

# Dynamics of Sinhala Buddhist Ethno- Nationalism in Post- War Sri Lanka

Ayesha Zuhair  
Centre for Policy Alternatives | April 2016

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Any errors are entirely my own.

Ayesha Zuhair  
28 March 2016

## ACRONYMS

ACBC	All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress
ACMC	All Ceylon Makkal Congress [All Ceylon People's Congress]
CPA	Centre for Policy Alternatives
BBS	Bodu Bala Sena [Buddhist Power Force]
BJP	Bodu Jana Peramuna [Buddhist People's Front]
JBS	Jathika Bala Sena [National Power Force]
JHU	Jathika Hela Urumaya [National Sinhala Heritage]
JNP	Jathika Nidahas Peramuna [National Freedom Front]
JVP	Janatha Vimutkthi Peramuna [People's Liberation Front]
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
NCEASL	National Christian Evangelical Alliance
NMAT	National Movement Against Terrorism
NMJS	National Movement for a Just Society
NSC	National Shooru Council
ONUR	Office for National Unity and Reconciliation
PHU	Pivithuru Hela Urumaya [Pure Heritage Party]
SFM	Secretariat for Muslims
SI	Social Indicator
SJB	Sinhale Jathika Balamuluwa [Sinhale National Stronghold / Rally]
SLMC	Sri Lankan Muslim Congress
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
SR	Sinhala Ravaya [Sinhala Roar / Sound]
SU	SihalaUrumaya [Sinhala Heritage]
UNFGG	United National Front for Good Governance
UNP	United National Party
UPFA	United People's Freedom Alliance

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	5
<b>Methodology and Organisation</b>	7
<b>Political Buddhism and the Sinhala Buddhist Consciousness</b>	7
Historical Origins	7
Emphasis on Pacifism	8
Contemporary Buddhism	8
Buddhism and Violence	10
The Influence of the <i>Mahavamsa</i>	11
The Sinhala-Buddhist Consciousness	13
<b>Defining Sinhala-Buddhist Ethno-Nationalism</b>	14
<b>Public Perceptions</b>	16
The Role of Buddhism in Politics	16
Religious Expression by Buddhist Political Leaders	17
Opinion on Reconciliation-related Issues	17
Views on Buddhism's Constitutional Status	19
<b>Emerging Dynamics</b>	20
Resurgence of Sinhala-Buddhist Ethno-Nationalism	20
Emergence of the BBS	21
A Silent Revolution	24
Nationalist Appeal Tested	25
'Sinha Le' campaign	27
<b>Conclusion</b>	29
<b>Annexures</b>	
List of Interviewees	31
Relevant Graphs from the Democracy Surveys	32
Infographic on Religious Violence in Post-War Sri Lanka	33
Estimating the Sinhala Vote	34

## INTRODUCTION

Almost seven years have lapsed since the end of the war, yet Sri Lanka continues to remain a deeply divided society. Empirical evidence from the four waves of the 'Democracy in post-war Sri Lanka' public opinion survey conducted by Social Indicator (SI), the survey research arm of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), corroborates this ground reality: Sri Lankans are polarised along ethnic lines on key questions related to governance,<sup>1</sup> and the task of promoting reconciliation between the island's diverse communities has been identified by the current administration as a key priority.<sup>2</sup> A special Presidential Task Force on Reconciliation, which subsequently metamorphosed into the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) was thus appointed in March 2015,<sup>3</sup> with a specific mandate "to lead, facilitate, support and coordinate matters related to national unity and reconciliation in Sri Lanka".<sup>4</sup>

Divisive nationalist posturing from the country's main ethnic communities has presented the singular most formidable challenge to reconciliation, social cohesion, and the vision of creating a united Sri Lanka. This report examines the phenomenon of ethno-nationalism, broadly defined as "the extreme political expression of ethnicity",<sup>5</sup> among the island's largest ethno-religious group – the Sinhala Buddhist community, which accounts for 70.2% of the population.<sup>6</sup> The Buddhist belief system is regarded as anti-doctrinaire,<sup>7</sup> and Buddhism is widely accepted as a pacifistic and tolerant religion. Yet political Buddhism has been linked to ethnic violence in both Sri Lanka's pre and post-independence history. The end of the war in May 2009 saw the resurgence of Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism as a prominent force, the most patent instance of its link to violence being manifested in the June 2014 anti-Muslim riots in the country's south-western coastal belt.

This report focuses on the dynamics of Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism in the post-war context. Contrary to some interpretations that ethnicity has lost its power as a tool for political mobilisation, this report contends that Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism remains a highly

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<sup>1</sup>For example, the question "Has the Government done enough to address the root causes of the ethnic conflict?" has shown sharp division between the Sinhala and Tamil communities. A majority of Sinhalese felt that the Government has done a lot (41.1% in 2011, 35% in 2014), while the majority of Tamils said that the Government has done nothing (32.3% in 2011, 39.9% in 2014).

<sup>2</sup> In his inaugural address to the United Nations at the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in New York on 30 September 2015, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena stated that "reconciliation receives priority attention in my country".

<sup>3</sup> "Presidential Task Force on Reconciliation Established," *DailyFT*, 05 March 2015, Available Online: <http://www.ft.lk/2015/03/05/presidential-task-force-on-reconciliation-established>

<sup>4</sup> *Office for National Unity and Reconciliation* website, <http://onur.gov.lk/about-onur/>. ONUR is headed by former Sri Lankan President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. It was formally established in April 2015.

<sup>5</sup> Levin, Michael D. (1993), "Introduction" in Levin, Michael D. (ed.) *Ethnicity and Aboriginality: Case Studies in Ethno-nationalism*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

<sup>6</sup> Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka, *Census of Population and Housing* (2012), "A3: Population by religion according to districts, 2012. Available Online: <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/Pages/Activities/Reports/cph2011Pub/pop43.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Russell, Jane (1982) "Introduction" in *Communal Politics under the Donoughmore Constitution – 1931 – 47* (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Tisara Prakasakayo). Russell also goes on to say the major reason for the continuing commitment to democratic norms has been the tolerant nature of the Theravada Buddhist rubric.

potent force. Nationalistic fervour appeared to be on a downward trajectory following the January 2015 presidential election in which Maithripala Sirisena won campaigning on an anti-corruption platform which pulled together a number of divergent political forces. However, the growing disenchantment in the Sinhala-Buddhist community on many fronts, their burgeoning economic woes in particular, at least in part has made it easier for nationalistic political posturing to recapture its lost appeal.

The presidential election of 08 January 2015 and the parliamentary elections of 17 August 2015 saw concessive losses for former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, under whose leadership the military victory against the LTTE was achieved, and whose ethno-nationalistic invocations during both election campaigns seemingly failed to adequately mobilise the Sinhala masses. On the other hand, the promise of '*Yahapalanaya*' (Good Governance), the slogan upon which Sirisena was elected, augured well as cross-cutting theme which greatly resonated with all the communities united in their dejection of the Rajapaksa regime's rampant corruption, nepotism and other excesses. Thus, there was a perceptible shift from ethnic nationalism to civic nationalism coalescing around a set of normative values.<sup>8</sup>

Sirisena's electoral victory represented a positive and historic mandate to re-establish democratic norms in Sri Lanka, a republic that had clearly taken an authoritarian turn under the previous administration. His victory, however, cannot be construed as a rejection of ethno-nationalism. Rather, Rajapaksa's defeat is better explained by the widespread disenchantment with his increasingly totalitarian style of governance as well as the practical economic considerations of the Sinhala masses. The Sinhalese, like the other communities, were not able to fully enjoy the 'peace dividend' due to the colossal corruption and nepotism prevalent then, with the Rajapaksa regime's superfluous infrastructural development drive having little impact on the daily lives of ordinary citizens.

Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of the Sinhala-Buddhist population continues to strongly relate to the ethno-nationalism espoused by Sinhala nationalist political leaders as borne out by the large number of preferential votes earned by certain recognised ethno-nationalists in the general elections of August 2015, and the inability of both major political parties to secure an overall majority in Parliament necessitating the formation of a national government. The patent popularity of the recent 'Sinha-Le' campaign, which appears to be politically-backed and well-organised, also provides convincing evidence of the power of ethno-nationalism as a tool to mobilise insecure masses.

This report also argues that while the vast majority of Sinhala Buddhists embrace rationalistic values and are amenable to sharing power with the minorities,<sup>9</sup> nationalistic forces within the community continue to subsume moderate voices. As a direct result of their dominance and the centre's apprehensions of triggering an extremist backlash, arriving at a sustainable political solution to the country's ethnic question will remain a contentious issue. Therefore, although the

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<sup>8</sup>Welikala, Asanga, Interview with the author for CPA, 04 October 2015.

<sup>9</sup> See Tisaranee Gunasekera's analysis, "The Portrait of a People", *Colombo Telegraph*, 17 November 2013, Available Online: <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/the-portrait-of-a-people/>

government has accorded priority to ‘reconciliation’ as a policy objective, a meaningful reconciliation process which – most critically – includes the formulation of an inclusive political system whereby minorities will have an equitable stake in governance will be extremely challenging in view of this reality.

The report further posits that policy interventions should not seek to sever or diminish group identities that are profoundly felt – indeed any attempt to do so would be purely illiberal and counter-productive – but should aim to manage existing ethno-nationalistic sentiments and channel them in a positive direction in order to foster greater social cohesion and national unity.

## **METHODOLOGY AND ORGANISATION**

This report has benefitted from the vast and rich scholarly literature on nationalism in general, and Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism in particular. Both face-to-face and email interviews with experts<sup>10</sup> on the subject, and data from the ‘Democracy in Post-War Sri Lanka’ public opinion poll carried out by the SI unit of the CPA form the two other components upon which this report is based. The report begins with an overview of political Buddhism and the development of the Sinhala-Buddhist consciousness. It then defines ‘Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism’ for greater conceptual clarity. The report proceeds thereafter to examine contemporary public perceptions based on responses to the questions on the role of Buddhism in Sri Lankan politics and the level of religious expression by Buddhist political leaders in the November 2013 and August 2014 democracy surveys.

The report finally focuses on the emerging dynamics of Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism, with the discussion being elucidated by the results of the key elections that have been held in post-war Sri Lanka.

## **POLITICAL BUDDHISM AND THE SINHALA-BUDDHIST CONSCIOUSNESS**

### **Historical Origins**

Buddhism was formally introduced to Sri Lanka around 2,300 years ago by Arahat Mahinda, son of Emperor Asoka of India during the reign of King Devanampiya Tissa. It was established in India by Siddhartha Gautama three centuries prior to Arahat Mahinda’s arrival in Sri Lanka and has been the dominant religion practiced in Sri Lanka since its introduction. The Asokan missionary approach featured preaching, relaying the principles of the Buddha directly to the common people. King Devanampiya Tissa actively promoted the spread of Buddhism, and the link between the state and Buddhism developed from this point. Sri Lankan Buddhists subscribe to Theravada

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<sup>10</sup> Please refer Annexure 1 ‘List of Interviewees’ for details.



Buddhism ('Doctrine of the Elders')<sup>11</sup> which draws from the *Tripitaka*, or Pali canon, which Buddhist scholars generally agree contains the earliest surviving record of the Buddha's teachings.<sup>12</sup> As Bellanwila Wimalaratana Anunayake Thera puts it, "Sri Lanka received the original teachings of Lord Buddha during Emperor Asoka's time in the third century B.C. and the concern of the monks and the elderly from then to date has been to preserve the teachings of the Buddha."<sup>13</sup>

### **Emphasis on Pacifism**

Globally, Buddhism is widely accepted as a non-violent religion. This comparative lack of violence is partly explained by the fact that Buddhists have not sought to proselytise vigorously and Buddhism does not emphasise a monopoly on truth unlike its monotheistic counterparts.<sup>14</sup> The Buddha was an advocate of the "middle path" and much in Buddhism favours the cause of peace-making. The Buddha rejected fanaticism and self-indulgence, leading instead a balanced, sober and gentle life despite having been born into royalty. His teachings emphasise the importance of non-attachment and non-aggression.<sup>15</sup> In the *Dhammapada*, the most widely read Buddhist scripture, the Buddha is quoted to have said, "Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is an eternal law." He is also quoted in the *Dhammapada* to have stated that "the one who has conquered himself is a far greater hero than he who has defeated a thousand times a thousand men."

### **Contemporary Buddhism**

The Buddhism that is practiced in Sri Lanka today is not the same doctrine that is said to have been preached by Gautama Buddha, but one that has undergone many waves of transformation.<sup>16</sup> The scholarly literature on Sinhala Buddhism shows that there is no single and unified Buddhism. Like most other religions and philosophies, Buddhism too is plural, and there are many 'Buddhisms' existing at a variety of levels – for example, textual, popular, political and ideological.<sup>17</sup> The *Sangha* (the Order of Buddhist monks) is also not monolithic structure with one

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<sup>11</sup>The Buddhist world can be ideologically divided into three groups: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana.

<sup>12</sup>Access to Insight (Legacy Edition), *What is Theravada Buddhism?* 30 November 2013, Available Online: <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/theravada.html>

<sup>13</sup>Ven. Prof. Bellanwila Wimalaratana Anunayake Thera, Interview with the author for CPA, 25 September 2015.

<sup>14</sup>DeVotta, Neil (2007) *Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalist Ideology: Implications for Politics and Conflict Resolution in Sri Lanka* (Washington: East-West Center), p.1.

<sup>15</sup>Cox, Harvey (1994) "World Religions and Conflict Resolution" in Johnston, Douglas and Sampson, Cynthia (eds.) (1994) *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 272.

<sup>16</sup>Uyangoda, Jayadeva (2007) "Paradoxes of Buddhism" in Uyangoda, Jayadeva (ed.) (2007) *Religion in Context: Buddhism and Socio-Political Change in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association), p. 3.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

well-defined ideology.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, there are monks who advocate militant Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, and there are those who distance themselves from this and promote co-existence.

It is important to note that what is now taken for granted as enduring Buddhist traditions were in fact invented in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of the Sinhala-Buddhist 'reawakening'.<sup>19</sup> In early Buddhism, monks renounced materialism and devoted their time to the quest for liberation from the cycle of birth and death, living on the householder's generosity. Monks today, however, conceive a different role for themselves and consider social service ('*samajasevaya*') which includes political activity as a key component.

The monk's role as a social activist, now widely believed by contemporary elite monks and the Sinhala Buddhist middle class to go back to two millennia, is in fact traceable to the written and spoken words of Anagarika Dharmapala<sup>20</sup> who provided an ideological framework for Sinhala Buddhist revivalism in the early decades of the twentieth century. The doctrinal cover and historical rationalisation for monks engaging in electoral politics was provided by the scholar monk Walpola Rahula.<sup>21</sup> In his influential book published in 1946 entitled *Bhiksuvage Urumaya* (The Heritage of the Bhikku), and described as "the masterpiece charter for monastic activism"<sup>22</sup>, Rahula asserted that monks could engage in politics given their mandate to perform social service, and had done so since the time of the Buddha.

The involvement of Buddhist monks in politics following independence in 1948, in effect, transformed Buddhism into a highly politicised religion. The phenomenon of 'political Buddhism' with its spread of a nationalist ideology that in fact had little to do with canonical Buddhist ethics thus emerged. Since independence, Buddhist interest lobbies have been active in politics and politicians seek the support of organised Buddhist groups as well as the clergy at elections and their presence at ceremonies. Similarly, Buddhist institutions too depend on the state, thus making the relationship a deeply symbiotic one.<sup>23</sup> This relationship between the state and Buddhism was given special constitutional status with Buddhism being accorded the "foremost place" in Section 6 of the 1972 Constitution, and its contemporary iteration, Article 9 of the 1978 Constitution. According to Kalana Senaratne, this was "unnecessary, for Buddhism is not a philosophy that demands special status or a foremost place. Its problematic dimension lies in the

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<sup>18</sup>Seneviratne, H. L. (2007) "Buddhist Monks and Ethnic Politics", in Uyangoda, Jayadeva (ed.) (2007) *Religion in Context: Buddhism and Socio-Political Change in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association), p. 88.

<sup>19</sup>Uyangoda, Jayadeva (ed.) (2007) *Religion in Context: Buddhism and Socio-Political Change in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association), "Introduction", p. ix.

<sup>20</sup>Seneviratne, H.L. (1999) *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism In Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

<sup>21</sup> Kemper, Steven (1999) *Book Review: The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism In Sri Lanka*, Available Online: <http://www.globalbuddhism.org/2/kempe011.html>

<sup>22</sup>Seneviratne, H. L. (2007) "Buddhist Monks and Ethnic Politics", in Uyangoda, Jayadeva (ed.) (2007) *Religion in Context: Buddhism and Socio-Political Change in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association), p. 88.

<sup>23</sup>Uyangoda, Jayadeva (2007) "Paradoxes of Buddhism" in Uyangoda, Jayadeva (ed.) (2007) *Religion in Context: Buddhism and Socio-Political Change in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association), pp. 1-2.

fact that according to such a status carries the impression especially in a multi-religious society that there is a foremost religious group in this country that deserves greater protection than the rest.”<sup>24</sup>

## **Buddhism and Violence**

Buddhist identity transformed greatly under the influence of Protestant Christianity and the evangelical movement that accompanied British colonisation. Buddhism too began to similarly assert religious boundaries and purity,<sup>25</sup> a phenomenon that referred to as ‘Protestant Buddhism’.<sup>26</sup> It began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of Anagarika Dharmapala in protest against Christian cultural encroachment, and called for a return to authentic Buddhism. The foundation for the success of Dharmapala’s project was the marginalised status of Buddhism and the discrimination Sinhala Buddhists experienced under colonial rule. Hence the call to restore Buddhism to “its rightful place” by Dharmapala, along with other prominent nationalist voices such as L. H. Mettananda and G. P. Malalasekera.

In fact, it was G. P. Malalasekera who proposed the establishment of a commission to inquire into injustices suffered by Buddhists under colonial rule to the then Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake. The Prime Minister however refused to do so on the premise that it would be a violation of the Soulbury Constitution. Subsequently, the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress (ACBC) headed by Malalasekera appointed their own Commission of Inquiry on 02 April 1954 which was popularly referred to as the ‘Buddhist Commission’.

Their report outlined the grievances of Buddhists and recommended measures to elevate the position of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. It argued that Buddhism had been neglected during colonial rule and that little had been done by post-independence governments to rectify the damage.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Senaratne, Kalana, Interview with the author for CPA, 20 September 2015.

<sup>25</sup>Gombrich, R. F.(1988) *Theravada Buddhism: A social history from ancient Benares to modern Colombo*, (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul), cited by De Silva, Premakumara “Anthropology of ‘Sinhala Buddhism’”, *Contemporary Buddhism*, Vol. 7, No. 2, November 2006, (Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group), p. 167.

<sup>26</sup>Obeyesekere, Gananath (1970) “Religious symbolism and political change in Ceylon”, *Modern Ceylon Studies*, Vol. 1 No. 1: pp. 43-63.

<sup>27</sup> The committee comprised Ven. Abanwelle Siddhartha, Ven. Haliyale Sumanatissa, Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya, Ven. Polonnaruwe Vimaladhamma, Ven. Madihe Pannaseeha, Ven. Henpitagedera Gnanaseeha, Prof. G.P. Malalasekera, L.H. Mettananda, P.de S. Kularatne, Dr.Tennekoon Wimalananda and D.C. Wijewardena. The report was presented to the *Maha Sangha* and the general public at a meeting held at Ananda College on 04 February 1956. Perera, Janaka, “Pioneer of Buddhist revivalism: L. H. Mettananda was the guiding spirit behind the Buddhist Commission Report that accelerated the United National Party’s ignominious defeat in the 1956 Parliamentary Elections”, *Daily News*, 20 March 2009, Available Online:<http://archives.dailynews.lk/2009/03/20/fea01.asp>

In *Buddhism Betrayed*, Stanley J. Tambiah draws attention to the paradox between Buddhism's non-violent philosophy and the high degree of political violence in Sri Lanka.<sup>28</sup> The book's main thesis is that the modern, nationalist orientation of Buddhism represents a betrayal of its classical form, caused in large part by the active engagement of Buddhist monks in politics following independence. Tambiah argues that the political activities of the *bhikkus* did not advance democracy and universalism but promoted a narrow and exclusive ethno-religious, nationalist ideology. Therefore, even if the phenomenon of political Buddhism existed in some form prior to arrival of the colonial powers, it gained traction as an ideology emphasising Buddhist supremacy and minority subordination in the post-independence period with entry of monks into electoral politics.

### **The Influence of the *Mahavamsa***

The roots of Buddhist nationalism can be traced to the Pali Chronicles, namely *Dipavamsa* (Chronicle of the Island), *Mahavamsa* (Great Chronicle) and *Culavamsa* (Lesser Chronicle), texts which are unique to Sinhala-Buddhism. The most influential among these historical texts is the *Mahavamsa*, written around the sixth century C.E. by a monk named Mahanama whose aim was to glorify Buddhism and the rule of Buddhist kings in Anuradhpura. The *Mahavamsa* claims that the 'Sinhala' (lion people), an Aryan clan which spoke a Sanskrit-based language, were the first to arrive in the island from North India. It states that Prince Vijaya ('the valiant'), the primogenitor of the Sinhala race, arrived in the island in a region called Thambapanni, on the day the Buddha died thus suggesting that Sri Lanka is a sacred land destined to be a repository for Buddhism.<sup>29</sup>

The notions of *Sinhadipa* (island of the Sinhalese) and *Dhammadipa* (island ennobled to preserve and propagate Buddhism), arise therefrom.<sup>30</sup> Historians, however, do not rely on the *Mahavamsa* as an accurate source of history because it contains mythology such as Prince Vijaya's father being born from the union between a lion and a princess. According to Neil DeVotta, without appreciating the extent to which Sri Lankan Buddhists have internalised the *Mahavamsa* as indisputable history, it is impossible to comprehend the passion with which Sinhala Buddhists relate to Sri Lanka and the impetus for political Buddhism on the island.<sup>31</sup> Although Theravada Buddhism is based on the *Tripitaka*, it a religious text that has nothing to offer Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists who justify their claims and ideology using the *Mahavamsa*.<sup>32</sup> Rohan

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<sup>28</sup> The book attracted much controversy and was banned in Sri Lanka due to the influence of Buddhist nationalists who had probably not even read the book but were offended by the militant depiction of prominent Buddhist monk, Ven. Maduluwawe Sobitha Thera in its cover.

<sup>29</sup> Geiger, Wilhelm (1912) *The Mahavamsa*, translated into English (London: Oxford University Press), Chapter 6, paragraph 47, p. 54. Available Online: <http://what-buddha-said.net/library/pdfs/mahavamsa.geiger.pdf>

Geiger notes in the introduction that the *Dipavamsa*, Chapter 9, Paragraphs 21-22 states, in a somewhat more general way that Vijaya landed at the time of the Buddha's death.

<sup>30</sup> DeVotta, Neil (2007) *Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalist Ideology: Implications for Politics and Conflict Resolution in Sri Lanka* (Washington: East-West Center), p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Edrisinha concurs, “Most Buddhists in Sri Lanka have been brought up with that kind of mythology which sometimes overrides the doctrine. It is a kind of mind-set that is very problematic.”<sup>33</sup>

The *Mahavamsa's* narration of the battle between King Dutugemunu (also known as Dutthagamani) and King Elara (or Ellalan) in the second century B.C.E. is of special significance. Elara is described as a Tamil Chola King from South India who ruled the Anuradhapura Kingdom after capturing power in 205 B.C.E., and was defeated by Dutugemunu, son of King Kavantissa of the Ruhunu Kingdom, following which the island was united into a single kingdom. When Dutugemunu expressed remorse for all the people who had been killed, he was informed by some monks that he should not worry as non-Buddhists were “not more to be esteemed than beasts”:

*“And thereon the king said again to them: 'How shall there be any comfort for me, O venerable sirs, since by me was caused the slaughter of a great host numbering millions? From this deed arises no hindrance in thy way to heaven. Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the (three) refuges, the other had taken on himself the five precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil life were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts. But as for thee, thou wilt bring glory to the doctrine of the Buddha in manifold ways; therefore cast away care from thy heart, O ruler of men! Thus exhorted by them the great king took comfort.”*<sup>34</sup>

This glorification of violence has been used by Buddhist nationalists as a source of encouragement for conflict with non-Buddhists. As Tisarane Gunasekera notes, “with a single story, the unscrupulously brilliant author of *Mahavamsa* created a nexus between war, race and religion and consecrated the task of protecting the faith as the *raison d'être* of kingship.”<sup>35</sup> She contends that Mahanama's ancient betrayal of Buddhism played a seminal role in creating the modern ethnic problem and in igniting the ongoing violence against religious minorities.<sup>36</sup> In Walpola Rahula's view, Dutugemunu waged war to re-establish Buddhism and to liberate the country from foreign influence. Rahula asserts that the monks then did not stay in their cells with one even disrobing and joining the army, and a large number of others accompanying the army into battle, their presence being an inspiration for the warriors. As Rahula puts it: “From this time the patriotism and the religion of the Sinhalese become inseparably linked... and assumed such overpowering proportions that both *bhikkhus* and laymen considered that even killing people in order to liberate the religion and the country was not a heinous crime.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Edrisinha, Rohan, interview with the author for CPA, 12 October 2015.

<sup>34</sup> Geiger, Wilhelm (1912) *The Mahavamsa*, translated into English (London, Oxford University Press), Chapter 6, paragraph 47, p. 54. Available Online: <http://what-buddha-said.net/library/pdfs/mahavamsa.geiger.pdf>

<sup>35</sup>Gunasekera, Tisarane, “Betraying Buddhism and Undermining Sri Lanka”, *Colombo Telegraph*, 26 January 2014, Available Online: <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/betraying-buddhism-and-undermining-sri-lanka/>

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>Rahula, Walpola (2007) [1946] *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu: The Buddhist Tradition of Service*, (New York: Grove / Atlantic), pp. 20-21.

## The Sinhala-Buddhist Consciousness

In 1956, the Sinhala national consciousness emerged in full with the election of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike as Prime Minister. Bandaranaike, though belonging to the Colombo elite, was able to establish a link with the Sinhala rural masses by appealing to their religion and ethnicity. His *Pancha Maha Bala Vegaya* (five great forces) brought together a coalition of Sinhala political society – namely, the *Sangha* (clergy), *Veda* (physicians), *Guru* (teachers), *Govi* (farmers) and *Kamkaru* (workers), that campaigned for the introduction of Sinhala as the country's sole official language.<sup>38</sup> Among very first acts of the new government was to implement its key election pledge and enact the 'Sinhala Only Act', which was designed to end the influence of the English language, and to bolster the Sinhala majority who were then direly under-represented in the state system. Subsequent to the political transformations of 1956, another notable development was the emergence of the '*Jathika Chinthanaya*' (national consciousness) movement. It was both a reaction to the introduction of free market economic policies of 1977 and the continued intellectual dominance of the English-speaking, urban elite.<sup>39</sup>

Its main proponents Gunadasa Amarasekera and Nalin De Silva, posit that the different communities in Sri Lanka have lived under the *Jathika Chinthanaya* of the Sinhala-Buddhist majority for over 2,000 years, and that there was a single, overarching Sinhala-Buddhist culture in which all people have historically co-existed and should therefore continue into the future.<sup>40</sup> Similar to the '*Hindutva*' the *Jathika Chinthanaya* is a school of thought which claims to respect minorities but only so far as those minority cultures accept the norms of the dominant culture as their own.<sup>41</sup> The *Jathika Chinthanaya* is particularly important for the reason that it is the philosophical foundation upon which extreme nationalist groups such the Sihala Urumaya (SU, present day JathikaHelaUrumaya, JHU) and the National Movement against Terrorism (NMAT) were later formed.

The common thread underpinning the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist ideology is the imagination of a glorious past in which the Sinhala nation was one cohesive polity. It was a society that was simple and self-sufficient, and practiced pure Theravada Buddhism. This ideology holds that this pristine society in which the Sinhala Buddhist culture reigned supreme and indeed flourished was destroyed by successive foreign invasions and influences (including Hindu, Christian and

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<sup>38</sup> J. R. Jayawardene from the United National Party (UNP) who later became Prime Minister and President of Sri Lanka was the first leader who proposed Sinhala as the official language in the State Council in 1943. Gonsalkorale, Raj (2011), "S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike remembered", *Asian Tribune*, 26 September 2011, Available Online: <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2011/09/26/s-w-r-d-bandaranaike-remembered>

<sup>39</sup> Chandraprema, C.A. (1991) *Sri Lanka, The Years of Terror – The JVP Insurrection, 1987-1989* (Lake House, Colombo).

<sup>40</sup> Senaratne, Kalana (2015) "Jathika Chinthanaya and the Executive Presidency", *Reforming Sri Lankan Presidentialism: Provenance, Problems and Prospects*, (Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives), p. 208.

<sup>41</sup> Goonewardena, Kanishka (2007) "Sinhala Buddhist Ethno-Nationalism – Masquerading as Sri Lankan 'Civic Nationalism', 'National Ideology' in a Buddhist Country", *Himal*, October – November 2007.

Islamic) over the centuries, relegating both Buddhism and the vibrant Sinhala culture into subservience. Thus the emphasis on restoring Buddhism to its rightful place and the Sinhala people to their rightful position as rulers of the land in the Sinhala-Buddhist ideological framework.

## DEFINING SINHALA-BUDDHIST ETHNO-NATIONALISM

The term 'nation' in the social sciences refers to a group that has a collective identity based on ethnicity, religion, tribe, culture, language and/or some other criterion. As Walker Conner notes, a nation must be "self-defined"<sup>42</sup> and in the words of Ernest Renan, must "will themselves to persist as communities".<sup>43</sup> Thus the cornerstone of group identity is found in how a group defines itself in relation to others. Ethnicity is a crucial psychological element in the term 'nation' and therefore, "the essence of a nation is intangible. This essence is a psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in a most vital way."<sup>44</sup> It is not chorological or factual history that matters in relation to 'nation' but sentient or felt history, and all that is required for the existence of a nation is the intuitive conviction of a group's distinct origin and evolution.<sup>45</sup> A nation, in the words of Benedict Anderson, is an 'imagined community' because it is a community that is socially constructed by members who maintain deep attachment to one another even in the absence of face-to-face contact.<sup>46</sup>

Walker Conner makes an important distinction between state and nation, between patriotism and nationalism which leads him to coin the term 'ethno-nationalism'. For Conner, civic nationalism is tantamount to patriotism which produces a loyalty to the state and can be rationally explained, unlike ethno-nationalism which can be studied by analysing its appeals and stimuli but cannot be rationally explained.<sup>47</sup> Both conceptions of nationalism usually make strong territorial claims, but group identity in the ethnic conception is primarily defined by reference to ethnic identity whereas the civic conception of nationalism is more inclusive and makes reference to a set of normative values. In other words, civic nationalism is where loyalty to the group is defined by common subscription to ideals rather than cultural markers, and where anyone within the territory is included.<sup>48</sup> In line with Anderson's position that the term ethno-nationalism is

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<sup>42</sup> Conner, Walker (1994) "A Nation is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a..." in *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 92.

<sup>43</sup> Renan, Ernest (1945) 'Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation' republished in *Ernest Renan et l'Allemagne*, Textes recueillis et commentés par Emile Bure, NY cited in Gellner, Ernest (1983) *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), p. 53.

<sup>44</sup> Conner, Walker (1994) "A Nation is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a..." in *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 92.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>46</sup> Anderson, Benedict (1983 / 1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso), pp. 6-7.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 8.

<sup>48</sup> Welikala, Asanga, Interview with the author for CPA, 04 October 2015.

used because 'nationalism' is not always used in its pristine sense and is frequently confused with patriotism, this report uses the term nationalism and ethno-nationalism as synonyms. As such, all references to nationalism is specifically to ethno-nationalism and not to any other conception of nationalism.

The Sinhalese, comprising predominantly of Buddhists,<sup>49</sup> constitute the largest ethnic group in Sri Lanka, and can be distinguished by their Sinhala language, a language spoken only in Sri Lanka. In this context, it is interesting to note that according to the CPA SI Democracy Survey of November 2013, 85.2% of Sinhalese believe that it is very important to be able to speak the Sinhala language in order to be considered a true Sri Lankan.<sup>50</sup> It is also remarkable that as many as 70% of Sri Lankans thought that Sinhala is the sole official language while a mere 15% knew that the Constitution accords both Sinhala and Tamil the status of official languages. The belief that Sinhala is the only official language is primarily held by the Sinhalese community with 82.2% expressing this belief, with as little as 7.8% of Sinhalese aware that the Sinhala and Tamil languages enjoy parity of status.<sup>51</sup>

In this backdrop, Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism can be described as a form of nationalism that is ethno-religious in character and draws on the Sinhala language as well as Buddhism.<sup>52</sup> It is a nationalism which considers the territory of Sri Lanka to be belonging, predominantly, to the Sinhala-Buddhists, and its primary aim is to protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.<sup>53</sup> While there are several strands of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism,<sup>54</sup> Sinhala-Buddhist nationalists, in general, see no distinction between the Sinhala-Buddhist identity and the Sri Lankan identity. For them, other groups can exist in the country and expect to be treated with respect as long as they acknowledge the supremacy of Buddhism and the primacy of the Sinhala language and culture.

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<sup>49</sup>Although Sinhalese are predominantly Buddhist, a small percentage of the Sinhala population follow Christianity and Catholicism.

<sup>50</sup>*Survey on Democracy in Post-War Sri Lanka: Topline Report*, November 2013 (Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives), p. 48.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>52</sup>Senaratne, Kalana, Interview with the author for CPA, 20 September 2015.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Uyangoda, Jayadeva, Interview with the author for CPA, 21 September 2015.



## PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

### The Role of Buddhism in Politics

SI's November 2013 survey revealed a clear division of opinion across the four main communities on the role of Buddhism in Sri Lankan politics.<sup>55</sup> The view that Buddhism has too much of a role was shared by 35.5% of Sri Lankans while 33.9% felt that it was the right amount. From an ethnic perspective, 44.5% of Sinhalese thought that it was the right amount while a significant majority from the other minority communities – Tamil (78.5%), Up-Country Tamil (74.7%) and Muslim (70.4%) believed that Buddhism plays too significant a role in Sri Lankan politics. One in five (or 20%) of the Sinhalese held the view that Buddhism commands too considerable a role in politics.

The August 2014 survey which was conducted subsequent to the outbreak of communal violence in Aluthgama and neighbouring areas in June 2014, revealed a still higher disapproval among minority groups on the role of Buddhism in politics. The percentage increases are as follows: Tamil 0.8% (79.3%), Up-Country Tamil 16.4% (91.1%), and Muslim 13% (83.4%). Correspondingly, there was a 4.6% upsurge compared to the previous year in the Sinhala community, with 49.1% of Sinhalese opining that the role of Buddhism is the right amount.

It is worth noting that, compared to the previous year, there was a slight increase in the number of Sinhalese (3.1%) who felt that the role of Buddhism was excessive. Similarly, there was a 4.6% increase, compared to the previous year, among the Sinhala community who believed that the level of Buddhism in politics was appropriate. Those who felt that the role of Buddhism in politics was too little also went by 1.8% from 2013 to 2014.

Opinion of the Sinhala community on the role of Buddhism in politics:

	2013	2014	% Difference
<b>Right Amount</b>	44.5%	49.1%	+ 4.6%
<b>Too Much</b>	20%	23.1%	+ 3.1%
<b>Too Little</b>	14.4%	12.6%	+ 1.8%

The Aluthgama riots erupted in June 2014 during the interim period between the 2013 and 2014 surveys. The data then suggests that, the riots, if anything may have served to harden positions

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<sup>55</sup> The survey disaggregates along ethnic, not religious, lines. See Annexure 2 for relevant graphs.

within the Sinhala-Buddhist population. In the aftermath of the riots, a significant drop in support for the role of Buddhism in politics could have been expected. However, the results proved somewhat counter-intuitive. Contrary to expectations, both categories “right amount” and “too little” gained ground, in tandem with the “too much” category. While this is in no way conclusive, it does indicate that the violence may have deepened both intra and inter group antagonisms for the Sinhala-Buddhist community. It may be possible therefore to infer that ethno-religious identity has a positive relationship with ethno-religious violence. That is, episodes of violence harden identities, and thereby bolsters ethno-nationalistic sentiments.

### **Religious Expression by Buddhist Political Leaders**

On the question of religious expression by Buddhist political leaders, again the division of opinion among Sri Lankans is evident. On a national level, the 2013 survey showed that 24.3% felt there was too much expression, 22.1% thought there was too little, and 26.6% believed it was the right amount. Corresponding to the previous question on the role of Buddhism, the views of the majority community were markedly different to those of the three main minority groups. 33.5% of Sinhalese stated that the level of expression was appropriate, whereas a majority of respondents from the minority communities – Tamil (64.4%), Up-Country Tamil (53.1%), and Muslim (63.5%) felt that religious expression of Buddhist political leaders was too much. The 2014 survey did not include the question on religious expression by Buddhist leaders for comparative analysis.

### **Opinion on Reconciliation-related Issues**

The July 2011, November 2013 and October 2015 waves attempt to gauge public opinion on a political solution to the ethnic question. Respondents were asked to select the statement that was more agreeable to them with Option A stating: “The constitution should be changed based on recommendations made by an all-party committee to produce a political solution to country’s ethnic problem” and Option B stating, “There is no need for a political solution as the LTTE was completely defeated militarily”. In July 2011, 29.7% of Sinhalese held the view that the constitution should be changed to produce a political solution to the ethnic question. In November 2013, the figure was 30.8% among Sinhala respondents showing that opinion on the issue had not changed significantly since 2011. The results of the survey conducted in October 2015 shows a fairly significant shift in Sinhala public opinion with as many as 48% of Sinhalese – that is, nearly half the Sinhala population – stating that the country’s constitution should be changed to produce a political solution to the ethnic issue. The proportion of the Sinhala population holding the view that there is no need for a political solution as the LTTE was defeated has remained steady overall ranging from 15-18%.

Gauging Sinhala public opinion on a political solution to the ethnic question:

	<b>July 2011</b>	<b>November 2013</b>	<b>October 2015</b>
<b>Option A</b>	29.7%	30.8%	48%
<b>Option B</b>	17.6%	14.9%	17.8%

Respondents were also asked to select the statement most agreeable to them on devolution of power to the provinces. Option A stated, “Power needs to be devolved to the provincial councils while reducing the power of the central government” and Option B stated, “It is ok to decentralise certain powers but powers of the central government should not be reduced.”

While the percentage of Sinhalese in favour of devolution to the provinces has not increased significantly, the percentage of Sinhalese opposed to reducing powers of the central government has risen by 16.7% to 48%.

Gauging Sinhala public opinion on decentralisation / devolution of power

	<b>July 2011</b>	<b>November 2013</b>	<b>October 2015</b>
<b>Option A</b>	15.3%	Not Available	17.8%
<b>Option B</b>	31.3%	Not Available	48%

The July 2011, November 2013, August 2014 and October 2015 surveys attempt to assess public opinion on re-building conflict affected areas. Two statements were read out, and respondents were asked to choose which statement was most agreeable to them. Option A stated, “The Government should give priority to allocating resources to rebuilding the conflict affected areas, even if this means that less money is spent in the rest of the country” and Option B stated, “There are many other problems facing this country that the government should focus on; rebuilding the conflict affected areas should not be given priority over the needs of the rest of the country”.

The results reflect an overall decline in support for re-building conflict affected areas in the Sinhala community, with a marked increase in those holding the view that re-building conflict affected areas should not be given priority (18.6% in August 2014 went up to 40.4% in October 2015).

Gauging Sinhala public opinion on re-building conflict affected areas:

	<b>July 2011</b>	<b>November 2013</b>	<b>August 2014</b>	<b>October 2015</b>
<b>Option A</b>	49.6%	59.1%	44.6%	33.4%
<b>Option B</b>	16.1%	7.9%	18.6%	40.4%

The results, viewed together, paint a mixed picture. While growing numbers of Sinhalese recognise the need to address the ethnic question, almost half the Sinhala population does not want the powers of the central government to be reduced in any way. This indicates that the Sinhala community remains wary of power-sharing arrangements and is fearful that devolution might pave the way for secession.

### **Views on Buddhism’s Constitutional Status**

In February 2016, the CPA conducted an opinion poll to glean public perceptions on constitutional reform<sup>56</sup> to feed into the ongoing discussions on drafting a new constitution. As expected, the majority of Sri Lankans (54.9%) were extremely favourable towards the inclusion of the clause on Buddhism in a new constitution, while 18.2% were not at all in favour. The Sinhalese community was the most favourable with 70.4% being extremely favourable. The majority from the other communities (Tamil, 75.9%; Up Country Tamil, 56.6%; and Muslim, 62.8%) were not in favour of the inclusion. It is pertinent to note that just 6.3% of Sri Lankans agreed with the statement ‘Sri Lanka’s Constitution should have no mention of religion, except to guarantee the freedom of religion to all’.

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<sup>56</sup>*Opinion Poll on Constitutional Reform: Top Line Report*, February 2016, (Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives), p. 9. Available Online: <http://www.cpalanka.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Opinion-Poll-on-Constitutional-Reform.pdf>

## EMERGING DYNAMICS

### Resurgence of Sinhala-Buddhist Ethno-Nationalism

When the Sri Lankan armed forces defeated the LTTE on 19 May 2009, the victory was framed within the global discourse on the 'war on terror'. The then Head of State, President Mahinda Rajapaksa in his address to the Sri Lankan Parliament stated, "Ending terrorism in Sri Lanka means a victory for democracy in the world. Sri Lanka has now given a beginning to the ending of terrorism in the world..."<sup>57</sup> But far from restoring democracy and reaching out to the country's ethnic minorities,<sup>58</sup> the Rajapaksa government steered towards authoritarianism and nurtured a majoritarian mind-set. There was a palpable sense of triumphalism following the war victory, and no real acknowledgement of the root causes of the near three-decade long armed conflict. On the contrary, support for Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism was used as a deliberate political strategy to consolidate the majority vote-base, a strategy that has intermittently been employed by political leaders in Sri Lanka's post-independence history with devastating long-term consequences.

A crucial part of this strategy was to demonise the minority communities by extending impunity for verbal and physical attacks on them. This was particularly evident in 2012 and 2013 which saw a spate of attacks directed against the Muslim and Christian communities. The Secretariat for Muslims (SFM) recorded 284 incidents of threats, attempted attacks, harassment, incitements and provocations directed at Muslims in 2013, while the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress (SLMC) reported 241 anti-Muslim attacks in 2013. The National Christian Evangelical Alliance (NCEASL) recorded 103 incidents in 2013 and 69 incidents in 2014.<sup>59</sup> All this happened in the backdrop of what was seen as the 'Sinhalisation' of areas in the North and East that had little or no Sinhala-Buddhist population. In the post-war period Buddhist temples, statues and shrines for Bo trees were constructed with the direct involvement or assistance of state actors, especially the military. A CPA report notes, these constructions were seen not simply as religious symbols but also amounted to a 'ritual stamping' and demonstration of the power of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalism re-asserting its control.<sup>60</sup>

The CPA report that was produced in March 2013 acknowledged that the post-war period allowed for religious communities to rebuild places of worship that were damaged and destroyed in war-

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<sup>57</sup>Rajapaksa, Mahinda, *President's speech to Parliament on the defeat of the LTTE*, 19 May 2009, Available Online:

[http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/document/papers/president\\_speech\\_parliament\\_defeatofLTTE.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/document/papers/president_speech_parliament_defeatofLTTE.htm)

<sup>58</sup> In fact, Rajapaksa asserted, "We have removed the word minorities from our vocabulary three years ago. No longer are the Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and any others minorities. There are only two peoples in this country. One is the people that love this country. The other comprises the small groups that have no love for the land of their birth. Those who do not love the country are now a lesser group," thus projecting artificially polarised categories.

<sup>59</sup> See Annexure 3 for Infographic.

<sup>60</sup> *Attacks on Places of Religious Worship in Post-War Sri Lanka*, March 2013, (Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives).

affected areas and greater freedom of movement to access religious sites.<sup>61</sup> However, the report also pointed out that the number of incidents including mob attacks on places of worship; robberies and vandalism of religious places; the killing of clergy; protests against religious communities; and hate speech on the internet and in the media created an environment of insecurity and vulnerability.<sup>62</sup>

### **Emergence of the BBS**

In 2012, an extreme Sinhala-Buddhist organisation called the *BoduBalaSena* (Buddhist Power Force) was created. With a very short period of time since its establishment, the BBS rose to prominence, and received much attention in the media, both print and electronic, as well as social media, thus managing to capture a significant public space. One of their key objectives was to draw attention to the threats faced by the Sinhala race in the face of globalisation, and this they did by launching a virulent anti-Muslim campaign. This included allegations of a growing international Islamic presence in the country and the Muslim population's expansion posing a threat to the Sinhala community's status as the country's majority, thus engaging in flagrant fear-mongering. The BBS led by Galagodaththe GnanasaraThera and Kirama Vimalajothi Thera,<sup>63</sup> along with other less prominent organisations such as Sinhala Ravaya led by Akmeemana Dayarathana Thera, demanded government action against the rising 'extremism' in the Muslim and Christian communities. The organisation's theoretician Dilanthe Withanage opines:

*"Although Sinhalese are the majority of this country, and although Buddhism is given some recognition in the constitution, this is not happening in practice. We thought we have a duty to protect the Sinhalese and Buddhism, and the BBS was created for this purpose... Sinhalese can be considered as the majority, but with globalisation, it is a global minority. If something happens to the Muslims and Tamils all the embassies will raise their voices. But if something happens to the Sinhalese, no one is there to protect."*<sup>64</sup>

Withanage's comments brings to focus what many analysts have defined as the 'majority with a minority complex', a phrase originally used by Stanley J. Tambiah to draw attention to Sinhala fears and insecurities of being dominated by some 60 million Tamils in southern India, and of Muslims enjoying the support of the global Muslim community.

Although the BBS claims its goal is to protect the rights of Sinhala-Buddhists who have no such international links in the face of both internal and external threats, its activities have not helped the Sinhala-Buddhist community in any way. Through its activities, the BBS only heightened

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<sup>61</sup>Attacks on Places of Religious Worship in Post-War Sri Lanka, March 2013, (Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives).

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> He later parted ways with the BBS on the basis that the organisation has deviated from its original purpose. See interview with Yatawara, Dhaneshi, "BBS not created to facilitate political aspirations - Ven. KiramaWimalajothiThera", *Sunday Observer*, 31 May 2005, Available Online: <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2015/05/31/pol03.asp>

<sup>64</sup>Withanage, Dilanthe, Interview with the author for CPA, 15 October 2015.

ethnic consciousness and further polarised the communities. Particularly telling in this respect was the Rajapaksa government's unwillingness to take any action against the BBS, despite extensive grounds for criminal prosecution.

For example, a BBS spokesman Mawathagama Pemananda Thera, in a public meeting held in Kandy on 17 March 2013 stated that the Quran orders Muslims to spit three times on meals offered to non-Muslims. There is no such statement in the Quran which orders Muslims to do so, and was clearly designed to pit the Sinhalese against the Muslims.<sup>65</sup>

The BBS also accused its critic Watareka Vjitha Thera of the Jathika Bala Sena (JBS) of working with Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry and Commerce and leader of the All Ceylon Makkal Congress (ACMC), to illegally settle several displaced Muslims in the Wilpattu National Park. The BBS stormed the inaugural press conference of the JBS on 09 April 2014 at Nippon Hotel in Colombo and demanded that the organisation be disbanded. Here Gnanasara Thera also attempted to disrobe Watareka Vijitha Thera, as confirmed by Police Media Spokesman SSP Ajith Rohana.<sup>66</sup> Surrounded by a mob which included monks, Vjitha Thera was coerced to apologise and made to agree to disband the organisation. However, Vjitha Thera later lodged a complaint with the Slave Island Police.

The National Shoora Council (NSC), an umbrella body of national-level Muslim organisations, points out that the BBS mob had violated several provisions of the Penal Code such as threat of murder, unlawful assembly, criminal trespass, criminal intimidation, extortion or robbery, wrongful restraint, wrongful confinement etc. by forcibly preventing the press conference of Vijitha Thera. There is now a court case filed by a group of ordinary Muslim citizens pending in this regard,<sup>67</sup> in which Gnanasara Thera along with seven others are accused of unlawful disruption, intimidation and assault. Following the complaint, Gnanasara Thera appeared for an inquiry at the Slave Island Police Station on 12 April 2014.

On the same day, opposite the Slave Island Police Station, Gnanasara Thera alleged that the concept of 'Thaqya' in the Quran allows Muslims to acquire the wealth of non-Muslims through fraudulent means,<sup>68</sup> whereas the Quran explicitly states otherwise.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> "National Shoora Council urges govt. to protect Watareka Vijitha Thero and stop BBS' unlawful acts", *Colombo Telegraph*, 24 April 2014, Available Online: <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/national-shoora-council-urges-govt-to-protect-watareka-vijitha-thero-and-stop-bbs-unlawful-acts/>

<sup>66</sup>Jayakody, Ruwan Laknath, "BBS on warpath-Gatecrashes inaugural JBS press conference-Chases out Maulavis, tests monks on Buddhism", *Ceylon Today*, 10 April 2014, Available Online: <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-61407-news-detail-bbs-on-warpath-gatecrashes-inaugural-jbs-press-conference-chases-out-maulavis-tests-monks-on-buddhism.html>

<sup>67</sup> The case has proceeded to the trial stage.

<sup>68</sup>Full Unedited Video Available Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98dG-HfFuk0>.

<sup>69</sup> Surah Al-Baqarah in the Quran (2:188) says "And eat up not one another's property unjustly (in any illegal way, for example, stealing, robbing, deceiving), nor give bribery to the rulers (judges before presenting your cases) that you may knowingly eat up a part of the property of others sinfully".

Subsequent to this a BBS mob had raided the Ministry of Industry and Commerce on 23 April 2004 in search of Watareka Vijitha Thera possibly to harm the monk for ignoring the threats and complaining to the Slave Island Police, clearly showing that the BBS had thought it fit to take the law into their own hands.

What is to be noted in this context is that most of these incidents occurred in the presence of the police, the media and the public, and the two court cases against Gnanasara Thera and the BBS for defaming the Quran and storming the JBS press conference were filed by ordinary Muslim citizens who were convinced that the Police, in these circumstances, would not act unless compelled to do so.

According to the NSC, Gnanasara Thera's statement opposite the Slave Island Police Station, amounted to offences relating to religion as laid down in the Penal Code and violated the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). The NSC noted that with such stringent laws in place, the police in a shocking manner released the offenders at the police station itself without reporting facts to and producing the suspects before the Magistrate.<sup>70</sup>

Possibly the most rabid speech of Gnanasara Thera was the one delivered in Aluthgama on 15 June 2014, the day in which riots erupted in Aluthgama and Beruwala, in which he incited the Sinhalese to finish off the Muslims (derogatory referred to as '*Marakkalayas*'). He told a rousing crowd, "If one *Marakkalaya* lays a hand on a Sinhalese that will be the end of all of them".<sup>71</sup>

There is little doubt that the Aluthgama carnage in which three innocent lives were lost, scores injured, and extensive property damaged, was the result of the dangerous hate campaign against Muslims carried out over several months, and in particular the fiery speech given by Gnanasara Thera in what was already a very tense locality. As journalist Dharisha Bastians observes:

*"Gnanasara Thera's hate speech against Muslims did not begin in Aluthgama last Sunday. It has been growing increasingly rabid, increasingly violent and inciteful for 18 long months. The Government that arrested journalist J.S. Tissainayagam, politician Azath Sally and human rights activists Ruki Fernando and Father Praveen Mahesan under sections of the Prevention of Terrorism Act dealing with an incitement of communal tension, has been criminally derelict in the case of Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara."*<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>[Insulting the Holy Quran could lead to worldwide response detrimental to the country](http://www.eyesrilanka.com/2014/04/25/insulting-the-holy-quran-could-lead-to-worldwide-response-detrimental-to-the-country/), *Eye Sri Lanka*, 25 April 2014, Available Online:

<http://www.eyesrilanka.com/2014/04/25/insulting-the-holy-quran-could-lead-to-worldwide-response-detrimental-to-the-country/>

<sup>71</sup> Unedited Full-Video of Gnanasara Thera's Pre-Riots Speech, Available Online:

<https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/unedited-full-video-bbs-gnanasaras-pre-riots-speech/>

<sup>72</sup>Bastians, Dharisha, "Striking the Match", *Daily FT*, 26 June 2014, Available Online:

<http://www.ft.lk/article/313452/Striking-the-match>



Equally telling in this context is the “concern” expressed by the powerful then Secretary of Defence Gotabaya Rajapaksa of the threat of “Muslim extremism” in the country. In his keynote address at the ‘Defence Seminar – 2013’ organised by the Sri Lanka Army in Colombo, he opines:

*“It is a known fact that Muslim fundamentalism is spreading all over the world and in this region. This is a situation that our law enforcement agencies and security forces are concerned about particularly as there have been instances where extremist elements have been in transit in Sri Lanka prior to arrest and handing over to appropriate authorities... The possibility that such extremist elements may try to promote Muslim extremism in Sri Lanka is a cause for concern.”<sup>73</sup>*

### **A Silent Revolution**

When President Mahinda Rajapaksa called for elections in October 2014, a good two years ahead of schedule to seek a fresh six-year term, he appeared invincible. The announcement was the result of several factors which included fears of his fading popularity as signalled in the Opposition’s strong showing in the September 2014 Uva Provincial Council election,<sup>74</sup> as well as astrological counsel.

Rajapaksa, who was initially elected to the country’s highest office in November 2005 by a slim margin of around 180,000 votes (50.29% or 4,887,152 votes polled), removed the two-term limit on the presidency after coasting to victory in January 2010 when he secured 57.88% (6,015,934 votes polled) of the popular vote.<sup>75</sup> His trump card was the victory over the LTTE, and by September that year, his party – the United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) – commanded a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

In seeking a third term, Rajapaksa had the advantages of an opposition in total disarray and enormous state resources at his disposal. He exercised complete control of the State apparatus with members of his family and loyalists holding key positions in government. The longer the delay in holding elections, they reasoned, the narrower the chances of winning. At that juncture, the odds of winning a third term were firmly in favour of Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was the clear front runner. When then Health Minister and General-Secretary of the SLFP (the main constituent party of the UPFA) Maithripala Sirisena announced his intention to contest the presidential election on 21 November 2014, it came as a shock to the entire country, Rajapaksa included. Sirisena pledged to end nepotism, corruption and the abuse of the rule of law. Sirisena declared:

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<sup>73</sup> Full Video of Gotabhaya Rajapaksa’s speech is Available Online:  
<http://www.adaderana.lk/news.php?nid=23950&mode=beauti#.UibPzaaSXUQQ.facebook>

<sup>74</sup> The UPFA vote base fell significantly when from previous elections, enabling the party to secure only a slim majority.

<sup>75</sup> Department of Elections, Sri Lanka, “Presidential Elections”, Available Online:  
<http://52.1.201.50/web/index.php/en/presidential-election>

*“The entire socioeconomic and political systems of this country have been taken over by one family. They have ruined this country that is now engulfed in corruption and blatant abuse of power. It is against this that I am coming forward as the common candidate of the opposition... I will abolish the Executive Presidency in 100 days after being elected as the President. I will restore the rule of law by reactivating the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution and make the Police, Elections, Public Service and the Judicial Service Commissions fully independent. The president will be made answerable to the legislature and create a people’s government that enjoy real peace, prosperity and happiness.”<sup>76</sup>*

Sirisena’s defection and his emergence as the common opposition candidate brought together ideologically diverse parties. His candidature drew support from the centre-right United National Party (UNP), Socialist Janatha Vimutkthi Peramuna (JVP), Sinhala nationalist Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) as well as parties representing the minority Tamil and Muslim communities. It was widely described as a ‘rainbow coalition’, and the battle portrayed as one between David and Goliath.

At the forefront of the Opposition campaign was Maduluwawe Sobitha Thera, the chief incumbent of a suburban temple, the Kotte Naga Viharaya and founder of the National Movement for a Just Society (NMJS). At a time when few Buddhist monks dared to swim against the tide, Sobitha Thera gave played a defining role in bringing together a group of political actors under a common banner – the United National Front for Good Governance (UNFGG). In espousing the cause of democracy and social justice, and in spearheading the struggle to restore civil liberties, Sobitha Thera transcended his Sinhala-Buddhist identity. If he represented militant Buddhism in his early days, Sobitha Thera later moved to much more moderate grounds and his strength during the last two decades was rooted in his ability to forge alliances across ethnic and religious groups.”<sup>77</sup>

In a similar spirit, ethnic-based political parties too mobilised under the *Yahapalanaya* slogan, shedding to some extent their nationalist outlook. *Yahapalanaya* thus augured well as cross-cutting theme which appealed to all communities united in their dejection of the Rajapaksa regime’s rampant corruption, nepotism and other excesses.

### **Nationalist Appeal Tested**

The results of 08 January 2015 presidential election and the 17 August 2015 parliamentary elections which saw consecutive losses for Mahinda Rajapaksa and the UPFA have been projected

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<sup>76</sup>“Video – I will take on MR: Maithripala”, *Daily Mirror*, 21 September 2014, Available Online: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/57095/unp-names-maithripla-as-the-common-candidate>

<sup>77</sup>Gunawardene, Nalaka, “Maduluwawe Sobitha Thero (1942-2015): The Monk Who Ended Sri Lanka’s Decade of Darkness”, *Groundviews*, Available Online:

<http://groundviews.org/2015/11/08/maduluwawe-sobitha-thero-1942-2015-the-monk-who-ended-sri-lankas-decade-of-darkness/>

by many analysts as a victory for the moderates, both in the South as well as the North, and a rejection of extremism. Although the moderates did emerge victorious, this cannot be interpreted as a rejection of the Rajapaksa brand of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism<sup>78</sup> and the end of ethno-religious appeal in Sri Lanka. While it is certainly true that the election gave an unprecedented opening to revive the discourse on democracy and brought about a palpable shift from ethnic nationalism to civic nationalism coalescing around a set of normative values,<sup>79</sup> ethno-nationalism continues to exist on all sides and remains a potent force.

This is borne out by the fact a number of facts. Firstly, Maithripala Sirisena’s manifesto avoided dealing with the ethnic question and devolution of power, revealing that he remained highly conscious of the Sinhala-Buddhist pulse. Second, the Common Opposition coalition failed to secure an overall majority in Parliament necessitating the formation of a national government, and Rajapaksa retains a considerable level of support in areas that are dominated by Sinhala-Buddhists. Third, although the BBS (contesting as the BJP) managed to get a negligible 20,000 votes, several nationalists who contested under the UPFA such as Wimal Weerawansa (JNP; 313,801 votes) and Udaya Gammanpila of the (PHU; 198,818 votes) performed very well, securing a high number of preferential votes in their respective districts.

In addition, according to a noteworthy statistical study, the Sinhala vote was split 58-41 in favour of Mahinda Rajapaksa while Maithripala Sirisena obtained an 85-13 margin of the overall minority vote, demonstrating that Rajapaksa was still the preferred candidate for the Sinhala-Buddhist majority.<sup>80</sup> At being said, Rajapaksa’s support base eroded significantly from 2010 to 2015 as the table below shows.<sup>81</sup>

Performance of Mahinda Rajapaksa / UPFA at key elections in post-war Sri Lanka:

<b>Election</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Votes</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Presidential Election	January 2010	6,015,934	57.88%
Parliamentary Election	April 2010	4,846,388	60.33%
Presidential Election	January 2015	5,768,090	47.58%
Parliamentary Election	August 2015	4,732,664	42.38%

As the table illustrates, the government which commanded a two-thirds majority in Parliament in 2010 lost support dramatically by 2015, with Mahinda Rajapaksa losing well over a million

<sup>78</sup>Senaratne, Kalana, Interview with the author for CPA, 29 September 2015.

<sup>79</sup>Welikala, Asanga, Interview with the author for CPA, 04 October 2015.

<sup>80</sup> The methodology to estimate the most likely split assumes the valid votes casted are distributed as per the 2012 census data in conjunction with statistical techniques. The all-island estimate is obtained by aggregating the district estimates. See Annexure 4 for table.

<http://www.ft.lk/2015/02/13/deconstructing-the-2015-sri-lanka-presidential-election-through-data-analysis/>

<sup>81</sup>Department of Elections, Sri Lanka. Available Online: <http://www.slections.gov.lk/>

votes from January to August 2015. But Rajapaksa's declining support among the majority community cannot be completely explained by waning Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. A plausible explanation is that for those who supposedly voted against the nationalist camp, nationalism was something they left behind to take care of other burning issues that were highlighted in the campaign such as the corruption and the public space occupied by the Rajapaksa family which was highly critiqued among Sinhala-Buddhist society as much as it found criticism amongst the minorities.<sup>82</sup>

In the words of Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri, "Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism suffered a major political defeat, but it has not been ideologically defeated." The voters that supported the UNFGG consisted of all ethnic communities in contrast to the pre-dominantly Sinhala-Buddhist UPFA vote-bank. In the light of a divided majority, it was the minorities who voted decisively against Mahinda Rajapaksa ousting him from office. Immediately after his defeat, Rajapaksa blamed the 'Eelam votes' for his loss. In the general elections, Rajapaksa's candidature only helped the forces of the 08 January Revolution, re-group.<sup>83</sup> As Tisarane Gunasekera cogently argues, UPFA leaders from Mahinda Rajapaksa downwards, invoked Eelamist, Jihadist, Indian and Western spectres, but a combination of patriotic rhetoric, attacks on the minorities and shrill warnings about international conspiracies could not make a sufficient number of Sinhala-Buddhists forget their very real economic problems.<sup>84</sup>

### **The 'Sinha Le' campaign**

The 'Sinha Le' campaign first came into the spotlight on social media platforms towards the latter part of 2015. It originally began as a poster campaign which carried an image of the lion taken from the national flag along with the words 'Sinha' (lion) in yellow and 'Le' (blood) in red. Soon a large number of 'Sinha Le' posters appeared in public spaces, as well as private vehicles, most notably in three wheelers, buses and vans. On the night of 02 January 2016, the words 'Sinha Le' were sprayed across several gates and walls of Muslim-owned houses in Nugegoda. Widely seen as an act designed to provoke ethnic tensions, it carried the message that Muslims were the campaign's main target.<sup>85</sup>

A few days after the act of vandalism, on 06 January, a group calling itself the 'Sinhale Jathika Balamuluwa' (SJB) announced its formation at a media briefing to "safeguard the identity of the Sinhala people and to regenerate the supremacy and pride of the Sinhala people".<sup>86</sup> The new party

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<sup>82</sup>Senaratne, Kalana, Interview with the author for CPA, 28 September 2015.

<sup>83</sup>Bastians, Dharisha, "The Fallen King?" *DailyFT*, 27 August 2015, Available Online: <http://www.ft.lk/article/462997/The-fallen-king>

<sup>84</sup>Gunasekara, Tisarane, "The Economics of Democracy", *Groundviews*, 19 October 2015, Available Online:

<http://groundviews.org/2015/10/19/the-economics-of-democracy/>

<sup>85</sup>"Words Sinhala blood written on gates of Muslim residencies in Colombo", *Sri Lanka Brief*, 03 January 2016, Available Online: <http://srilankabrief.org/2016/01/words-sinhala-blood-written-on-gates-of-muslim-residences-in-colombo/>

<sup>86</sup>Siriwardana, Ajith, "New party aims to safeguard Sinhala identity", *Daily Mirror*, 06 January 2016, Available Online: <http://www.dailymirror.lk/102081/new-party-aims-to-safeguard-sinhala-identity>

endorsed the 'Sinha Le' campaign, thereby giving it a public face. The SJB also spearheaded a well-attended motorcade on 23 January 2016 which commenced in Colombo and culminated in a public rally in Kandy where they claimed to have distributed over 200,000 Sinha Le stickers.<sup>87</sup> 'Sinhale' was a term used prior to independence to refer to the part of the country that remained free from colonial rule. Today it is being given the different meaning of "Sinhala blood" by being broken into two parts as "Sinha Le". Its current usage through posters, stickers, social media and on properties of minority communities has given it racist undertones.<sup>88</sup>As Sanjana Hattotuwa observes:

*"The campaign is essentially racist, mixing elements of violent xenophobia, Islamophobia, racial slurs and hate speech in what is promoted as a campaign signifying love for country and patriotic zeal. Perusing through a Facebook group, one of many others, established in support of the campaign, one encounters outrageous content of a nature the careful observer will immediately recognise as exactly what was promoted by similar pages, groups and sites aligned with the BoduBalaSena (BBS)... The fans and followers create echo chambers, where radicalisation is fostered by the production, publication, dissemination and discussion of deeply racist material. Almost exclusively in Sinhala, this content passes under the radar of platforms like Facebook and policies in place against content that instigates communal violence, racism and hate speech."<sup>89</sup>*

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<sup>87</sup>Kumarasinghe, Uditha, "The genesis of Sinha Le", *Sunday Observer*, 31 January 2016, Available Online: <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2016/01/31/fea14.asp>

<sup>88</sup>"Sinha Le hate campaign must be dealt with by new law: NPC", *Colombo Telegraph*, 16 January 2016, Available Online: <https://www.colombotelegraph.com/index.php/sinha-le-hate-campaign-must-be-dealt-with-by-new-law-npc/>

<sup>89</sup>Hattotuwa, Sanjana, "A concentrated effort to deny and destroy diversity", *Sunday Observer*, 10 January 2016, Available Online: <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2016/01/10/spe-uni-04.asp>

## CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that the biggest challenge to Sri Lanka's reconciliation agenda comes from nationalists on all sides of the divide. The difficulty lies in the fact that there can be serious resistance from nationalists to evolving a meaningful power-sharing arrangement as a key component of the reconciliation process. Ethno-nationalistic rhetoric was strongly invoked during both major elections of 2015, but it was unable to harness adequate support to ensure electoral victory for the nationalist camp because other pressing issues impelled a significant proportion of the Sinhala-Buddhist population to vote for a change in the country's political leadership.

Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism, the particular focus of this report, was on a general downward trajectory following the 2015 presidential election driven in large part by the discourse on democracy which was activated in the run-up to the election and thereafter. Nevertheless, it remains a very potent force which could be used to stir communal discord as the context changes. The growing disenchantment in the Sinhala-Buddhist community on many fronts, their economic and cultural insecurity in particular, at least in part has made it easier for nationalistic political posturing to re-capture its lost appeal. The popularity of 'Sinha-Le' campaign, which appears to be politically-backed and well-organised evinces ethno-nationalism's continued power as a tool to mobilise insecure masses.

In this connection it is important to note that the Government's decision to withdraw the Penal Code Amendment Bill to render hate speech a crime punishable by a two-year prison term is welcome, as it could have been potentially dangerous in view of the fact that successive governments have used such provisions to selectively target political opponents. The necessary legal framework is already in line with international standards, and what is required is to ensure the uniform application of existing laws.<sup>90</sup> The law enforcement agencies should implement existing laws pertaining to hate speech as defined in the Penal Code and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and guarantee a climate in which all religious communities can practice their faith without fear.

This report also takes the view that the time is not opportune to call for the removal of the clause in the Constitution which accords Buddhism the foremost place. No doubt all religions should both be viewed and treated equally and that a secular state is indeed the ideal, but to attempt to

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<sup>90</sup>Gehan Gunatilleke has pointed out that Section 3(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Act No. 56 of 2007 sufficiently covers hate speech. There are also ample safeguards in the Constitution's Fundamental Rights Chapter, while certain offenses relevant to communal violence are already included in a host of Statutes including the Penal Code and the Police Ordinance. Jayakody, Ruwan Laknath "No need for new hate speech laws..." *Ceylon Today*, 20 November 2015, Available Online: <http://www.ceylontoday.lk/51-109901-news-detail-no-need-for-new-hate-speech-laws.html>. The CPA has also produced a useful brief on this – *Constitutional and Legal Framework Governing Religious Freedom and Related Issues*, Available Online: <http://www.cpalanka.org/constitutional-and-legal-framework-governing-religious-freedom-and-relatd-issues/>

remove this clause at this juncture would in all likelihood lead to a backlash and scuttle the reform process.

The success of the reconciliation process will be contingent upon the government's ability to retain the confidence and support of the Sinhala community as much as all other communities. It is important to respect national consciousness, not to dismiss or to deny it. Concerns of the Sinhala-Buddhist population have to be taken seriously, in particular the fear that power-sharing will lead to Sri Lanka's disintegration and poses a threat to Buddhism. Any process that does not address these concerns will certainly not be sustainable. If extremists are not included in the process of determining the country's future, there is the danger of them becoming spoilers. Therefore, the strategy should be to further expand the middle by involving the extremists in a spirit of transparency and consultation, and to foster a conception of Sri Lanka from an essentially Sinhala-Buddhist state, to a multi-religious, multi-ethnic, pluralistic society.

Possibly the best example of this middle ground was found in the rainbow coalition that propelled Maithripala Sirisena to the presidency. One of its key movers, the late Ven. Maduluwawe Sobitha Thera showed how a Buddhist religious leader espousing core Buddhist values such as compassion and universalism can take Buddhist concerns seriously and yet act as a unifying force for all communities. The opening created on 08 January 2015 for civic nationalism to supersede the confines of ethnic nationalism should be fully utilised by the current political leadership and civil society groups to broaden the middle ground to push forward the reconciliation and development agenda.

## ANNEXURE 1

### List of Interviewees

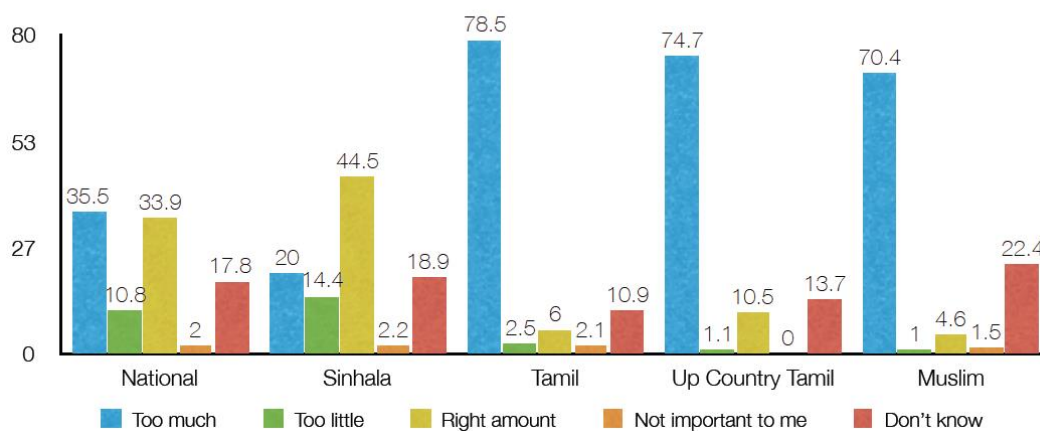
No.	Name	Designation	Date of Interview
1.	Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda	Professor of Political Science and Public Policy, University of Colombo	21/09/2015
2.	Ven. Prof. Bellanwila Wimalaratana Anunayake Thera	Deputy Incumbent of Bellanwila Rajamaha Vihara; Chancellor, University of Sri Jayawardhanapura	25/09/2015
3.	Dr. Kalana Senaratne	Lecturer, University of Peradeniya; Researcher, Social Scientists' Association	20/09/2015 and 28/09/2015
4.	Dr. Asanga Welikala	Lecturer in Public Law, Edinburgh Law School; Senior Research Associate, Centre for Policy Alternatives	04/10/2015
5.	Dr. Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri	Senior Lecturer, Department of History, University of Colombo	07/10/2015
6.	Mr. Rohan Edrisinha	Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of Colombo	12/10/2015
7.	Mr. Dilanthe Withanage	Chief Executive Officer / Programme Coordinator, Bodu Bala Sena	15/10/2015



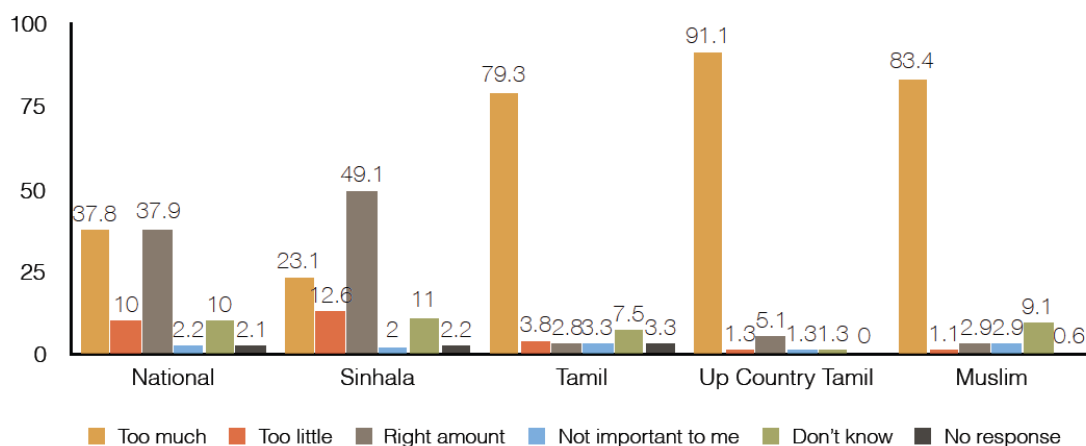
## ANNEXURE 2

### Relevant Graphs from the Democracy Surveys

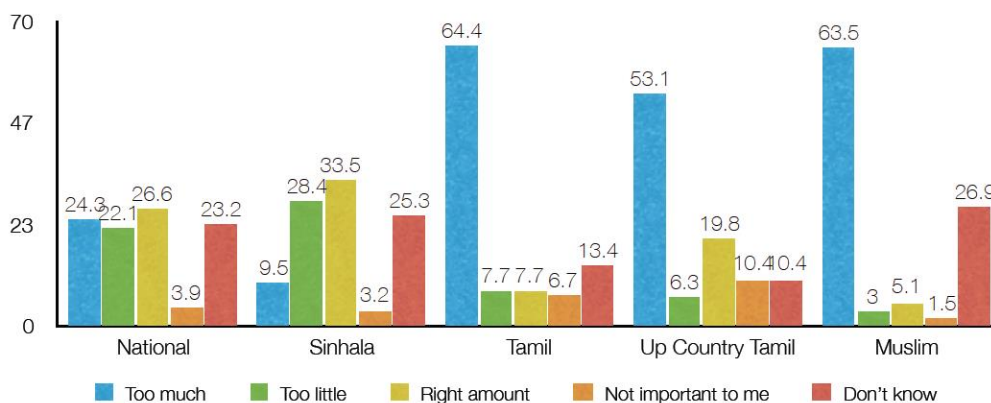
*August 2013: What is your opinion about the role of Buddhism in Sri Lankan politics?*



*October 2014: What is your opinion about the role of Buddhism in Sri Lankan politics?*



*August 2013: What is your opinion about the expression of religious faith by Buddhist political leaders?*



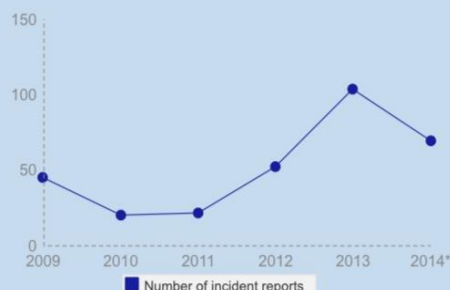
## ANNEXURE 3

### Infographic on Religious Violence in Post-War Sri Lanka

#### INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE & INTIMIDATION AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

**The National Christian Evangelical Alliance (NCEASL)**

Recorded 103 incidents in 2013 and 69 incidents in 2014.



\*Data up to August, 2014

#### The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC)

Reported 241 anti-Muslim attacks in 2013.



SLMC also reported of 69 anti-Christian attacks in 2013.

#### INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE & INTIMIDATION AGAINST THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

**The Secretariat for Muslims**

Recorded 284 incidents of threats, attempted attacks, harassment, incitements and provocations directed at Muslims in 2013.

### 2014 JUNE: VIOLENCE IN ALUTHGAMA & BERUWALA

Widely believed that on 15th June, violent attacks followed a speech made by Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thero.

**3** Muslims and

**1** Tamil were killed.

**88**

people were injured.

**100s**

of Muslim homes and businesses were destroyed or partially damaged.

**200**

million rupees allocated by the government for reconstruction work.

**3 months after the incident, the high-level panel to investigate the incidents, promised by the President, is yet to be appointed.**

**Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thero to date has not been indicted for incitement of violence.**

#### SOURCES

CPA Report: <http://www.cpalanka.org/attacks-on-places-of-religious-worship-in-post-war-sri-lanka/>

NCEASL Incident Reports: <http://nceasl.org/category/religious-liberty/incident-reports/>

SLMC Report: <http://www.onetext.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Annex-1-Religious-Violence-2013.pdf>

<http://nceasl.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/SLB-Fact-Sheet-2-Sep-2014-re-attacks-on-religious-minorities.pdf>

<http://www.ft.lk/2014/06/26/striking-the-match/>

[http://www.priu.gov.lk/news\\_update/Current\\_Affairs/ca201406/20140628sl\\_army\\_troops\\_begin\\_initial\\_repair\\_works\\_aluthgama\\_beruwala.htm](http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201406/20140628sl_army_troops_begin_initial_repair_works_aluthgama_beruwala.htm)



## ANNEXURE 4

### Estimating the Sinhala vote for Maithripala Sirisena and Mahinda Rajapaksa (By Dr. Ranjiva Munasinghe and Ruwanthi de Silva of Argyle X)

District	Maithripala Sirisena			Mahinda Rajapaksa		
	Sinhala Vote	Minority Vote	% Error Estimate	Sinhala Vote	Minority Vote	% Error Estimate
Colombo	45%	90%	0.79%	55%	5%	0.13%
Gampaha	45%	95%	0.27%	54%	5%	0.18%
Kalutara	40%	90%	(0.43%)	60%	5%	(0.04%)
Kandy	40%	95%	0.82%	58%	5%	(0.38%)
Matale	35%	98%	0.12%	63%	2%	0.38%
Nuwara Eliya	40%	80%	(0.45%)	60%	17%	0.09%
Galle	40%	99%	0.04%	59%	1%	(0.11%)
Matara	40%	60%	0.23%	60%	22%	(0.03%)
Hambantota	35%	65%	0.12%	65%	0%	(0.11%)
Jaffna	0%	75%	(0.16%)	0%	22%	(0.06%)
Vanni	57%	80%	0.31%	43%	17%	0.35%
Batticaloa	50%	82%	(0.01%)	35%	16%	0.02%
Digamadulla	35%	85%	(0.64%)	65%	14%	0.20%
Trincomalee	50%	80%	(0.10%)	47%	19%	0.46%
Kurunegala	41%	96%	0.02%	58%	4%	0.23%
Puttalam	39%	81%	(0.12%)	60%	18%	0.13%
Anuradhapura	40%	100%	(0.07%)	59%	0%	(0.05%)
Polonnaruwa	55%	85%	(0.02%)	44%	15%	(0.03%)
Badulla	35%	88%	(0.13%)	63%	12%	(0.22%)
Moneragala	35%	80%	0.06%	65%	0%	(0.07%)
Ratnapura	40%	65%	(0.52%)	60%	27%	0.01%
Kegalle	40%	90%	(0.38%)	59%	10%	(0.20%)
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	<b>40.96%</b>	<b>84.68%</b>	<b>0.08%</b>	<b>58.26%</b>	<b>12.79%</b>	<b>0.02%</b>