Healing in the Wake of Ethnic Conflict: A Role for International Civil Society in Sri Lanka's Transitional Justice Process

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Sri Lanka, the small island nation off the South-Eastern coast of India, is currently in a state of socio-political and economic distress. The *Aragalaya* (Sinhalese for Struggle of the People) movement, which brought on the collapse of the notorious Rajapaksa government and the subsequent near-implosion of Sri Lanka's economy in 2022, illustrates the severity of public outcry for institutional reform and genuine reconciliation. This is largely due to the decades-long domination of a corrupt government and the exacerbation of daily-life struggles by the Covid-19 pandemic. Most importantly however, it is due to the lack of a meaningful national Transitional Justice process following the end of a 26 year-long civil war in 2009. Contemporary scholarship on Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka is predominantly focused on criticising the government's lack of political will to deal with the past and the accompanying negative impact on the nation's transition to a more equal and just society. In contrast, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the role of international civil society in Sri Lanka's Transitional Justice process. Moreover, even less time has been spent investigating the salient role which ethnic identity plays in this process. Here an opening appears prompting the question of why these two indispensable areas of Transitional Justice scholarship have been neglected in the case of Sri Lanka. What is the nexus here?

Traditional Transitional Justice literature, while emphasising the state's primary responsibility for driving processes of Transitional Justice, recognises the important role which international civil society may play as a facilitator and practitioner. Contrarily, ethnic groups, and ethnic identity specifically, has been an afterthought for the majority of Transitional Justice scholars. In recent discourse however, the salience of ethnicity has surfaced, particularly when reflecting on other prominent cases of ethnic conflicts like Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. The relationship between international civil society and ethnic groups becomes clear when thinking about the bottom-up approach which the majority of contemporary peacebuilding efforts have embraced over the last two decades. When international actors execute mechanisms of Transitional Justice in post-ethnic conflict contexts, they are certain to engage with issues of ethnic identity and deal with inter-ethnic disputes. How then does international civil society go about engaging with these ethnic-related issues? And how does their engagement impact the fulfilment of Transitional Justice's core goals? It is this line of questioning which underpins the research question guiding this thesis: *How does International Civil Society's Engagement with Ethnic Groups Affect Transitional Justice?*

Investigating the role of ethnic groups in the Transitional Justice process is necessary because ethnicity, as a notion which permeates the concept of society, is intertwined with civil identity and therefore with political claims. For Transitional Justice to fulfil its core mission of recognising human rights violations and facilitating the transition to a more just society, it must inevitably engage with ethnically-rooted issues. Special attention is required for understanding and analysing the complexities of post ethnic-conflict contexts as there is an abundance of evidence to suggest the dynamics of these types of conflicts differ from those of other types of conflict.[1] Afterall, the failures of early peacebuilding operations are primarily attributed to implementing 'universal' approaches which do not engage with case-specific nuances like ethnic identity. I argue the fundamental aims of Transitional Justice will go unmet if ethnic conflict resolution is grouped with approaches to other, less complex, instances of political violence.

The practice of Transitional Justice is rooted in the ideological school of thought known as 'liberal peace' and it was born out of the peacebuilding interventionist framework conceived in the wake of the Cold War.[2] It is associated with the set of processes, measures, and policies that societies adopt in order to promote democratisation and address widespread human rights abuses that occur during periods of conflict.[3] Traditionally, Transitional Justice encompasses a wide range of mechanisms, including but not limited to: truth and reconciliation commissions, criminal prosecutions, institutional reform, reparations programs, and memorialisation efforts.[4] These mechanisms serve to fulfil, in some capacity, the four core goals of Transitional Justice, namely: Recognition, Civic Trust, Reconciliation, and Democracy.[5]

Sri Lanka presents an interesting context in which to explore international practitioners' engagement with ethnic groups due to the intrinsic link between ethnic identity and the turbulent socio-political environment. The Sri Lankan civil war, which lasted for 26 years from 1983 to 2009, is rooted in ethno-nationalist disputes and residual resentment from colonial occupation. The war gained international notoriety due to the scope and severity of violence, the large-scale human rights abuses committed by both insurgents and government forces, and

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[1] Arthur, 2011, p.272.
[2] Paris, 2004.
[3] Quinn, 2017, p.10.
[4] Hayner, 2005, p.45.
[5] De Greiff, 2021.

the flagrant lack of justice that has been served to victims. The Sri Lankan government's efforts towards fulfilling prosecution demands, providing reparations, and espousing institutional reform is regarded as grossly insufficient. They have been widely criticised for not following through on their formal commitments, such as their promises to address "past abuses; to pursue truth, justice, and accountability; and to provide redress to victims" which was affirmed in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Resolution 30/1 in 2015.[6] As a result, the overwhelming majority of Transitional Justice efforts in Sri Lanka since 2009 have been conducted, funded, and organised by local and international civil society.

With this in mind, this thesis will explore how international civil society has served as a practitioner of Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka, and to what extent their engagement with ethnic groups has fulfilled the goals of Transitional Justice. First, a review of the relevant literature will conceptualise the aims, means, and plausible outcomes of international civil society's engagement with ethnic groups. Subsequently I will explain how process tracing, in conjunction with qualitative analysis, has been employed as research methodology. Operationalising this I will investigate three relevant cases of foreign donor-funded projects, designed with the goal of facilitating Transitional Justice, in Sri Lanka between 2010 and 2020. The analysis follows a structure which highlights observable implications, examines evidence to support those implications, and finally infers which plausible outcome is most supported and to what extent the four goals of Transitional Justice have been met. Scholars such as Arthur[7] and Fisher[8] have expressed a great need for analysis and documentation surrounding practices of interactive conflict resolution and the consideration of ethnic identity in peacebuilding practices. This research will therefore be contributing to a small but growing pool of scholarship working towards a deeper understanding of Transitional Justice processes in post ethnic-conflict contexts.

The results of this research suggest foreign donor-funded and designed projects which prioritise ethnic-concerns in the planning and execution of Transitional Justice mechanisms can garner significant progress towards Recognition, Civic Trust, Reconciliation, and Democracy on a community-level. International civil society initiatives have been largely well received by

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[6] Teitel, n.d.
[7] 2010.
[8] 2022.

locals and in most cases have resulted in measurable change, particularly regarding inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance and improved social cohesion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Civil society plays a key role in fostering democratic governance and peaceful societies, so consequentially, their efforts can determine the success or failure of Transitional Justice processes.[9] The term 'civil society' refers to the sphere of organised social action which operates between the state and the individual. This encompasses a broad range of voluntary organisations, associations, and networks which operate separately from the state and the private sector. As such, 'local civil society' is understood as organisations, networks, and associations which operate within a specific geographical area, either at a community or national level. 'International civil society' then, encompasses organisations, associations, and networks which operate beyond national borders and which often addresses global issues. The core difference between 'local civil society' and 'international civil society' is the scope and reach of the issues and challenges which they aim to address.[10] Both distinctions however, possess mobilisation and organisational strengths which characterise their effectiveness in advocating for and enacting large-scale change.

In the context of this thesis, 'local civil society' is operationalised to mean grassroots organisations, community development groups, religious groups, youth groups, or any other association concerned with issues relevant to local or community populations. 'International civil society' is operationalised to mean any entity working with concerns which transcend national borders. They primarily focus on issues such as human rights, peacebuilding, development, social justice, poverty eradication, and/or any other peace, justice, or humanitarian-related practices.

Despite governments typically being the main implementors of Transitional Justice mechanisms, the demand for international civil society's involvement in Transitional Justice processes is particularly high in developing countries like Sri Lanka. This is largely because developing countries' governments often lack resources (financial or material) and institutional capacity (expertise or management ability) to sufficiently implement Transitional Justice measures without non-state assistance. This prompts demand for facilitation by local civil society or international actors.[11] Additionally, in some contexts the state may have been the perpetrator of abuse and discrimination, which often results in local civil society no longer

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[9]Marchetti & Tocci, 2009; Hayner, 2005, p.45.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Duthie, 2009, p.12.; Backer, 2003, p.301.

trusting state institutions to fulfil their duties of rolling out reparations packages or promoting national reconciliation.[12] International civil society then supports the state and local civil society in the implementation of Transitional Justice mechanisms most commonly through providing technical assistance, organisational and managerial support or training, and funding. They also advocate for and monitor the implementation of Transitional Justice measures to ensure they adhere to international human rights standards and are sufficiently inclusive.[13]

Ethnic identity is a concept which is especially salient in the context of Transitional Justice because ethnic group participation, recognition, and inter-ethnic trust underpins the legitimacy of liberal institutional transitions and genuine reconciliation. Ethnicity is a notion which transcends the parameters of 'local civil society'. Ethnic identity is different from other social identities, such as class or gender, because ethnicity is constructed around ideas of descent which are intrinsic to social and biological reproduction.[14] This also distinguishes them from political identities, although the two can in sometimes be interrelated depending on the extent to which ethnic division is carried over to the political sphere. In the case of Sri Lanka, this ethnic distinction is evident and rife in the political sphere.

Ethnic identity and inter-ethnic disputes, particularly when intrinsically linked to political divisions, can produce difficult terms of operation for international civil society. The mission of international civil society must be to work with, not against, government reforms addressing past injustices rooted in ethnic discrimination. However, the active role of local civil society should be prioritised in order to adhere to the bottom-up peacebuilding approach. Culture, religion, and language are typically at the core of ethno-political and social grievances. Therefore, scholars emphasise that Transitional Justice measures are more effective in ameliorating ethnic disputes when they are designed with purpose, taking into account a sophisticated analysis of the socio-political and historical conflict context in which they operate.[15]

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[12] Quinn, 2021, p.114.
[13] *Ibid*, p.118; Duthie, 2009, p.10.
[14] Arthur, 2011, p.273.
[15] *Ibid.*, p.272.

2.1 Aims: Four Goals of Transitional Justice

This thesis relies on a definition and normative conception of Transitional Justice which consists of four 'aims' or 'goals', namely: Recognition, Civic Trust, Reconciliation, and Democracy. This conception espouses that mechanisms of Transitional Justice should not be viewed as isolated pieces, but should rather be thought of as 'parts of a whole', working towards two sets of 'mediate' and 'final' goals. The two 'mediate goals' are Recognition and Civic Trust, and the two 'final goals' are Reconciliation and Democracy. Distinguishing between 'mediate' and 'final' goals helps us clarify the relationship between mechanisms (such as judicial reform) and what it is they are trying to accomplish (Democracy). It is important to note however, that mechanisms of Transitional Justice can serve more than one aim at a time. For example, truth-telling exercises can fulfil both Recognition and Civic Trust simultaneously, but truth-telling alone is not sufficient to wholly realise both of these aims. Lastly, these four goals are not merely desirable aims, but they are in and of themselves systematically interconnected with and related to the concept of justice.[16]

To elaborate, the first of the 'mediate' goals is Recognition and all measures of Transitional Justice aim to provide recognition to victims. In its most basic form, this would require victims and perpetrators to acknowledge that they can be harmed or inflict harm through certain actions. Transitional Justice can be understood, in some capacity, as efforts to institutionalise the recognition of individuals as citizens that possess equal rights.[17]

The second of these 'mediate' goals is Civic Trust. First it is important to clarify what is meant by civic trust: "trust" relates to the development of a "mutual sense of commitment to shared norms and values", and "civic" refers to the disposition among citizens, who are strangers, and members of the same political community. Thus, "civic trust" encompasses the mutual commitment to shared norms and values between members of society who belong to the same political community. Except, civic trust is not only about interpersonal trust between citizens, but also about civic trust in an institution.[18] Trusting an institution is about knowing that its constitutive values, norms, and rules are shared by its participants and its members, and that they are regarded by all as binding.[19]

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[16] De Greiff, 2021, pp.31-32.
[17] *Ibid.*, pp.42-43.
[18] *Ibid.*, p.45.
[19] *Ibid*, p.46.

Moreover, the first of the 'final' goals is Reconciliation. The philosophical notion of resentment is useful to understand the character of an unreconciled society: it refers to a "specific type of anger, one that attributes responsibility for the defeat or threat of defeat of normative expectations".[20] Thus, an unreconciled society is one in which resentment characterises the relations between citizens, or groups which make up society (like ethnic groups) as well as between citizens and their institutions. Reconciliation then, encompasses the condition under which citizens can trust one another once more (or perhaps for the first time), and holds the normative expectation that they are committed to the same norms and values which motivate their ruling institutions.[21]

The second 'final' goal then is Democracy. An important caveat for this end is that this does not mean that Transitional Justice measures alone can or will bring about democracy. Rather, democracy is seen as a precondition or consequence of law-based systems found within the notion of justice. The implementation of Transitional Justice mechanisms strengthens the rule of law and this is done in many ways: through criminal trials, truth-telling exercises, reparations programs and institutional reform measures.[22] When practitioners of Transitional Justice mechanisms say they promote the rule of law, they speak to a conception of justice which calls for political participation. In this light, one can observe the interconnectedness of justice and rule of law under democracy. Naturally, not all democracies possess spotless human rights records, however they have been proven to fare significantly better than alternative regimes.[23]

2.2 Means: Strategies of Engagement

Although local actors should always take the lead in shaping the justice agenda of their transitioning society, international civil society can be indispensable in the resources and management which they offer in the form of donor-funded projects. Scholars argue the success of Transitional Justice projects depend on how broad the scope of society they engage with is. A successful project requires engagement with a full scope of diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups in order to sufficiently address the full range of harm experienced by society.[24]

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[20] De Greiff, 2021, p.49.
[21] *Ibid*, p.49-50.
[22] *Ibid.*, p.53.
[23] *Ibid.*, p.55.
[24] Teitel, 2000, p.200.

In conjunction with Transitional Justice scholarship, this thesis works with the assumption that international civil society takes on the role of facilitators as opposed to leaders. They serve to contribute to a state's goals of Transitional Justice and to empower local civil society in their process of reconciliation and self-actualisation. Therefore, international civil society should be understood in the context of this discussion, and later analysis, as supplementary actors.[25] The main approaches and strategies of engagement which international civil society implements with ethnic groups fall under three umbrella categories: *Trust Building, Promoting Accountability and Justice*, and *Lobbying for Institutional Reform*. These approaches garner significant implications for the 'mediate' and 'final' goals of Transitional Justice. International civil society, in their initiatives to support Transitional Justice, always aim to fulfil, in some capacity, one or more of these ends.

2.1.1 Trust Building

Fear and anxiety are major themes present in research conducted on ethnic conflicts, with uncertainty and fear of the future shaping groups' behaviours and attitudes towards one another. This can be divided into two separate components when looking at how fear and anxiety plays into conflict. First is the object of fear which ranges from the physical security of a group, to the fear of assimilation of political domination by another group. The second, is the process by which fear leads to violence. This is illustrated by the "security dilemma", where one group's attempt to make itself more secure is perceived as threatening behaviour by another group.[26] To ameliorate this cycle of fear and anxiety, it is important for international civil society to adopt a strategy of trust-building with these vulnerable groups. In encouraging inter-ethnic trust (Civic Trust), international civil society may facilitate a process by which reconciliation and healing can take place. Civic Trust, being a foundational goal of Transitional Justice, is an essential component for the achievement of genuine reconciliation in a fractured society.[27] In rebuilding inter-ethnic trust, international civil society also contributes to increased social capital.[28]

Moreover, miscommunication and linguistic discrimination are also highlighted as essential areas of engagement for the successful restoration of Civic Trust. This is primarily intertwined

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[25] Crocker, 1998, p.509.
[26] Arthur, 2011, p.276.
[27] Fischer, 2011, p.411; Govier, 2002, p.141.
[28] Duthie, 2009.

with one ethnic group's bid for dominance over another as "information failures" or differences in intercultural communication impacts potential peace processes like negotiation and bargaining.[29] To address this, Transitional Justice scholars emphasise the importance of local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), like grassroots organisations or youth groups, in the process of trust-building. These local civil society organisations hold power as facilitators of public consultations and in encouraging debate.[30] The organisational characteristics and cultural awareness of local NGOs offers a comparative advantage for issues regarding language and translation which international civil society does not have. Thus, cooperation and collaboration on Transitional Justice Projects, specifically through seed grants which support local initiatives, is imperative.

The trust-building strategy is mostly aligned with the two 'mediate' goals of Transitional Justice, Recognition and Civic Trust. International civil society conducts trust-building through organising, assisting, or funding criminal prosecutions, judicial reform, truth-telling exercises, and language-learning activities among others. This fulfils recognition through acknowledging and reaffirming the human rights which citizens possess, recognising cases in which those rights were violated, and prosecuting the perpetrators of those violations. This promotes civic trust, not only between ethnic groups but also between citizens and the state, by institutionalising diverse language education and vetting the judicial branch of government.[31]

2.1.2 Promoting Accountability and Justice

International civil society groups take on investigatory and advocacy roles by conducting inquiries into human rights violations and promoting accountability and justice wherever possible. Specifically, they can monitor a state's compliance with international human rights law and make recommendations on the treatment and reparation of past abuses as well as how to prevent future violations.[32] In doing so, they pay special attention to issues like ethno-nationalism and other consequences thereof, like linguistic racism and religious discrimination. Through community-based approaches, international actors gather nuanced information from locals' lived experiences and their sentiments towards the methods or rate of transition and reconciliation. These entities, namely international NGOs, foreign governments, or think tanks,

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[29] Arthur, 2011, pp.280-281.
[30] *Ibid*, p.9.
[31] De Greiff, 2021, p.46.
[32] *Ibid*, p.26.

often publish their own evaluation reports, organize conferences to present findings, and call for further action. They subsequently inform international opinion and contribute to public debate on how best to approach these issues in the international peacebuilding discourse.[33] They not only garner international attention and support for transitional societies, but they also strengthen and lend legitimacy domestically to democratically elected governments.[34] The International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) is one notable example of such an actor.

The advocacy strategy of international civil society in promoting accountability and justice speaks mainly to the Recognition and Reconciliation goals of Transitional Justice. It fulfils these goals by removing the burden from victims to heal their own wounds. It does not submit to the 'wipe the slate clean' tendencies which some governments, who were perpetrators of abuses, have adopted in some cases. Advocacy and campaigning, particularly the kind that garners international attention, can pressure governments to provide reparations to victims. This would demonstrate a transitional government's commitment to justice through the investment of their resources in transitional activities. However, this this engagement strategy is only effective when perpetrators acknowledge their past wrongdoings. Recognition, as an essential component of Transitional Justice, involves holding perpetrators accountable. It is not sufficient alone to only promote factors like forgiveness, social trust, and reconciliation. The advocacy must evoke lasting change in order to be considered effective.[35]

2.1.3 Lobbying for Institutional Reform

Institutional reform in an essential component of an effective Transitional Justice process because a large component of Transitional Justice itself is the promotion of democratisation. While institutional reform must ultimately be implemented by state actors themselves, there is an important role which local and international civil society can play in the process. Scholars explain that institutional reform is often the result of extensive input from local civil society and this input can be amplified with the support of international civil society.[36] Additionally, international actors, when conducting Transitional Justice projects/programs, can contribute to vetting procedures which dismisses public officials who committed or aided abuses in the past.[37] Specifically, international civil society can be helpful in advocating for the reform of

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[33] De Greiff, 2021, p.295.
[34] Crocker, 2000, p.18.
[35] Quinn, 2021, p.124.
[36] Hayner, 2005, p.47.
[37] Duthie, 2009, p.14.

state entities like the police or the military, and they can support judicial systems or other institutions related to rule of law in fortifying democratic governance structures.[38]

International civil society lobbies for institutional reform primarily through public consultation and stakeholder engagement. Certain organisations possess a degree of international legitimacy which might grab the attention of international legal entities such as the International Criminal Court, prompting their involvement in such processes. Public consultation also gives local civil society a greater sense of ownership over policy decisions and thus a greater involvement in the implementation and success of these processes, which is what makes it such an impactful strategy.[39] International civil society engages with local civil society by researching the nuances of what different ethnic or religious groups might want to change in their government. They then lobby for those specific concerns to be addressed, for example, through constitutional reform which recognises multiple official languages.[40]

Lobbying for institutional reform meets the Civic Trust and Democracy goals of transitional Justice. Civic trust and democracy are somewhat interdependent. Democracy can flourish in a reconciled society where civic trust is restored between citizens. Civic trust in institutions can be strengthened under a regime which prioritises strengthening the rule of law, which is inherently a democratic regime. International civil society promotes both of these ends through targeting the more personal areas within institutional reform, like holding high-profile perpetrators of war crimes accountable through vetting, and implementing laws or acts which protect the rights of individuals.[41]

2.3 Plausible Outcomes

International civil society has the capability to design, finance, and manage large-scale justice projects with a broad scope which the states governing fractured societies often cannot conceive themselves. While they can have significant positive impacts on Transitional Justice progress, they may also weaken or prevent a society from effectively meeting the goals of Transitional Justice and becoming self-actualised.[42] This is why a bottom-up approach and the effective and inclusive execution of mechanisms is so heavily stressed in Transitional Justice

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[38] Duthie, 2009, p.14.
[39] Hayner, 2005, p.47.
[40] Dewasiri, 2020, p.1.
[41] De Greiff, 2021, p.47.
[42] *Ibid*, pp.28-29.

literature. Moreover, failed peacebuilding missions of the past, such as those executed by the UN in the 1990s, implores researchers and policy-makers to consider the risk factors of different actors undertaking mechanisms of transitional processes.

My conclusion, based on existing theoretical research and the findings of experienced Transitional Justice practitioners, is international civil society's engagement with ethnic groups in the Transitional Justice process can have two plausible sets of outcomes. First is the 'Backfiring' Effect, which does not fulfil the four goals of Transitional Justice. This outcome would essentially result in reduced civic trust in governments, an aggravated socio-political climate, and the potential reignition conflict or violence. The second is the 'Successful Facilitation' Outcome, which does, at least in part, fulfil the four goals of Transitional Justice. This outcome is characterised by increased social capital, improvement in local capacity to address issues, increased feelings of recognition through legal empowerment, and progress towards a functioning democratic society through increased political participation.

2.3.1 The 'Backfiring' Effect

Hand-Holding

Too heavy an influence from international actors might impede the natural progression of domestic Transitional Justice initiatives. While international actors may have the intention of creating robust local civil societies, capable of independent public deliberation under the rule of responsive and accountable governments, too much influence can have the opposite effect. If international civil society's presence is too omnipotent, it may hinder the necessary domestic criticism of an actively reforming government during turbulent post-conflict periods.[43] This kind of 'hand-holding', which reduces public deliberation, will narrow local civil society's consensus and support for governmental efforts, which is imperative for the success of the Transitional Justice process. International actors contribute to this demise by not engaging and collaborating with government institutions, or by implementing development structures which are not sustainable once they leave the environment.[44] Conversely, it is also possible for 'hand-holding' to apply to the state. Should the government become too dependent on donor funding or other assistance, they may be unable to maintain the same level of service provision or efficiency once the donor leaves.

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[43] Crocker, 2000, p.29.
[44] *Ibid*; Hayner, 2005, p.46.

Miscommunication

International civil society could jeopardize genuine reconciliation should they not effectively address issues of miscommunication and language disparities. The potential for miscommunication decreases with more research and the input of local actors on how to approach difficult topics and conduct inter-ethnic communication. Moreover, the feasibility and ease of inter-ethnic communication depends on local civil society's receptiveness to it. Inter-ethnic contact may aggravate tensions as opposed to amending them, which directly contradicts the goal of reconciliation to resolve resentment. This is particularly common when cross-group contact, like inter-ethnic dialogue and truth-telling activities, surrounds contentious subjects, such as those which Transitional Justice is designed to raise, without caution.[45] International actors will only worsen tensions if they do not engage with local civil society actors, who can serve as translators or provide necessary information on cultural and religious nuances, or if they do not conduct public consultations on how best to proceed with activities.

Bad Timing

International civil society should not be ignorant of a transitional society's challenges and must be cognisant of acting at the appropriate time. Acting too soon, before the domestic situation has stabilized in the wake of conflict, could be detrimental to future domestic reform efforts. In other cases, international civil society may over-extend their presence, preventing the transitional government and society from developing their own capabilities. Moreover, international civil society could act too late, after the window of opportunity has closed.[46] For Transitional Justice to be ameliorating as opposed to destabilizing, mechanisms should be implemented in a consolidation or peacebuilding phase.[47] Finally, there is the potential for unexpected global phenomena, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, to influence the timing, scope, and impact of such projects.

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[45] Arthur, 2011, p.286.
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Ibid.*, p.285.

2.3.2 The 'Successful Facilitation' Outcome

Social Capital

Transitional Justice initiatives which recognize and respect ethnic identities increase social capital and foster civic trust. Civic trust and social capital have a mutually reinforcing relationship in which they increase and decrease symbiotically. Social capital is the shared values and resources which enables a society to work towards a common goal efficiently. It is essential for the achievement of all four Transitional Justice goals. Social capital increases when members of society feel respected and share common values on how to interact with one another.[48] International actors contribute to the symbiotic growth of social capital and civic trust through setting up inter-ethnic engagement opportunities like programs, workshops, and psychological counselling sessions. Here, focus is placed on improving language comprehension and truth-telling so that victims may openly speak about anxieties and fears related to their ethnic identity and the atrocities they endured as a result of that. Citizens learn from one another's experiences and develop respect for identities which differ from their own, through this social capital grows. This is also achieved by spreading messages of peace, promoting social cohesion and respect by collaborating with local civil society organisations, youth groups, schools, and religious leaders.

Social Capital predominantly fulfils the Civic Trust and Reconciliation goals of Transitional Justice. This criterion of the 'Successful facilitation' Outcome is met by adopting a *Trust-Building* strategy of engagement.

Legal Empowerment

International civil society conducts local reconstruction, reconciliation, and development programs, particularly in societies fractured by political, ethnic, and religious conflicts.[49] This often encompasses legal empowerment, paralegal services, institutional capacity-building, assisting with administrative registration or the acquisition of identity documents for displaced people, funding or assisting with the realisation of reparations programs, and other efforts to monitor justice institutions.[50] International actors take into consideration ethnic identities and the root causes of conflict when designing such programs. By doing so they deliver fair and

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[48] Duthie, 2009, p.18.
[49] Backer, 2003, p.304.
[50] Duthie, 2009, p.20; Alexander, 2003, p.53.

balanced services to victims, increase feelings of recognition and freedom, improve governance structures, and alleviate poverty.[51]

Legal Empowerment predominantly fulfils the Recognition goal of Transitional Justice. International actors may meet this criterion of the 'Successful Facilitation' Outcome by adopting the *Trust-Building* and/or the *Lobbying for Institutional Reform* strategies of engagement

Political Participation

International civil society can increase public political participation by restoring civic trust in government institutions. They do so by educating rural communities on electoral processes, training government officials on how to engage with multi-ethnic communities, and encouraging public participation in government-run Transitional Justice initiatives. Additionally, the engagement between an international actor and the government lends legitimacy to a program which is implemented collaboratively with the state.[52] This is further achieved by international civil society assisting with vetting procedures, providing grants to local government for improved civic engagement activities, and providing training to government employees on equal treatment of civilians.

Political Participation predominantly fulfils the Civic Trust (in institutions) and Democracy goals of Transitional Justice. This criterion of the 'Successful Facilitation' Outcome is met when international actors adopt the *Promoting Accountability and Justice* and *Lobbying for Institutional Reform* strategies of engagement.

Table 1: Aims, Strategies & Plausible Outcomes

Goals of Transitional Justice	Strategies of Engagement	Plausible Outcomes
Recognition	Trust-Building	'Backfiring' Effect
Civic Trust		
	Promoting Accountability & Justice	
Reconciliation		'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
Democracy	Lobbying for Institutional Reform	

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[51] Golub, 2007, pp.47-48.
[52] Crocker, 2000, p.18.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Methods of Research

In order to generate rich and insightful conclusions on how international civil society's engagement with ethnic groups has impacted the desired outcomes of Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka, I have employed a qualitative methodological approach with a single case-study design. Employing process tracing, I explore this interdisciplinary topic with careful consideration of the norms, concepts, and theories that intersect in the discipline of Transitional Justice. Research has been conducted through the collection, review, and analysis of existing primary and secondary sources found online through governmental and organisation databases, university-accredited search engines, as well as in the comprehensive physical archives of Leiden University.

3.1.1 Process Tracing

I operationalise process tracing as a method of research by forming pre-conceived plausible conclusions supported by academic literature, and testing them using observations from a single case study.[53] This simple method can be condensed into a three-step process. The first step is establishing that an initial event or process took place. This is can also be thought of as compiling 'observable implications'. In this case, observable implications are pieces of evidence which illustrate that international civil society has engaged with ethnic groups in some way and has caused a measurable change. Secondly, I recognise that a subsequent outcome has occurred. This outcome refers to one of the plausible outcomes which I have developed, namely: the 'Backfiring' Effect, or the 'Successful Facilitation' outcome. Lastly, I make inferences to demonstrate that the former is the cause of the latter. This means I will analyse these various observations according to the criteria of each plausible outcome to determine which plausible outcome theory possesses more empirical support in the case of Sri Lanka.

3.1.2 Observable Implications

In accordance with process tracing methodology, I present a table of observable implications. This table outlines the key themes, also understood as 'areas of engagement', under which the practitioners of Transitional Justice initiatives typically operated in Sri Lanka. These themes are: *Education & Language, Social Cohesion, Psychological Support*, and *Governance &*

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[53] Mahoney, 2012, p.570.

Capacity Building. Within these themes there are various case-specific observations. These observations are found in primary sources such as final project evaluation reports. The 'mechanism' indicates the cause of the observation. These mechanisms explain briefly how international civil society engaged with ethnic groups to cause an identifiable change. Finally, the 'consequence for theory' indicates which of the two plausible outcomes these observations may support.

Table 2: Observable Implications

Theme	Observation	Mechanism	Consequence for Theory
Education & Language	Reduced perception of social inequity	Implement and fund an anti-hate speech campaign with religious leaders	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
	Teachers, schoolchildren and parents have improved diverse language comprehension	Facilitate and fund in-school and community centre language learning activities	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
	Student committees dedicated to promoting inter-ethnic harmony and reconciliation	Provide seed grants to local organisations and schools	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
	Inter-ethnic charity networks formed	Encourage inter-ethnic and inter-religious group activities	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
Social Cohesion	Increased confidence and reciprocity to inter-ethnic and government engagement	Fund and organise social activities in multi-ethnic communities	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
	Youths form inter-ethnic and inter-religious friendships	Organise inter-ethnic social activities	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
Psychological Support	Improved inter-ethnic tolerance & respect in several communities	Implement community-level psychological support services	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
	Decrease in inter-ethnic suspicion and hatred	Assist institutionalisation of national and provincial mental health services	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
Governance & Capacity Building	Increased confidence of locals to engage with government institutions	Fund administrative translation services in collaboration with local government entities	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
	Local government officials concerned about ability to maintain increased capacity and service provision	Provide grants and facilitate capacity building activities for local government officials	'Backfiring' Effect
	Increased voter registration and electoral process education	Facilitate rural communities' acquisition of identity documentation, encourage voter registration, and organise electoral process education programs	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome

Increased youth participation in government-run Transitional Justice programs	Facilitate capacity building activities which connect youth, civil society leaders, and government officials	'Successful Facilitation' Outcome
Reduced trust in government's Transitional Justice efforts	Not monitoring funding provided to government for ex-combatant reintegration programs	'Backfiring' Effect

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Text Selection: International Civil Society's Transitional Justice Initiatives in Sri Lanka

I have selected three examples of international civil society funded, managed, and implemented programs/projects in Sri Lanka to measure and discuss to what extent their engagement with ethnic groups supports one of the plausible outcome theories.

The three selected programs are:

1. **Sri Lanka Reintegration & Stabilisation in the East & North (RISEN) Program** implemented by *Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI)*. (2010-2014)
2. **Sri Lankans Mobilised to Achieve Reconciliation and Transformation (SMART)** implemented by *Search for Common Ground (SFCG)*, *Peace and Community Action (PCA)*, and *Association for War Affected Women (AWAW)*. (2014-2016)
3. **Promoting Reconciliation in Sri Lanka (PRSL)** implemented by the *United Nations Development Program (UNDP)*, *UNICEF*, and the *World Health Organisation (WHO)*. (2017-2020)

I have chosen these examples for three reasons. First, these projects collectively span over most of the 14 years since the end of the war in 2009. This is beneficial for increasing the already small scope of analysis because each project was designed for and implemented at different stages of national 'healing'. Secondly, each of these projects is well documented by online progress reports, as well as extensive and detailed evaluation reports conducted by external evaluation teams. The evaluation reports on these projects present findings without bias, and provide accounts from real participants which is beneficial for an objective analysis. Lastly, while each of these projects seek to address at least one or more of the four Transitional Justice goals in some capacity, they each also focus on a wide and unique array of concerns and they engage with ethnic groups in different ways.

3.2.2 Background on Selected Projects

Sri Lanka Reintegration & Stabilisation in the East & North (RISEN) Program

The RISEN program was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and was implemented by DAI from August 2010 to January 2014. With a budget of USD 23 million, the program aimed to establish and manage a quick response mechanism which would strengthen Sri Lanka's confidence and capacity to address the consequences of conflict, violence, and instability. Over the course of the program, practitioners' focus moved away from reintegration and stabilisation towards social cohesion and civic engagement. The program aimed to facilitate social cohesion through improving interethnic interactions, economic opportunities, and social equality. They sought to enhance civic engagement through improving community and local government relationships, advocacy capacity, and civic rights. The program is largely regarded as successful by external evaluators.[54]

Sri Lankans Mobilised to Achieve Reconciliation and Transformation (SMART) Project

The SMART project was funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and implemented by SFCG together with PCA and AWAW starting in 2014, for a period of 24 months. The project had a budget of EUR 300 thousand, and aimed to empower fractured communities to contribute towards reconciliation in post-war Sri Lanka. The project had three main objectives: first, to increase youth, religious, and community leaders' capacity to initiate reconciliation activities within their communities; second, to facilitate inter-ethnic and interreligious coexistence by promoting local-level collaborative initiatives; and third, to increase civic engagement around the implementation of the government's Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) Report. The main mechanisms which this project implemented were aimed at preparation, engagement, capacity building, and dialogue and collaboration sessions on LLRC implementation and the importance of Transitional Justice. External evaluators concluded that the project made significant contributions towards its objectives.[55]

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[54] Social Impact Inc., 2014.
[55] De Silva *et al.*, 2017.

Promoting Reconciliation in Sri Lanka (PRSL) Project

The PRSL project was funded by the Peacebuilding Fund of the UN and was implemented collaboratively by the UNDP, UNICEF, and the WHO, starting in April 2017 until December 2020. With an allocated budget of USD 1.6 million, the three core aims of the project were divided by the three collaborators as such: the UNDP focussed on promoting processes for social cohesion and conflict prevention; UNICEF sought to improve the education system to support inter-group and inter-personal understanding and interaction; and the WHO aimed to address conflict-related mental health and psychological issues. The mechanisms implemented throughout this project were varied due to the broad focus of the project and the three different avenues of engagement. External evaluators found that this project was not highly successful, rather, the overall progress was weak and the core targets were not achieved. This is largely attributed to inadequate coordination among different UN agencies, the absence of managerial supervision, and considerable delays impacted by both the 2019 Easter Sunday attack in Colombo, and the Covid-19 pandemic.[56]

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[56] Mahindapala *et al.*, 2021.

Chapter 4: Case Study History & Contemporary Context

Due to the salient ethnic identity component of this thesis, it is imperative to discuss the root causes of the Sri Lankan conflict, and the role which this played throughout the war and after the cessation of violence. Additionally, crucial for understanding the complexities of Sri Lanka's ethnic disputes, it is helpful to reference the national ethnic demographic statistics (as of 2019): 74.9% Sinhalese (predominantly Buddhist); 11.2% Sri Lankan Tamils (predominantly Hindu with substantial Christian groups); 9.3% Sri Lankan Moors (predominantly Muslim); 4.2% Indian Tamils; 0.5% other minority groups.[57]

4.1 Root Causes of Conflict

In the wake of Portuguese and Dutch occupation, the legacy of British colonial rule during the 19th and 20th centuries, enshrined ethnic resentment in Sri Lanka's greater society, predominantly between the Sinhalese and Tamils. Economic development under British occupation affected the demographic picture of Sri Lanka dramatically as it left thousands of Sinhalese displaced due to the establishment of rubber and tea plantations in the Central district. Tamil communities, primarily situated in the North and Eastern provinces of the island, were disadvantaged because most of the economic activity was then taking place towards the South and West, thus they sought employment in the civil service and private sector.[58]

Concurrently, under British rule, education on the island also became influenced by Western and Christian values, which created a social stratum of an educated, English-speaking Tamil minority. The British used the Tamil minority as cheap labour while a new bourgeoise class of Sinhala-speaking elites emerged and started constructing a social and religious culture of nationalism which promoted an anti-colonial stance. The Sinhalese viewed these changes under colonial rule as barriers to their advancement, and as the doings of hostile elements of Dravidian expansionism, Christianity, colonialism, and modernity. These forces of Sinhalese nationalism further perpetuated myths of "eternal and ancient conflicts with Tamils" which only grew after independence.[59]

In contrast, the English-educated Tamils, populating the colonial administration sector, increasingly felt superior to their Sinhalese counterparts which only intensified Sinhalese

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[57] Minority Rights Group International, 2019.
[58] Arambewela & Arambewela, 2010, p.370.
[59] *Ibid.*, p.371.

resentment and anxiety. After independence in 1948, this translated into the emergence of a post-colonial, forceful, Sinhalese hegemonic and ethno-nationalist project which was exclusive of Tamils in particular. Sinhala politicians leveraged on historical interpretations of Sinhalese identity and resentment which created a dominant ideology for the ruling elite.[60] This emerging Sinhalese nationalism movement campaigned for proportionate representation for ethnic groups within the new independent indigenous constitution. Thus, in February 1948, the majoritarian constitution was adopted and newly independent Sri Lanka gained its first conservative Sinhalese prime minister, D.S. Senanayake.[61]

The new government was Sinhalese dominant and nationalist in ideology. They perceived the Tamil minority as having access to a disproportionate share of power due to the educational opportunities they had under colonial rule which motivated the Sinhalese government to 'restore balance'. The state took control of education, trade, industry, and politics which they justified on the grounds of helping to curb the influence of foreign and minority dominance. Measures were implemented to effectively enshrine the Sinhalese as the dominant force in Sri Lanka. This was most notably done by replacing English with Sinhalese as the official language with the "Sinhalese Only Bill" of 1956, stripping the Tamil language of all power of parity.[62] Many historical accounts of this time emphasise that language hereafter became politicised and used as a tool for linguistic racism.[63]

The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), also known as Peoples Liberation Front, were uprisings and revolts which permeated Sri Lanka's socio-political climate throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The support base for this movement was overwhelmingly rural and consisted primarily Sri Lankan youth struggling to find work, and Sri Lankans of a 'lower' caste. JVP ideology was underpinned by Marxism as well as Sinhalese and Buddhist nationalism and their goal was to ultimately annihilate their political opponents. They did so by means of extreme violence and mass-killings as well as assassinations of political leaders.[64] Though this conflict and tension was not fuelled by ethnic concerns, as it was primarily Sinhalese against Sinhalese, the destruction and counter insurgence launched by the Sri Lankan government set the pace for

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[60] Arambewela & Arambewela, 2010, p.371.
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] Anandakugan, 2020.
[63] Arambewela & Arambewela, 2010, p.371.
[64] Watkins, 2005, p.218.

their response in the next conflict. The lack of recognition and justice served for those missing, displaced, and brutally killed in this period would also carry over twenty years later in 2009.[65]

4.1.1 The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

The Sri Lankan political climate of the 1970s can be characterised by mainstream Tamil politicians advocating for the establishment of a new separate state which would be called 'Tamil Eelam'. Here, Tamils would be allowed to enjoy the educational and working opportunities denied to them under the 'Sinhalese Sri Lanka' and this state would be situated in the 'Tamil homeland' in the northern and eastern provinces of the island.[66] The Tamil community had mixed reactions to the idea of a separate Tamil Eelam. From the handful of groups that supported the notion, one prevailed over others: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), founded in 1972 by Velupillai Prabhakaran. The LTTE conquered other emerging Elam groups such as the Tamil Elam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and soon became the sole representation of Tamil separatists.[67]

Over the course of the Sri Lankan civil war (1983-2009), the group would become known for their high-profile attacks, such as the assassinations of two heads of state (namely, former prime minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, and former president of Sri Lanka, Ranasinghe Premadasa, in 1993). They were also notorious for suicide terrorism, carried out by their suicide bombing unit known as the Black Tigers.[68] The organisational structure of the LTTE was hierarchical, under the leadership of founder Prabhakaran. The group had significant army, navy, and air capabilities, and were infamous for their large proportion of female and child combatants which made up between 20-30% of the LTTE's fighting cadre. Their primary strategies of attack were land and sea tactics, as well as guerrilla warfare. The group was predominantly funded and supported by Tamil diaspora spread across the world.[69]

4.2 Brief Overview of the Civil War: 1983-2009

The civil war in Sri Lanka was triggered in July 1983 by a devastating series of attacks, ambushes, and riots spread across the country, known as Black July. Many witnesses and critics see this period as a turning point which would characterise the war as institutionalised political

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[65] Alex Rothman, 2023.
[66] Arambewela & Arambewela, 2010, p.371
[67] Anandakugan, 2020.
[68] Stanford University Centre for International Security and Cooperation, n.d.
[69] *Ibid*; Anandakugan, 2020.

brutalisation and violence.[70] Many Tamils fled the country at this time, and sought asylum as refugees in India and the West. This is where the Tamil diaspora would (at first voluntarily, and later under coercion) begin funding the separatist activities of the LTTE. Due to the unlawfulness of these activities, Tamil diaspora often conducted these funding activities secretly or under the guise of humanitarian aid. These communities became institutionalised agencies actively supporting the armed conflict of the LTTE against the Sri Lankan state. This movement encompassed drug trading and other covert business operations to fund the arms and other military equipment sought by the LTTE. The group was declared a terrorist organisation in October 1997 and outlawed in several countries.[71]

The civil war went through three notable phases, namely: the "First Eelam War" (1983-1990), the "Second Eelam War" (1990-1995), and "Eelam War 3" (1995-2009). The most significant events from this time are: India's peacekeeping forces which attempted to maintain peace in the North for three years before withdrawing; the assassinations of two heads of state by the Black Tigers; a failed Norwegian mediation attempt in 2002; and the 2005 presidential election which was won by Mahinda Rajapaksa.[72]

The last few months of the civil war are widely regarded as the most brutal and violent due to the extent of the deaths, torture, hostage holding, and destruction. Critics make the argument that this is when the two sides of the conflict became a 'mirror image' of one another, in an effort to try and win the war. Many allegations of war crimes and human rights abuses are based on events from this time.

In January 2009, government forces seized the LTTE de facto capital of Kilinochchi. In April, the LTTE declared a unilateral ceasefire but they were met with hostility from the government which demanded their surrender. In May, the military regained control of the entire coastline for the first time since 1983. On May 16th and 17th, heavy fighting raged as LTTE troops tried to flee disguised as civilians. Others committed suicide by bombing. On May 18th 2009, the military declared the island back under government control after the LTTE leader, Prabhakaran, and other top LTTE leaders were killed by special forces.[73]

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[70] Arambewela & Arambewela, 2010, p.372.
[71] United States Department of State, 2018.
[72] Reuters, 2009.
[73] *Ibid.*

4.2.1 Guns Fall Silent

When the Sri Lankan Armed Forces declared a military victory over the LTTE, only guns fell silent. Sri Lanka passed into a post-war phase as opposed to a post-conflict situation. The roots of the conflict were not addressed and overcome. Instead, the ruling Rajapaksa government took on a triumphalist and assertive role, both domestically and internationally, with an eagerness to present Sri Lanka as one of the few (or only) Global South countries to have defeated terrorism. The government espoused itself the role of the defender of national sovereignty, security and territorial integrity. Within the Sri Lankan state, both of the major political parties of Sri Lanka, namely the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) and the United National Party (UNP), as well as their allies, shared the view that no one would go before any tribunal or court to face charges of war crimes.[74]

4.3 Contemporary Socio-Political Context (Post-2009)

In the wake of war, the political context of Sri Lanka was turbulent. Ethno-religious nationalism was dominant, and the SLFP's opposition parties were labelled as subservient to the ideologies of Western politicians. In 2010, former president Mahinda Rajapaksa passed an 18th amendment to the constitution removing the two-term limit on presidency, subsequently allowing himself to contest for an unprecedented third term in 2015. However, Maithripala Sirisena, the Minister of Health and General Secretary at the time, won the 2015 presidential election. Sirisena appointed Ranil Wickremesinghe, the leader of the UNP opposition party, as his prime minister. This launched what is known as the *Yahapalana* (Sinhalese term meaning "good governance") movement.[75]

The differences in background, ideology, and approaches to governance between Sirisena and Wickremesinghe fostered an indecisive and unstable government. Rajapaksa, with a stronghold on the Sinhalese community voter base, found his way back into parliament later that year in the August 2015 general elections. He had founded a new party under his leadership: the Sri Lanka People's Front (commonly known by its Sinhalese name, the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna – hereafter SLPP).[76]

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[74] Saravanamuttu, 2022, pp.51-52.
[75] *Ibid*.
[76] *Ibid*, p.53

The SLPP rose to power in the Sinhala-dominant south during the 2018 local government elections, and Mahinda Rajapaksa remained the most popular politician in the country. By 2019, the Sirisena-Wickremasinghe government had restored the two-term limit on presidency. However, the coalition rapidly lost public support following the April 2019 Easter Sunday attacks by an Islamic group in Colombo, which they were vehemently accused of mishandling. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Mahinda Rajapaksa's brother, was the SLPP nominated candidate. A senior military officer during the war and Minister of Defence in 2009, Gotabaya is considered a key architect of the state victory against the LTTE. He won the presidential election in 2019 with 52% of the vote. The following year, in 2020, and in the midst of the Covid-19 global pandemic, the SLPP secured a two-thirds majority in parliament following general elections. Critics of the Sri Lankan (Rajapaksa) government consider this the "final blow" to the state's short window for the pursuit of Transitional Justice as a societal project.[77]

4.3.1 The Sri Lankan Government's Post-War Transitional Justice Initiatives

In November 2006, a Presidential Commission of Inquiry was appointed to look into 15 cases of serious human rights violations, including the assassination of a former minister and the killings of 17 aid workers between 2005-2006. This report was only tabled in October 2015. In 2010, the government appointed a Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) where over 5000 submissions were made and hundreds of victims testified. The final report was tabled in Parliament in 2011 and made significant recommendations. In 2015, the Sri Lankan government, along with the USA, co-sponsored the UNHRC resolution 30/1 to promote accountability and commit to initiating a Transitional Justice initiative. This commitment encompassed the establishment of four mechanisms: the Office for Missing Persons (OMP), a Truth, Justice, Reconciliation, and Non-Recurrence Commission, an office for Reparations, and a Judicial Mechanism with a Special Counsel.[78] To date, only one of these mechanisms (the OMP) has been fully established.[79]

In 2015, the Sri Lankan Cabinet of Ministries formed the Task Force for Reconciliation Mechanisms which was delegated to conduct public consultation on the design of Transitional Justice mechanisms. This Task Force Report, made up of over 7000 citizen submissions, was submitted to the government in 2017. Additionally in 2015, the Office of National Unity and

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[77] Saravanamuttu, 2022, p.55.
[78] Asia Justice and Rights, 2022, p.2.
[79] Teitel, n.d.

Reconciliation was established under the president's office and parliament passed Act No. 4 on Assistance to and Protection of Victims of Crime and Witnesses.[80] In 2016, the prime minister established a Committee on Public Representations on Constitutional Reform (PRC) to seek public views on a new constitution. Finally, in 2018 the OMP commenced operations after considerable delays. That same year, the Cabinet of Ministries endorsed a Bill to establish an Office for Reparations and parliament passed the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances Bill.[81]

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[80] Asia Justice and Rights, 2022, pp.2-3.
[81] *Ibid.*

Chapter 5: Analysis

Due to the Sri Lankan government's failure to follow through on most commitments made to the UNHRC, and their sparse efforts to implement Transitional Justice initiatives of their own accord, I argue the RISEN, SMART, and PRSL projects are responsible for implementing the majority of community and provincial-level Transitional Justice initiatives since 2009.

Each project's outcomes present key observations which have been grouped under four themes: *Education & Language, Social Cohesion, Psychological Support,* and *Governance & Capacity Building.* The RISEN and SMART projects both adopted the *Shramadana* approach, a Sri Lankan philosophy of self-governance, in their engagement with local actors.[82] In contrast, PRSL adopted more of a top-down approach, similar to the earlier UN peacebuilding missions of the 1990s. Each project engaged with ethnic groups, specifically ethnic concerns, to varying degrees which impacted project results differently:

The RISEN program dedicated the majority of both organised activities (23%), as well as grants/funding (27%) to inter-ethnic undertakings (in comparison to other areas of focus).[83] RISEN practitioners demonstrated an essential understanding of local context and cultural nuances in their undertaking of mechanisms which incontestably contributed to the success of the program.

The SMART project placed significant emphasis on reconciling inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships. SMART's emphasis on empowering youth to become the leaders of Sri Lanka's reconciliation process appears to have instilled significant trust and confidence among the younger generation.

The PRSL project engaged more with state entities than with communities or individuals. Unlike RISEN and SMART, PRSL placed less emphasis on addressing specific ethnic groups and dealing with ethnic identity explicitly. Instead, PRSL practitioners focussed more on engagement with government institutions and facilitating institutional reform, but not in a manner which overtly emphasised ethnic concerns.

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[82] Social Impact Inc., 2014.; De Silva *et al.*, 2017.
[83]*Ibid*, p.9.

5.1 Education & Language

Education and Language is a theme which all three programs targeted in their overall planning and desired outcomes. UNICEF, under the PRSL project, only really collaborated with government institutions in addressing school curriculum and language policy. None of the work reflected in the final evaluation report of the program explicitly mentions the importance of making these changes to accommodate ethnic concerns or promote equal representation. Rather, UNICEF focused on streamlining education syllabus rollouts and teacher training. In contrast, RISEN and SMART approached these issues through engaging directly with civilians, civil society organisations, and schools. Under this theme, we can observe examples of these actors employing the *Trust-Building* strategy of engagement.

First, evaluators observed a **reduced perception of inequity among individuals from different ethnic groups**. The RISEN program imparted several grants, one of which was for a national anti-hate campaign implemented in collaboration with various religious leaders in 2013. The anti-hate campaign focussed specifically on hate speech. The project design process consisted of public consultations led by RISEN practitioners and leaders of different religious groups from communities across six districts. Their activities mostly centred around peace parades during which they promoted messages of peace through loudspeakers in rural areas which had been targeted by extremists. Moreover, they collaborated with religious leaders because they are trusted figures in rural communities which would not intimidate civilians. Evaluators consider this activity a success as it made observable progress towards tolerance and social acceptance in multi-ethnic and religious communities.[84]

Secondly, there has been a **significant improvement in diverse language comprehension among teachers, schoolchildren, and parents** across multiple districts. RISEN provided a grant to the Provincial Director of Education in the Northern Province to implement language training in 100 schools across the Northern province. This included classroom activities like learning a 'word of the day', which schoolchildren passed on to their parents at home. The grant also funded the language training of teachers who were encouraged to expand their skills for future professional development.[85] Additionally, the diverse language classes which were conducted in Uhana province under the SMART project were reported to have continued after

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[84] Social Impact Inc., 2014, p.14.
[85] *Ibid.*

the project came to a close due to local initiative and with support from community-based organisations.[86] This was an inadvertent outcome of the SMART project which is indicative of local motivation and engagement with Transitional Justice initiatives. Evaluators regard both of these initiatives as successful. Common language comprehension enables different ethnic groups to interact with one another, often leading to conversations which engage in sensitive topics and truth-telling.

Moreover, SMART project evaluators report the establishment of **student committees dedicated to promoting inter-ethnic harmony and reconciliation in schools**. Children who participated in SMART project activities in Matara, a city in Sri Lanka's Southern province, requested help with forming school clubs dedicated to reconciliation efforts. The SMART project provided a seed-grant to help realise this project, which evaluators note has been successfully implemented. [87] These school clubs enabled students to get acquainted with children from diverse backgrounds and gain practical knowledge about interacting with different cultures and languages from a young age.

Finally, **inter-ethnic charity networks were formed** as a result of SMART project activities. The Zam Foundation, a local Muslim organisation in Weligama, in the Southern province, donates school supplies to Muslim schoolchildren in the area every year. However, after relationships formed between different religious leaders who met at SMART activities, the Zam Foundation decided to donate school supplies to several selected Sinhala Buddhist students in addition to Muslim students going forward.[88] This causal sequence of the SMART project, though not intended, is demonstrative of how international civil society's influence still holds significance after completion of the initial activities.

5.2 Social Cohesion

Inter-ethnic and religious social cohesion and trust, is an area which all three projects engaged with. RISEN, SMART, and PRSL all launched initiatives on a community-level trough similar activities such as funding and organising events, facilitating dialogue sessions and workshops, and launching social media campaigns. Under this theme, we can observe examples of these actors employing the *Trust-Building* strategy of engagement.

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[86] De Silva *et al.*, 2017, p.15.
[87] *Ibid.*
[88] *Ibid.*

First, social engagement activities organised under these projects **fostered a more confident and reciprocal environment for inter-ethnic and inter-religious interaction** in several communities. RISEN brought together multi-ethnic groups by organising and funding a number of major social and celebratory events related to sport and music. Two notable examples are the Esala Festival in Kathraragama, and a grant which RISEN allocated to the District Sports Office in Batticaloa to organise a province-wide sporting tournament in 2012.[89] Moreover, under the PRSL project, the UNDP engaged and collaborated with local civil society organisations, such as Prathiba Media Network (PMN), to promote inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue about social cohesion, Transitional Justice, and reconciliation. One of the core issues they addressed was the 'negative' attitudes of Sinhala Buddhist communities towards the concept of Transitional Justice and their 'ignorance' of conflict-prevention measures. Likewise, the UNDP worked with Sirahunani to launch an 'evidence' project with the goal of rebuilding the relationship between Tamil and Muslim communities in the North and East provinces. The main mechanism employed in this was screening films about the conflict to encourage dialogue.[90]

Evaluators regard both of these initiatives as successful in achieving their goals, and note that participants did express positively changed sentiment towards other ethnic groups. Events and activities such as these achieve social cohesion by bringing together vulnerable communities to form teams, perform, or compete in social contexts together. RISEN program participants reported that the sporting events in particular felt more inclusive for the first time. Additionally, the involvement of the District Sport Office in Batticaloa, situated in the Eastern province, gave Tamil participants confidence to interact with government officials again after they had previously been intolerant and discriminatory towards them.[91] Finally, PRSL participants expressed an improved understanding of concepts like reconciliation, reparations, and Transitional Justice as a practical process.[92]

Secondly, evaluators reported youth participants in the SMART project **formed close inter-ethnic and inter-religious friendships** with one another. During the social and dialogue-

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[89] Social Impact Inc., 2014, p.10.
[90] Mahindapala *et al.*, 2021, p.9.
[91] Social Impact Inc., 2014, p.10.
[92] Mahindapala *et al.*, 2021, p.9.

driven activities, youths engaged with individuals from other cultural and religious backgrounds, some for the first time. Specifically, one Buddhist youth leader expressed that he had formed close friendships with other Muslim participants during workshop activities and they were able to openly speak about their religious beliefs and how it has led to tension in the past.[93] Beyond forming in-person friendships, the activities of the program have also encouraged young people to connect on social media and collaborate on posts regarding their reconciliation exercises via Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Youth leaders expressed to evaluators however, they felt these mechanisms would have been more successful if they were given the opportunity to organise the events and activities themselves.[94] In this case, SMART practitioners prioritised the efficient organisation of the events over public consultation. However, it does not appear to have negatively affected the program's intended outcomes.

5.3 Psychological Support

To address the root causes of conflict, such as inter-ethnic and inter-religious fear, anxiety, and resentment, both the RISEN and PRSL programs made efforts to facilitate psychological support. They conducted this through organising group counselling and truth-telling sessions, as well as aiding and developing institutionalised mental health support. The SMART project, despite primarily being concerned with reconciliation, conducted little-to-no explicit psychosocial activities. Under this theme, we can observe examples of these actors employing the *Trust-Building* as well as the *Promoting Accountability and Justice* strategies of engagement.

First and foremost, the psychosocial activities implemented by these projects **improved inter-ethnic tolerance and respect** in several communities. RISEN implemented group counselling sessions in communities directly impacted by the conflict, primarily in the Eastern province, from 2010 to 2011. Participants expressed that this kind of activity and support was crucial for their community's stability as well as their individual recovery immediately after the war. Specifically, it promoted a shared understanding of common traumas endured throughout the war. These sessions not only provided civilians with the skills to relate to one another, but also offered career guidance and support for disproportionately affected individuals like widowed mothers. Additionally, individuals from previously conflicting ethnic groups developed

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[93] De Silva *et al.*, 2017, p.13.
[94] *Ibid.*, p.14.

interpersonal relationships due to these activities. They went on to invite one another to intimate family gatherings which was previously unheard of in these provinces.[95]

Secondly, local civil society-designed mental health services **reduced inter-ethnic suspicion and hatred** through community-based interventions which were funded and supported by the WHO. While the majority of the PRSL project's mental health related initiatives were targeted towards streamlining government approaches at a national level, the WHO did also support provincial and community-level initiatives. More specifically, the WHO supported the capacity development of local civil society organisations which designed and implemented the *Manohari* program. The purpose of this program was to strengthen psychological well-being, improve community-level mental health services, and lead community-based interventions to address issues such as fear, anger, inter-ethnic suspicion, and hatred. This was conducted primarily through 'drama therapy training', consisting of role-playing exercises, storytelling and other interactive discussions.[96] Overall, evaluators report that participants experienced positive behavioural changes.[97] These activities and reported outcomes are indicative of trust-building by overcoming the fears and anxieties related to ethnic-tensions.

5.4 Governance & Capacity Building

To support government-led Transitional Justice initiatives and rebuild Civic Trust in the state, RISEN, SMART, and PRSL implemented mechanisms in which they collaborated with government institutions on a local level, or promoted political participation to support democratisation. They did this by lobbying for administrative language diversity, supporting identification document acquisition, encouraging voter registration, running capacity building programs for government officials, and funding reparations programs. Under this theme, we can observe examples of these actors employing all three of the *Trust-Building*, *Promoting Accountability and Justice*, and *Lobbying for Institutional Reform* strategies of engagement.

Evidently, these programs **increased locals' confidence and trust in engaging with government institutions**. RISEN implemented one of the most successful mechanisms for this by sponsoring and supporting the translation of information booklets, signs, and other legal documentation into Tamil. Locals (in majority Tamil-populated areas) reported they felt

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[95] Social Impact Inc., 2014, p.10.
[96] Mahindapala *et al.*, 2021, p.19.
[97] *Ibid.*, p.20.

positive about the project because they could now understand location indicators like street names and other important information more accurately. Subsequently, this also prompted more Sinhalese people to visit these areas. Signs were translated to display three languages, allowing visitors to navigate and explore areas of interest which also accelerated inter-ethnic interactions and commerce. In the North and East provinces, where this initiative took place, evaluators observed a noticeable increase in confidence in the communities to seek out and receive government services.[98] However, the most prevalent positive response relates to communities witnessing their language being officially recognised in public administration for the first time.

Secondly, local governing bodies expressed concerns regarding a potential **lack of ability to maintain their increased capacity and service provision** without continuous support. In the predominantly Tamil-populated Northern province, where RISEN conducted some large-scale capacity building activities with government officials, many participants expressed concerns about the sustainability of these initiatives. The problem of donors continuously leaving the country once a project contract comes to an end, and the lack of guaranteed government funding thereafter, is a pervasive issue in the field of peacebuilding. Participants in this program particularly reported positive sentiment about the RISEN activities and the skills they had gained, however they feared there would be no way for them to practically implement them without donor presence in the area.[99] Though this is not indicative of RISEN having an explicit negative impact on the progression towards Transitional Justice goals, it does demonstrate lack of sustainable capacity building.

On the other hand, the RISEN program contributed significantly to **increased voter registration and education**. Other local civil society actors were reluctant to provide electoral support in the early stages of Sri Lanka's Transitional Justice process. However, RISEN's initiative to increase identity document and voter registration, and to educate rural communities on electoral processes, led to a stark increase in political participation in the local government elections in March 2011.[100] The acquisition of identity documents was especially impactful, as many members of rural and ethnic minority communities espoused feelings of recognition for the first time in 30 years. The acquisition of identity documents empowered some people to

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[98] Social Impact Inc., 2014, pp.15-16.
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] *Ibid.*, p.21.

vote for the first time ever. Additionally, RISEN practitioners also educated communities on American values like 'freedom of expression' which evaluators noted was an important element in gaining the trust of these communities. Some participants also explained that this was the first time Tamil and Muslim youth were brought together without a militarised presence in order to participate in positive democratic activity.[101]

These projects also **increased youth participation in government-run Transitional Justice programs**. The SMART project implemented capacity building programs which increased understanding of concepts like reconciliation among local civil society leaders. SMART practitioners trained local civil society organisation staff in the 'Common Ground Approach'. Additionally, they trained youth participants in leadership and trust-building, on creating advisory groups (made up of local community members), and taught them about the design and assessment of various reconciliation activities. Participants in this program felt a greater sense of ownership over the activities through this method of engagement and told evaluators that they feel transformed, perceiving themselves as leaders and agents of peace.[102] Due to meeting and forming relationships with other civil society leaders and government officials in the SMART program, youth participants went on to support District Secretariat officers in forming various reconciliation committees, particularly in the Southern province.[103]

Finally, poor monitoring of grants by donors **reduces trust in the government's Transitional Justice efforts**. The PRSL project launched an initiative to support the livelihoods of ex-combatants upon their reintegration into their communities. The initiative specifically provided funding for vocational training alongside general financial support for 350 ex-combatants. This initiative was implemented by Sri Lanka's Ministry of National Policies and Economic Affairs, Resettlement and Relocation, Northern Province Development, Vocational Training and Skills Development, and Youth Affairs. However, the due to a lack of a database of beneficiaries and consistent monitoring by UNICEF, evaluators were only able to determine a list of 60 beneficiaries, 27 of which could not be contacted to confirm their receipt of support. Of those beneficiaries contacted, 60% were satisfied with the aid they received, while 15% were not.[104] Though some aid was provided, the stark lack of information regarding the rest of the grant is

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[101] Social Impact Inc., p.22.
[102] De Silva *et al.*, 2017, p.13.
[103] *Ibid.*, p.14.
[104] Mahindapala *et al.*, 2021, p.10.

concerning. While evaluators do not explicitly indicate it, I take this to be indicative of potential mismanagement and negligence on the part of the Ministry which was responsible for allocation of funds. This inference is supported by the consequent corruption scandals and abuse of power allegations which brought on Sri Lanka's governmental and economic collapse in 2022. [105]

5.5 Implications for Plausible Outcomes

The above observations offer more support for the 'Successful Facilitation' Outcome than for the 'Backfiring' Effect. The cumulative findings from all three projects indicate concerted efforts to increase *Social Capital*, provide *Legal Empowerment*, and to promote *Political Participation*. However, there is some evidence to partially support the *Hand-Holding* and *Bad Timing* criteria of the 'Backfiring' Effect. Overall, I infer international civil society's engagement with ethnic groups has produced significant positive implications for the achievement of Transitional Justice goals on a community-level.

5.5.1 The 'Backfiring' Effect

Despite not explicitly discussing this in the above analysis, I do consider some support for the *Bad Timing* criterion. The PRSL project was conducted between April 2017 and December 2020, therefore some operations were interrupted or entirely derailed by the Covid-19 pandemic.[106] Consequently, this may have contributed to UNICEF's failure to monitor the grant provided to the government for ex-combatant reintegration. It is plausible to determine they were unable to conduct sufficient monitoring due to pandemic restrictions, however this is not indicated by external evaluators. Despite the evidence alluding to *Bad Timing*, the overall implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for PRSL did not result in a reignition of hostilities or tension as the literature would suggest.

Additionally, there is one observation which partially supports the *Hand-Holding* criterion. Under the RISEN program government officials and institutions, which were recipients of training and funding from USAID and OTI, expressed concern regarding their ability to maintain their increased capacity and service provision after the RISEN program concluded. While participants expressed they found value in the skills gained, they worried they would not

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[105] Rieger, 2022.; Hoskins, 2022.
[106] De Silva et al., 2017.

be able to implement them to full potential without donor funding. Typically, this would demonstrate a government becoming too dependent on donor presence which impedes the natural progression of a country's Transitional Justice process. However, in the case of Sri Lanka, I argue these concerns are rooted in the gross mismanagement of finances by government elites which came to light in 2022, and not necessarily in the manner which the RISEN program conducted funding and activities.[107]

Though there is partial evidence to support both *Bad Timing* and *Hand-Holding*, further investigation shows that these observations are fairly surface-level. Neither observation is the result of overt imposition or over-extension on the part of RISEN or PRSL practitioners. Rather, they are the result of an unforeseen global health anomaly and state corruption. Consequently, I infer there is not enough evidence to support the 'Backfiring' Effect outright in the case of international civil society's engagement with ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.

5.5.2 The 'Successful Facilitation' Outcome

The RISEN program outcomes meet the criterion of *Social Capital* by having reduced the perception of inter-ethnic inequity in several communities, improved diverse language comprehension, fostered an environment in which individuals feel confident and safe in inter-ethnic and inter-religious interaction, and by having improved inter-ethnic tolerance and trust in truth-telling activities. RISEN accomplished this by implementing a national anti-hate campaign, sponsoring language comprehension programs in schools, funding and organising several social activities like sporting events and festivals, and by implementing community-level mental health services. These mechanisms are indicative of the *Trust*-Building strategy of engagement and made significant progress towards the Transitional Justice goals of Civic Trust and Reconciliation.

Additionally, the program outcomes meet the criterion of *Legal Empowerment* predominantly by having assisted several communities with the acquisition of identity documents and by funding and facilitating the translation of administrative documents and signs. Furthermore, RISEN practitioners also provided career guidance to victims disproportionately affected by the war. These mechanisms demonstrate the *Trust*-Building and *Lobbying for Institutional*

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[107] Rieger, 2022.; Hoskins, 2022.

Reform strategies being employed and incontestably made significant progress towards the goal of Recognition.

Finally, RISEN program outcomes meet the criterion of *Political Participation* by and large through collaborating with government institutions wherever possible to restore civic trust in the government. They did so by collaboratively implementing the above-mentioned mechanisms with the Provincial Director of Education in the Northern province and the District Sports Office in Batticaloa. Moreover, RISEN also significantly increase voter registration and electoral education ahead of local government elections in 2011. These actions show the adoption of the *Lobbying for Institutional* Reform strategy of engagement and contributed considerably towards the goals of Civic Trust, and Democracy.

The SMART project outcomes meet the *Social Capital* criterion by improving diverse language comprehension in several communities, funding inter-ethnic reconciliation clubs in schools, contributing to the formation of inter-ethnic charity networks, and by enabling the formation of inter-ethnic interpersonal relationships. The positive results of these SMART mechanisms contribute predominantly to the fulfilment of the Civic Trust and Reconciliation goals and illustrate the implementation of the *Trust-Building* strategy.

Secondly, the project outcomes also meet the criteria of *Political Participation* as institutional capacity-building activities encouraged youth in the program to engage with government-run Transitional Justice programs. The collaborative effort of SMART and the government imparted legitimacy to their endeavours which partially fulfilled the goal of Civic Trust and indicates the partial adoption of the *Trust-Building* strategy of engagement.

The PRSL program outcomes meet the *Social Capital* criterion by having fostered community environments where individuals are more reciprocal and confident in inter-ethnic and inter-religious interaction, and by having reduced inter-ethnic suspicion and hatred in truth-telling or other psychological counselling environments. The UNDP worked towards this by collaborating with local civil society organisations to conduct several dialogue-oriented exercises which brought together multi-ethnic communities both in-person and on social media. The WHO achieved this by designing and financing several provincial and community-level mental health services in collaboration with local civil society organisations. The results of these mechanisms made demonstrable progress under the goals of Recognition and Civic

Trust and incontestably demonstrates the adoption of the *Trust-Building* strategy of engagement.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning the ex-combatant reintegration effort of UNICEF which partially meets the criterion of *Legal Empowerment*. Though this mechanism is largely considered a failure by evaluators, and the circumstances surrounding the monitoring and tangible evidence of this initiative are concerning, there are at least 33 confirmed recipients of aid, 60% of which are reportedly satisfied. The confirmed recipients of financial aid did report that the program helped them to kick-start their new livelihood ventures. For this reason, I do recognise some small attribution of the *Legal Empowerment* criterion fulfilment to the PRSL program.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This analysis reveals international peacebuilding efforts can garner significant positive implications for individual and community-level progress towards Recognition, Civic Trust, Reconciliation, and Democracy when ethnic-consciousness is prevalent in the planning and execution of Transitional Justice mechanisms. This thesis is by no means an exhaustive study on ethnic identity nor on Transitional Justice, however, it does offer some perceptive answers to the following research question: *How does International Civil Society's Engagement with Ethnic Groups Affect Transitional Justice?*

First and foremost, scholars which study Transitional Justice in post ethnic-conflict contexts argue that Transitional Justice approaches are not complete without considering the nuances and intricacies of ethnic identity and ethnic grievances.[108] Taking ethnicity and ethnic-concerns into consideration inevitably means Transitional Justice practitioners need to consider engagement on a community level as opposed to a national level. Employing Transitional Justice mechanisms which are driven by ethnic concerns on a national level is challenging for international actors, not only due to the diversity and dispersion of groups in Sri Lanka, but also due to resource and time limitations attached to donor-funded projects. Additionally, employing community-level approaches are more beneficial for addressing the specific grievances of conflict-affected communities. The two projects which adopted *Shramadana*, a Sri Lankan philosophy of self-governance, namely RISEN and SMART, offer by and large the majority of positive results from peacebuilding initiatives in Sri Lanka between 2010 and 2020.

It is unlikely that Transitional Justice measures implemented by international civil society can alone lead to the type of social and institutional transformation that is needed in the aftermath of an ethnic conflict where one group has experienced systematic abuse on the basis of identity and biological descent.[109] The process of healing which is necessary for this kind of societal transformation is only possible through local actors. The key benefit of international civil society then, is they can help empower those actors to undertake such a transformation with resources and support. In the results of these donor-funded initiatives, we observe significant and fundamental shifts in attitude which are indicative of the empowerment which local actors require to enact massive social transformation. This is demonstrated, for example, by the

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[108] Arthur, 2010.
[109] *Ibid.*

formation of close inter-ethnic friendships, reduced inter-ethnic suspicion and hatred, and increased political participation and action. These shifts seem small in comparison to the typical Transitional Justice outcomes of judicial reform and criminal prosecutions which are implemented by governments themselves. However, these shifts in attitude are what underpin mass transformation efforts such as the *Aragalaya* movement.

While this thesis offers some insight into the processes of Transitional Justice in Sri Lanka between 2010 and 2020, its application is limited in a contemporary setting. Sri Lanka is currently experiencing an unprecedented socio-political and economic crisis triggered by societal uproar, and for good reason. The *Aragalaya* movement, otherwise known as the Struggle of the People, was triggered by the accumulation of three major factors. First, the increasing difficulty of daily life since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which encompassed national shortages of basic necessities like medicine, food, and fuel. Second, the widespread public dissatisfaction with the gross financial mismanagement and ill-advised policy decisions of the Rajapaksa regime. And lastly, the first ever public default on international debt repayments.[110] Mass public demonstrations against the Sri Lanka's ruling political elite brought on the collapse of not only the Gotabaya government, but also a massive currency devaluation and the near total disintegration of the island's economy in the first half of 2022. According to the World Bank, Sri Lanka's poverty rate nearly doubled from 2021 to 2022 reaching 25% and is predicted to increase in 2023.[111]

The rapidly unfolding and ever-changing social, political, and economic climate of Sri Lanka offers an interesting backdrop for further research into the country's next steps towards Transitional Justice. National surveys conducted by the Sri Lanka Barometer in 2022 espouse that the current socio-political and economic crisis has highlighted the importance of addressing past injustices suffered by ethnic minorities for 59.1% of Sri Lankans.[112] This is particularly important for future peacebuilding endeavours in Sri Lanka. One such endeavour is a resurgence of interest from the U.S Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour which announced a funding opportunity for a victim-centric Transitional Justice project in Sri Lanka in March 2023.[113] The grant has yet to be tendered, however, with

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[110] Rieger, 2022.; Hoskins, 2022.
[111] Schoch, 2023.
[112] Sri Lanka Barometer, 2023, p.1.
[113] Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2023.

a budget of USD 1.4 million the project is set to have a comprehensive scope and is likely to be well received. Additionally, since the collapse of the government and the resignation of Gotabaya Rajapaksa in July 2022, his predecessor and previous prime minister, Wickremesinghe has become Sri Lanka's acting president. Under his authority a Sri Lankan delegation including the Minister of Foreign Affairs was sent to South Africa in March 2023 to study their national reconciliation program for long-term peace.[114]

Considering these contemporary developments and the small scope of analysis which this thesis offers, there is ample room to expand this field of research. Afterall, there are numerous other international civil society initiatives conducted in Sri Lanka since the end of the war which remain to be explored in this manner. With Sri Lanka's impending societal transformation on the horizon, the potential for finally dealing with a painful past on a national scale is becoming more likely. Can this new revolutionary shift in Sri Lanka's societal consciousness reignite the notion of "unity in diversity" which the state abandoned after the war?[115]

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[114] Ministry of Justice, Prison Affairs and Constitutional Reforms, 2023.
[115] Saravanamuttu, 2022, p. 55.x

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