



SRI LANKA LECTURE SERIES

Victor's Peace in Sri Lanka – Good Governance or Transformation of the State?

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During the last fifteen years there have been two political paradigms in Sri Lanka that underpinned transitional justice. One is the liberal peace paradigm and the other is the neo-conservative military paradigm. The former was led by the EU and the latter by the US/UK governments. These paradigms determine the ways in which transitional justice is envisaged and practiced (or not practiced). Development and human rights which constitute major features of transitional justice have been framed on the basis of these two paradigms which give rise to two radically different outcomes; justice within a negotiated political settlement (between the Sri Lankan state and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) and 'justice' within the non-negotiable Sri Lankan unitary state. This lecture will argue that the slogan of 'good governance' of the latter approach treats the unitary state as 'natural' and does not hold it accountable for the crimes committed against the Tamils in protecting the sovereignty of the Sri Lankan state. The logical outcome of this approach is further justification of militarisation, Sinhala Buddhicisation and acquisition of land of the Tamil Region of the island by the Sri Lankan state which makes transitional justice as victor's 'justice' and a mere impossibility. For any meaningful transitional justice process it is necessary not to treat the Sri Lankan state as a natural entity which goes against the basic principles of liberal peace.

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