lanka: Prospects and Challenges*, by Herath et al., is part of a dialogue between 'local and international researchers, and doctoral students who study peace and development issues in Sri Lanka' (p. xi). Prescriptive in its outlook, the collection of essays share the urge to set right all that is wrong in the island state by designing policies on matters as wide ranging as the neglect of children of war to setting up provincial councils in the North-East.

And yet, the books connote the impossibility of untying the threads of ecclesiastical authority and the state's power. For instance, in *Post-war Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, an essay by Sumana Ratnayaka, draws from the Buddhist *suttas* and from his own life. Ratnayaka surmises that 'reconciliation and conflict resolution should always be based on seeing (*janam*) and knowing and on sublime qualities, such as loving kindness, equanimity and wisdom' (p. 93). These noble aspirations nonetheless appear irreconcilable with the Sinhalese Buddhists' unaccommodating policies towards the Tamils and abject cruelty backed by the state. Nor does it cognise the vicious political mutation of a faith based on abdication of power to a power-clinging one. With the passage of time, powerful sections of Buddhism in Sri Lanka have devolved from a pacific faith to a rabid version, unrecognisable to many followers. The assumption that Buddhist values heal conceitedly suggests not only the absence of a non-Buddhist religious framework in which reconciliation can take place, but the complete and final marriage of Buddhism and

state power in Sri Lanka. It remains a matter of surprise that the Tamil view of the war or hopes of reconciliation are absent in the collection of essays. The permeation of Buddhist values is evident in Levalley's essay in the same volume, *Out of Hope*, where 'moksha' is uncritically projected as the objective of every human life. Describing it as 'Indian psychology', Levalley projects the values of *moksha* and *dharma* as 'guiding motivations' for children and teachers suffering the horror and psycho social damage of 'disaster trauma'. This is akin to the essentialist propositions of the bygone time, coming from, for example, A. K. Coomaraswamy (2007). While there may be merit in formulating a religio-spiritual resolve for the inflicted psychology, there is a risk of reducing Sri Lanka, India and Buddhism into naval-gazing spiritual entities.[1]

Like golden threads, Jayewardene's vision of Sri Lanka's past and future as one constituting solely of Sinhalese Buddhists and kings, these books also produce a selective narrative, one in which the 'affected' of the war are implicitly the 'Tamils' and never the Sinhalese themselves, one in which 'voices' need to be elicited and finally, one which internalises a Western vocabulary of 'reconciliation' and 'development'. Not only the category of reconciliation, these collections also do not recognise the fraught character of 'development'. Could there be development without 'cultural imagination'[2] and without the recognition of the notional dominance emanating from the World Bank and various international funding agencies? This question, very relevant in the time when every rank and file in political leadership would like to come across as 'Mr. or Ms. Development',[3] does not seem to interest the authors. There is an uncanny sacredness about these words and the related rhetoric which renders an intellectual handicap for the analyses, explanations and prescriptions. Collectively, they raise more questions than they answer; the questions they deal with are allegedly simplistic, naïve and innocent: What happens after the war? What are the forms of reconciliation? How to make democracy more holistic? Such questions are not adequate to comprehend myriad undercurrents, particularly when juxtaposed with

[1] For a convincing critique of this tendency, and a critical reading of Coomaraswamy's proposition, see Raghuramraju (2013).

[2] There are critical debates on the conceptualisation of development aplenty. Pathak, for example, emphasises cultural imagination of development and comprehension of the fragmented sociocultural components. For more information, see Pathak (2013).

[3] See the lecture, 'Development: Between Clichés and creativity' by Shiv Visvanathan, delivered on 8 October 2011, at Azim Premji University, Bangalore, India. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_wdd7D2iQk (last accessed on 1 November 2014).

a stance on Sri Lanka. One is reminded of Ismail, when he ponders, 'What is this object, Sri Lanka, in the first place? What kind of a place is it? Do you know it? Really? How do you know it? Did you hear or see or read about it? Why are you convinced that what you heard or read or saw was persuasive? Did it occur to you, to anticipate my argument somewhat, that Sri Lankans and Westerners, for instance, might comprehend it differently? Did you pause, consider, however briefly, that different disciplines might produce it differently? ... Is Sri Lanka a country in which people are domiciled, as the social sciences—geography, anthropology, area studies—and their applied allies—the census, encyclopaedia, journalism—by and large claim? Is it a state that issues passports—and kills its citizens, routinely and randomly?' (Ismail 2005: XIV–XV).

The bloodiness of the past, the strangled voices and hopes of both sides, of a just and peaceful land, appear to be erased in this version of history. Instead, one finds a persuasive pressure to look at the miraculous nature of development itself, as a way of being amnesiac about the past and hopeful about the future. The reinvented Leviathan is solemnised thereby. Indeed, this yields more questions than quelling anxieties of the people and curiosity of the critical readers.

Governing the Rebels

It might be useful to remember that Gramsci described the work and positions of intellectuals in a state as 'permanent persuaders'.[4] In *Post-war Reconstruction in Sri Lanka: Prospects and Challenges*, Herath and others declare at the outset, 'Sri Lanka now faces the prospects and challenges of post war reconstruction in the northern and eastern provinces ... to facilitate the dialogue between academics and practitioners and generate a pool of policy relevant knowledge' (p. xi). The links between the state and academicians, thereby, becomes transparent. Furthermore, Thaheer and others admit that 'there is no specific method in assessing the success of reconciliation in a post war society' (p. 2), as the authors of this volume have conducted 'the first ever assessment of the opinions, attitudes and experiences of the war affected people in the North and East of the country' (p. 7). Curiously enough, the 'first ever' is about enumerating modern and measured lives. The work reflects the modern belief in the 'goodness of enumeration', as it were. It produces data, which bolsters views,

[4] For more information, see Martin (2002: 116).

opinions and beliefs in the overall betterment of society. The practice of the colonial state to undertake surveys, polls and other forms of data collection uncritically persists in academics in contemporary Sri Lanka, as it is in the larger domain of South Asia. Calculative and utilitarian rationale spur such initiatives. Academics, research centres and universities, as a part of the toolbox of modernism must be recognised as an accomplice in the questioning and the measuring so essential to the state apparatus. Like the state, data collection is primed to be purposeful, unprejudiced and couched in the politically neutral veil of equality. For instance, Thaheer's study employs '12 field researchers in the five districts drawn from all three ethnic communities' (p. 24). The enumerative practice is, however, sufficiently fraught with the politics of inscribing, dividing, erasing and governing.[5]

For a world committed to naming, renaming, classifying and declassifying, the stoic determination not to even attempt to decode the term 'war affected' is striking. Are the wounded the only affected? What about those who deliver death and bombs? Watching the wounded is a trauma in itself. The unnamed continue in the void till they are classified as 'subjects' (p. 23). Thaheer states further 'focusing on information elicited from interviews, which capture the subjects' life world, the qualitative component helps interpret the social phenomena that are centric to the study' (p. 23). Armed with 'barometers' gathered from the South African experience, the researchers set to the 'field' collecting and filing their data from their subjects. One is inundated by surveys, questionnaires, barometers, FGDs (focus group discussions), the mechanised and tried and tested tools to extract and elicit information. It is here that the invisibility cloaks of the interrogators become troubling. Like Jayewardene's narrative, the book constructs a narrative of the people 'out there', of the land 'there' and voices of the 'others'. Not once are the souls of the interrogators questioned, or the bodies located. Who are these people, righteous about the right to ask, eager to scribble answers but cautious to name themselves? For academic scholarship in a postcolonial state, the colonial practice of enumerating, assumes a different lethality when carried out in the spirit of free enquiry. It is tempting, in this wake, to agree with Krishna when he argues that,

> the disjuncture between the two communities cannot be attributed easily to 'evil politicians' or 'extremist leaders'. It lies in the everyday

[5] Kaviraj, among others, have debated about the enumerative politics in India in historical context. For more information, see, Kaviraj (2010).

> construction of the 'other', the one who does not belong, who tried to belong but was reminded that they had no right and now, the ones who have been taught that they never can belong. (Krishna 1999: 55)

For instance, *Reconciliation in Sri Lanka: Voices from Former War Zones* examines the lives of 'communities' by interviewing and surveying 600 respondents in the north and east of Sri Lanka. There is a sense of balancing the voices of discontent with the admission that development is an instrument of institutional authorities and state-driven reconciliation has its limits. The authors critically pursue various projects undertaken by the government. By looking into perceptions towards security, truth and justice, the authors take a sympathetic view of people who are denied legitimate democratic rights and space for decades. As critical as they are of the Sri Lankan government's use of development as a tool to reconcile, stray observations betray their prejudice. In examining the 'feeling of safety' for instance, they point out, the 'community that experienced the brunt of the brutality of the war ... were subject to forced and involuntary recruitment by the LTTE ... as fighters and general labour' (p. 33). Elsewhere, the notion of 'reconciliation' amounts to acceptance of state's oppression, as it reads, 'the Tamil community has developed immunity or reconciled with continued suppression and other difficulties ... in living with a heavy military presence' (p. 38). The value of this work lies, however, in the voices it brings forward. Such as, the head of a rural development society questions the notion of development when they do not have houses to live or water to drink. Results of a survey on attitudes towards political culture reveal that a majority of the Tamil community and nearly one-third of the Muslim community do not trust the central government. Finally, an interview of a young Tamil woman summarises the decades of conflict. She laments, the Sinhalese 'look upon us as a vanquished lot not to be treated with respect. How can we even stand up as equals when we are not accepted as a community?' (p. 121). In times of political inhibition and curtailment, the book not only functions as a brave critique of a malevolent state trying its hand at reconciliation, but also questions the equation of development with monetary investments and infrastructure. It confirms the perception how a broken community after having lost its leadership, is scarcely in a position to reconcile. The work is a validation of the view that despite the formal end of war, Tamils still remain at the edge of Sri Lankan state and society.

Academic Agnosticism

If the 'other' in these books is preordained as the 'war affected', so is the 'field' of this academic enquiry ready-made. The North-East provinces are the declared 'field', occupied by Tamils for centuries, both as the battlefield and home for the LTTE, with Kilinocchi as their headquarters for over a decade. The space was contested over in many ways. In an attempt to unsettle the Tamil-Hindu majority in the area, a year after the 1983 pogrom, Minister Lalith Athulamudali spoke of the government's intention of settling 200,000 Sinhalese, mainly ex-convicts and fishermen to populate areas in which Tamils were in the majority. Launched with the help of Israeli expertise, the new Sinhalese settlements, efficiently 'evicted Tamils from the North East, thus denying the Tamils physical and cultural spaces' (Hoole 2009: 282) which they had occupied for centuries. In many ways, the Tamil counter-aggression is understandable. The LTTE too went on a rampage, massacring about 73 Sinhalese in South Mullaitivu, causing an escalation of violence. The subsequent guerrilla war was fought over this very region, with LTTE suzerainty peaking with the construction of an air base and port for international imports, ostensibly of arms and ammunition.

The gravity of the gruesome history however has little echo in the essays in the volume on *Post-war Reconstruction in Sri Lanka*. In the essay 'Prospects on the Renewal of Agriculture-driven Livelihood to Sustain People and Development in Northern Sri Lanka', for instance, after a generic description of soil and climate, the authors discuss the 'categories of war-affected victims'. They observe that the recent changes in the social structure of the northern region are interlinked with the conflict. Further,

> such events have caused a sense of 'insecurity' in the minds of the people in the northern region. This is evident from the recent Jaffna Municipal Corporation election held in August 2009 wherein around 80% did not show interest in collecting their voting cards and those who did obtain them did not cast their vote. Such an act of 'ignorance' of the basic responsibility of the citizens of a democratic country showcases the failure in building confidence. (p. 194)

Suffice to underline the adjectives the authors use to comprehend the after effect of war on people's psyche; 'insanity' and 'ignorance' do not offer anything more than callous haste in describing the scarred subjectivities. The earnest efforts of the Nucleus Foundation in the Eastern district of Ampara is the subject of Yoosuf's essay, 'Nucleus Entrepreneur

Exchange: Sustainable Peace Building Through Economic and Social Integration'. A non-profit organisation working with the former Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development, the agency is devoted to 'developing interethnic relationships among entrepreneurs in Ampara district to promote their participation in the conflict resolution' (p. 207). Ironically, when the task of this scale is ahead, dealing with the past can be done away with.

In *Reframing Democracy: Perspectives on the Cultures of Inclusion and Exclusion in Contemporary Sri Lanka*, Uyangoda and De Mel place the Sri Lankan state's staggered attempts to establish a deep and deliberative democracy in a historical timeframe and look at contemporary measures undertaken. In 1957, Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandarnaike and S. J. V. Chelvanayakam agreed to set up a framework of regional councils in the Tamil-majority northern and eastern provinces. This project however remained unimplemented. Instead, Bandaranaike was penalised for his attempts to share power with the Tamils; a Buddhist monk assassinated him in 1959. Had the power sharing arrangement come through, the civil war, which began in 1982 and the bloodshed that accompanied, perhaps could have been averted. Three decades later, in 1987, the state finally undertook the first major reform initiative to devolve power. Efforts to grant autonomy, however, failed. Thwarted by the hawkish Sinhalese nationalists, the Sri Lankan state was not able to accept and accommodate the democratic aspirations of the Tamils. Following LTTE's defeat, the government tried to bridge the gap between estranged communities, while battling ugly and bloody memories of the civil war. In the essay 'Border, Brokers and the State Effect: State Gender Relations in the Katunayake Free Trade Zone', De Mel looks at the weak possibilities of the state relinquishing hold on any area, for the state is an 'authoritative source which manages *all* other institutional guidelines, of the private and public, life and law, internal and external' (p. 201). Questions of local governance, decentralisation of authority and disaster management after the 2004 tsunami are all instances where state authority was exercised. There is nothing beyond the state or can limit the state. To ask the question, 'what does the deepening of democracy mean in Sri Lanka's local contexts, in the peripheries of the state, society and ethnic hierarchies' (p. 11) is to ask the right question, but the essays seek answers from spaces where one knows it will find none.

Lastly, it seems pertinent to mention that none of the three books, geared to deliberate upon the implications of civil war in political, developmental and social terms, reckon with the possible emergence of alternative voices. One such alternative has been the 'politically

expressive' contemporary visual artists' works in the decade of 1990s in Sri Lanka (Perera 2012). Premised upon the visual arts from the turbulent decade it appears that many youth artists from small towns began to offer artistic visual narratives on issues of ethnic violence, complicity of state and religion, and annihilation of sociocultural cohesion in Sri Lanka. The plethora of contemporary visual arts resists the erasure of memory, by candidly narrating the experiences of violence, loss and inflicted psyche. One wonders whether the academic reflections on post-war Sri Lanka, thereof democratic institutions, and endeavours for reconciliation and reconstruction would be complete without factoring in non-state sociocultural vectors. Perhaps, scholarship obsessed with prescriptive solutions to historically deeper instances of violence need to undertake massive soul-searching!

Conclusion

Written largely by Sri Lankan, mostly Sinhalese, activists, academics and researchers, these works share an unstated consensus on key areas. Political timidity, to put provocatively, runs consistently across the essays and the authors are cautious to not take sides. In the introduction to *Reconciliation in Sri Lanka*, the term ethnic Tamil minorities is scarcely mentioned. Generic and neutral terms are used as easy replacements, for example, 'war affected community' and 'resettled people'. India's 1987 contentious military peacekeeping mission, an event repaid by the LTTE with the assassination of the ex-prime minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, turns into a mild 'intervention'. Disturbing and unsubstantiated claims, furthermore, obscures the possibility of hard-hitting and irreverent political analyses. Schulz and Peiris observe that roots of the 'internal war lie in Sri Lanka's colonial past' (p. 28) and the Tamil population was overrepresented in the administration mainly due its educational skills (p. 29). Crafting peace requires gentleness and sensitivity between estranged communities. Tiptoeing around a politically charged past and a fragile future will, however, not help overcome the deep seated Tamil resistance, nor will the appeasement of development in the northern and eastern provinces. It is necessary that the state in Sri Lanka perceives itself as part of this painful process of war and hostility, one which has created the problem as much as it has tried to solve it.

Finally, military victories are often temporary, representing a mirage of peace till violence eventually escapes through the cracks. Within

the sovereign space of the island, a creative and equitable power sharing arrangement is perhaps the only way to achieve meaningful reconciliation. In short, returning to the Leviathan state of Sri Lanka, there is an imperative to tame the relationship between statecraft and the socio-religious doctrine and allow multiple, alternative, political imaginations to usurp the public sphere.

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