

TEN YEARS ON: ON END OF SRI LANKA CIVIL WAR

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Is one decade of peace enough to undo the [devastating effects of a civil war that lasted nearly three decades](#)? As Sri Lanka completes 10 years since the brutal and decisive war against Tamil militants came to an end, it must be acknowledged that the country has not achieved much tangible progress towards ethnic reconciliation, accountability for war-time excesses and constitutional reform that includes a political solution. The fruits of peace are limited to the revival of economic activity, but the pervasive grievances of the Tamil minority remain. Some progress has been made in resettlement and rehabilitation, but complaints abound. Many say their land continues to be held by the military, which also controls huge swathes of state-owned land. Preliminary steps were taken towards forging a new Constitution, but the process seems to be at a standstill. There is no sense of closure for families affected by the disappearance of thousands over the years. The creation of an 'Office on Missing Persons' has not inspired enough confidence. There is no mechanism to secure justice for those massacred in the closing stages of the war. What continues is the fractious politics of leaders of the national parties. Jockeying for power has overshadowed the promise of good governance, economic growth and a push towards a constitutional settlement.

The War on Terror is in peril

Half the period since the end of the war was marked by triumphalism and also warding off international pressure for an inquiry into possible war crimes. The year 2015 brought to power a new regime, a fresh promise of democratic governance, and the infusion of a spirit of political and constitutional reform. Any reckoning at the end of 10 years would possibly have been marked by a tabulation of peace-time gains and failures. However, a month ago everything changed. [The Easter Sunday bombings](#) have taken the country back to the time when terrorism was the dominant theme. This time, there is no real 'underlying cause' to address; no group or organisation to talk to; and no tangible political grievances to redress. The serial blasts, executed by fanatical elements apparently inspired by the Islamic State, may be a flashpoint for a fresh round of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tension. Already there was some indication last week when Sinhala mobs attacked predominantly Muslim villages in waves, destroying property and threatening the people. Anti-terrorism laws and emergency regulations are back in full measure. The biggest adverse fallout is that a new dimension has been given to inter-ethnic suspicions that may deepen distrust among communities. As prospects of accountability for past crimes and constitutional reform recede, some sections, including the incumbent regime, may believe economic development may be enough to propel the country forward. But when tensions persist among communities, nothing can make up for the absence of reconciliation and trust among all sections. Never has Sri Lanka needed a shared sense of nationhood among all its peoples more than it does now.

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With Masood Azhar listed as a terrorist, India must work to ensure the mandated sanctions

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