

**GOOD INTENTIONS AND FLAWED OUTCOMES:
THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL ACTORS ON
SRI LANKA'S TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESS**

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ABSTRACT

The protracted civil war in Sri Lanka had the effect of intensifying the dividing lines in the country's multi-ethnic society. A decade since the cessation of the brutal civil war, tensions still remain between ethnic groups, with transitional justice and reconciliation processes initiated thus far being unsuccessful in facilitating sustainable peace outcomes. This research examines how pressure from international actors for the adoption of transitional justice mechanisms and the establishment of accountability for war crimes affected the timing and sequencing of transitional justice and reconciliation mechanisms in Sri Lanka, which have largely been reactionary measures to deflect such pressure. Through an analysis of the transitional justice mechanisms adopted in Sri Lanka, reports and resolutions of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) concerning transitional justice in Sri Lanka and the stance of other international and transnational actors, this research finds that transitional justice mechanisms have been heavily inclined towards a retributive justice approach which seeks to address the symptoms of conflict, rather than its underlying causes. Furthermore, being a top-down process, it has been manipulated by international and local actors to suit their own agendas, largely ignoring the needs of the victims of the conflict. These findings indicate that effective and sustainable measures of transitional justice require a different approach - one that is locally owned and participatory, taking into consideration the context-specific needs of the victims, in order to transform the relationships between ethnic groups from hostility to one of interdependence.

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