

# MUSLIMS IN SRI LANKA AND THE CHALLENGES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

DR AMJAD MOHAMED-SALEEM

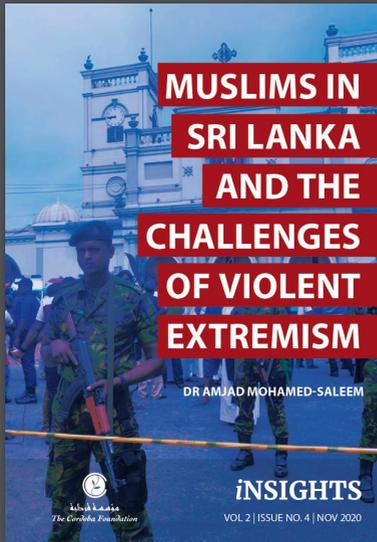


مؤسسة قرطبة

*The Cordoba Foundation*

**iNSIGHTS**

VOL 2 | ISSUE NO. 4 | NOV 2020

**SERIES EDITORS:**

Dr Anas Altikriti  
Chief Executive

Dr Abdullah Faliq  
Editor & Managing Director

Dr Jamil Sherif  
H. D. Foreman  
Sandra Tusin  
Dr Daud Abdullah  
Shirley Cross

**DESIGN & ART DIRECTION:**

Abdullah S. Khan

**COPYRIGHT**

© The Cordoba Foundation 2020. All rights reserved.

**DISCLAIMER**

Views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of The Cordoba Foundation.

[info@thecordobafoundation.com](mailto:info@thecordobafoundation.com)

Published in London

**VOL 2 | ISSUE NO. 4 | NOV 2020**

Available online:  
[www.thecordobafoundation.com](http://www.thecordobafoundation.com)

## THE CORDOBA FOUNDATION

*Cultures in Dialogue.*

The Cordoba Foundation (TCF) is an independent strategic think-tank that works to promote intercultural dialogue and positive coexistence through a range of activities including research and publications, training and capacity building, policy briefings and dialogues. The Foundation takes its name from the city of Cordoba – the European metropolis which was once a symbol of human excellence and intellectual ingenuity, where cultures, civilisations and ideas thrived. Embodying this spirit, TCF today facilitates the meeting of minds to advance understanding and respect for one another.

Our activities include:

- Structured consultation and advisory services
- Face-to-face interaction with decision-makers and figures of authority
- In-house research
- Workshops, seminars and debates on pertinent issues
- Consultancy
- Training and capacity-building
- Publications, Periodicals and Journals
- Resourceful website and knowledge database

[www.thecordobafoundation.com](http://www.thecordobafoundation.com)

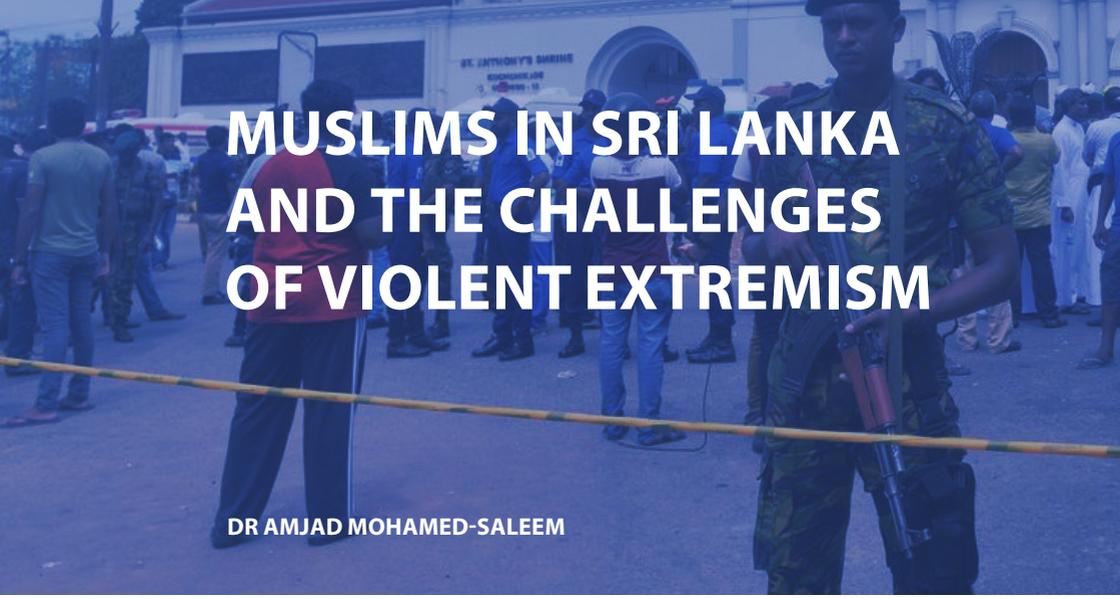


مؤسسة قرطبة

*The Cordoba Foundation*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

04	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>
06	<b>STRUCTURE AND AIMS OF THIS PAPER</b>
06	<b>UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SRI LANKA</b>
07	<b>CONTEXT 1: FRAMING ETHNIC REPRESENTATION</b>
08	<b>CONTEXT 2: VIOLENT CONFLICT</b>
09	<b>CONTEXT 3: MUSLIM IDENTITY</b>
10	<b>CONTEXT 4: ISOLATION AND EXCLUSION</b>
11	<b>CONTEXT 5: POST-CONFLICT RECONCILIATION</b>
13	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>
19	<b>AUTHOR PROFILE</b>
20	<b>ENDNOTES</b>
23	<b>REFERENCES</b>



# MUSLIMS IN SRI LANKA AND THE CHALLENGES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM

DR AMJAD MOHAMED-SALEEM

In April 2019, Sri Lanka suffered fateful Easter Sunday attacks that left over 200 dead and hundreds wounded (Al Jazeera English, 2019). These were the worst terror attacks to hit the island since the 1996 attacks by the Liberation of Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) during the 30-year-old war that ended in May 2009.<sup>1</sup> It transpired that the perpetrators of the terror attacks were from a local radical Islamic group (Islamic State Sri Lanka Branch) that proclaimed allegiance to Islamic State (IS) – with a more disturbing twist that a couple of the attackers were from a well-to-do Muslim business family known amongst business and political circles in Colombo.<sup>2</sup> This revelation resulted in a renewed fear from the Muslim community of a security surveillance and response from the Government similar to what the Tamils had gone through during the 30-year-old conflict. This fear would be compounded by the increasing harassment from the general public (Irshad, 2019) and a spate of pre-meditated and organised attacks against Muslim communities and businesses in the aftermath of the Easter Sunday attacks (Amarasingam and Fuller, 2019).

The harassment of the Muslim community has been exploited for political purposes in the wake of the 2019 presidential and 2020 parliamentary elections. In addition, with the current Covid-19 pandemic, the Muslims have once again been targeted, not only being represented in the media as the main cause of the spread of the virus in Sri Lanka, but having their basic burial rites denied (Saleem, 2020). This has added to the tension that has arisen after the Easter Sunday attacks calling for the greater scrutiny of Muslims and their institutions, and in particular demands for internal reforms to show demonstrable allegiance to the state (Mohamed-Saleem, 2019).

Since June 2019, the Government has embarked on a one-size-fits-all counter-terrorism policy. This includes committing to implementing the UN Security Council's resolution to curb terrorism and violent extremism following a visit by the UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (News18, 2019). Yet the commitment by the Government amidst international pledges of support to stem the flow of foreign terrorist fighters and counter violent extremism, in compliance with the international

counter-terrorism obligations, remains disingenuous especially in how the global narrative around violent extremism remain contested. By focusing a narrative on violent extremism unilaterally on the Muslim community, post East Sunday attacks, there is a misrepresentation of the reality and context of Sri Lanka which has seen its fair share of anti-state movements, contested political landscape, violent uprisings and conflict that have shaped the country's own history of violence (Gowrinthan, 2019). In other words, one cannot explore a narrative of violent extremism without looking at the state machinations, which remain a perfect breeding ground for youth radicalisation and the propensity for violence to take place.

There is also disingenuity in the government handling of the aftermath of the attacks and the treatment of the Muslim community. This has to be kept in mind when discussing a VE response. The fact is that the Easter Sunday attacks happened despite many intelligence service warnings. The leader of the groups responsible for the attacks was known and had been tracked without much effort from the Government to stop him (Samarajiva, 2019). The subsequent tracing and arrests of key suspects related to the bomb attacks also illustrate a certain level of prior knowledge from the security forces. The attacks on the Muslim community, post Easter Sunday attacks, also displayed a level of premeditation and organisation

that cannot be explained simply as a mob uprising seeking revenge. The fact that the Government seemed unable to also stop these mob attacks reflects a weakness at best, or complicity at worst.

It cannot be denied that the perpetrators of the Easter Sunday attacks were Muslims and there must be focus on and reflections from the Muslim community on why this happened. The Muslim community does have a lot to reflect upon internally as to how 'home grown' terrorists were allowed to develop and understanding what could have caused their radicalisation

*The attacks on the Muslim community, post-Easter Sunday [incidents], also displayed a level of premeditation and organisation that cannot be explained simply as a mob uprising seeking revenge.*

to violence. However, the question about the growth of violent extremism in the community cannot be answered without understanding the historical relationship of violent extremism in Sri Lanka.

Youth radicalisation and the propensity for violence is not new in Sri Lanka and there have been different waves of violent radicalisation in the country since the 1960s. The experience of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in the seventies and of the LTTE in the eighties revolves largely around the concept of blocked mobility and nationalism, where the aspirations of the young upwardly mobile cohort

are blocked by the older generation. The resultant resistance has more to do with differences in approach to the everyday running of the State than to anything else.

## STRUCTURE AND AIMS OF THIS PAPER

This paper thus asserts that viewing Sri Lankan Muslim identity solely from the security lens and adopting imported 'Preventing Violent Extremism' (PVE) templates will not address the underlying factors. By neglecting to understand this context, this paper argues that it is problematic to perpetuate a violent extremism narrative and a Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) process in Sri Lanka.

In addition, it is important to note that terms related to Violent Extremism (VE) are politicised, used interchangeably and often without a clear definition, resulting in the same terms being used to describe different approaches. This means that the lack of a definition risks a range of different actors falling under the umbrella of violent extremism from 'freedom fighters' and 'rebel groups' to organised criminal gangs, depending on the perspective of who is doing the naming. This can also become a convenient veil behind which some governments can mask the suppression of opposition and narrow the space for challenge by opposing political actors and/or civil society (Holdaway and Simpson, 2018).

What this paper will show is that Sri Lanka does not fit neatly into existing prescriptions for tackling violent extremism, namely around the militarisation of policing and state violence on at-risk communities. There must be a wider perspective of analysis and understanding, taking account of specific factors at play in the Sri Lankan context.

The first part of this paper presents the contexts for understanding the situation in Sri Lanka with reference to five aspects:

Framing Ethnic Representation

- Violent Conflict
- Muslim Identity

- Isolation and Exclusion
- Post-Conflict Reconciliation

The second part offers recommendations for the attention of policy-makers as well as Sri Lankan civil society:

- Integrating conflict sensitivity
- Understanding the role of the local community
- Reframing narratives of identity
- Not instrumentalising but integrating religion
- Tackling issues of marginalisation and encouraging positive activism

The paper concludes by reiterating the need to address structural inequalities towards social mobility and the attitude of the State towards minorities as well as state sponsored violence. There must be a vision to build Sri Lanka as a multi-ethnic nation. The paper also calls on the Muslim community to "re-imagine" what it represents and ultimately identifies with. In this regard much internal work is needed to work towards behaviour change to experience 'other' communities. This in itself is a case study to rethink Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) approaches.

## UNDERSTANDING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SRI LANKA

Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) focuses on preventative approaches allowing for programming to take a broader approach to the underlying drivers that create vulnerabilities to violent extremism and enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to resist it. [It is about understanding the drivers of violent radicalisation in Sri Lanka and for the purposes of this paper, the drivers of violent radicalisation within the Muslim community that is also linked to a wider context of violent radicalisation within

the country.<sup>3</sup> In this sense the author puts forward the following contexts in order to understand the driving factors<sup>4</sup> (Holdoway and Simpson 2018) which have contributed to radicalisation and violent extremism within the Muslim community in Sri Lanka.

### CONTEXT 1: FRAMING ETHNIC REPRESENTATION

Identity politics remains the number one push factor for any type of violent extremism in Sri Lanka. Ethnic and linguistic identity and contested identities have been cited as the main cause for community polarisation leading up to the 30-year-old conflict (Kapferer 1988). Thus a comprehensive understanding of Sri Lankan history has to be a starting point for any discussions to do with Sri Lanka, its conflict, the rise of violent extremism and community relations (Rogers J. D., 1994).

Like many post-colonial societies, Sri Lanka drew on pre-colonial culture, including religion, to form a national identity after gaining independence, including the increasing visible involvement of Buddhist monks in political activism (Deegalle, 2007). In particular, the period under the British is often blamed for fostering a conscious development of ethnic consciousness among the major ethnic communities who hitherto had been 'living in harmony' throughout the pre-modern period (Nuhman M. A., 2007).<sup>5</sup> For the British "different groups in Sri Lanka were, it was argued, different races and different races had different

customs" (Nissan & Stirrat, 1990, p.27) and consequently language, religion, custom and clothes were taken in various combinations as markers of racial variation. By the end of the 19th century a large number of distinct 'races' were recognised by the authorities in colonial Sri Lanka,<sup>6</sup> substantiating heterogeneity, formalising cultural differences and making it the basis of social organisation and political representation (Nissan & Stirrat, 1990). All this institutionalisation and dichotomy would eventually have an effect on how the different groups thought of themselves and the other contributing to new forms of ethno-religious competition and stratification (Bandarage 2009).

The growing narrative of 'Sinhalese Buddhist' politics during the colonial and post-colonial phases depict religion, ethnicity and race as inseparable, whilst serving and supporting the mutual interests of allowing the development of the concept of a 'Sinhala Buddhist Nation State' (Jayawerdena 2003). Hence Buddhism became the channel for the Sinhalese elite to voice their opposition not only towards the colonial power but also as a way of mobilising popular support in search of an 'idyllic' past.

With Independence in 1948, a fixed notion of identities began to inform the making of the Sri Lankan unitary 'nation' state with a Sinhala Buddhist majority-dominated ideology and a movement leading to the polarisation of diverse communities (Fernando J. L., 2008). The Sinhalese

*Sri Lanka drew on pre-colonial culture, including religion, to form a national identity after gaining independence, including the increasing visible involvement of Buddhist monks in political activism.*

would redefine ethnic relations to their advantage and consequently, constitutional arrangements at independence lacked sufficient safeguards for minority rights.<sup>7</sup>

## CONTEXT 2: VIOLENT CONFLICT

Whilst it is not the intention of the author to provide a detailed history of Sri Lanka (as this is extensively covered in *Insights*, Issue no. 6), it is crucial to understand that Sri Lanka has a history of violent conflict with young people taking up arms. Thus, violent extremism cannot be looked at as a phenomenon emerging after the Easter Sunday incidents. Youth radicalism in post-independent Sri Lanka is considered to be a complex and a multi-faceted phenomenon (Hemachandra, 2018). Prior to the Easter Sunday attacks, Sri Lanka had suffered from two youth uprisings, which have led to internal conflict in two instances, with the latest lasting 30 years and ending in 2009.

The first phase of direct violent extremism was born in Sri Lanka in the early seventies whereby people radicalised on a certain ideology resorted to violent means. The first armed insurrection was in 1971 by the People's Liberation Front (Janatha Vimukti Peramuna – JVP).<sup>8</sup> This was born as a result of the intransigence of the government to deal with bridging the existing divide – in particular the gaps between the English-speaking elite and the rural Sinhalese<sup>9</sup> – mainly the needs of the educated rural youth (Bandarage, 2009) in the face of a lag in economic growth. This was despite Sri Lanka spending nearly 10% of its GNP on education and other programs, from 1960-1977.

The second phase of direct violent extremism came as a result of the Government's political solution to the 1971 insurrection. The constitutions of 1972<sup>10</sup> and 1978 were changed to promote Sinhala

Buddhist hegemony by centralising the state, giving Buddhism the 'foremost' status. This rendered Sinhala the official language and failed to adequately provide for the protection of minority rights (International Crisis Group, 2007). The changing of the constitutions alienated and radicalised the Tamil lower middle-class youth<sup>11</sup> resulting in deep suspicions and cynicisms about the Sinhalese and strengthening calls for autonomy<sup>12</sup> (Shastri, 1990). This ultimately led to civil disobedience and the emergence of small militant Tamil groups.

From 1981<sup>13</sup> to 1983, a number of incidents helped perpetuate the feeling from Tamil political and civil society leadership that they could not be guaranteed safety by the Sri Lankan government (Feith 2010). However, it was the July 1983 Pogrom against the Tamils in retaliation for the killing of 13 soldiers in the north of the country, that legitimised<sup>14</sup> the claims of militant groups like the LTTE that the Sinhalese majority would not be accommodating the rights and privileges of the Tamil community. This pushed the latter to extremist elements within and also out of the external political process (Bandarage 2009).<sup>15</sup>

The 1980s and 1990s proved to be violent episodes in Sri Lanka's young history<sup>16</sup> with the defeat of the Indian Peacekeeping Force.<sup>17</sup> There were widespread attacks on mosques in the east,<sup>18</sup> there was mass displacement of Muslims from the north in 1990,<sup>19</sup> and the assassination of key Sri Lankan political and military leaders and Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Despite numerous peace negotiations in the 1990s and in 2002, the conflict persisted until its end in 2009.<sup>20</sup>

The attacks on mosques in the east in particular should be of note because it is not coincidental that the leader of the Easter Sunday attacks would hail from the

same town where those attacks took place and that town would be seen as the nucleus of homegrown terrorists, trying to affiliate themselves with ISIS. The mosque attacks were never really dealt with properly to address the trauma faced by people in the village after the shootings. The attacks, largely contributed to the rise of conservative thinking and an extreme representation of Muslim identity and ideology especially ideological clashes between various sects. The failure to deal with the mosque attacks represents a failure of Muslim as well as wider political leadership – the consequences from this reverberated arguably with the Easter Sunday attacks.

It is also notable that during this period a new Muslim political party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) was formed to address the compromised security of the Muslims and to channel the frustrations of the Muslim youth away from taking arms into more productive political causes (Ameerdeen 2006). In other words, for fear of Muslim youth being radicalised and turning to violence such as joining LTTE, the SLMC tried to channel the representation from the east into something more productive (Johansson 2007). This was a first indication of the dangers of Muslim youth being radicalised and steps considered to counter this.

In the post-2009 era, there have been incidents of anti-Muslim violence as a result of rising nationalist Sinhala Buddhist sentiments<sup>21</sup> and a systemic campaign of

‘Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalism’<sup>22</sup> inciting hatred (Imtiyaz & Mohamed-Saleem, 2015). Thus the contextual factors that underpin the violent extremism cannot be ignored.

### CONTEXT 3: MUSLIM IDENTITY

The Muslim community has been distinct in espousing its ‘racial’ Semitic identity<sup>23</sup> comparable to the Aryan (Sinhalese),<sup>24</sup> the Dravidian (Tamil) and Burgher (European mixed race) communities in Sri Lanka (McGilvray 2011) which has put them on a collision course with the Tamil political elite. The latter considered the Tamil-speaking Muslims as an extension of their own community. In the first instance, there is a determined definition of a separate ‘ethnic’ identity of the Muslim community which at the outset was linked to religion<sup>25</sup> and culture.<sup>26</sup>

There is also a political context underlying this disagreement with the Tamil political elite during the colonial times in the sense of political appointments due to ‘race’ to the legislative council by the British colonial rulers.<sup>27</sup> To put it plainly, the claims were to enhance a racial distinction to the Tamils, assert a religious identity whilst also

preserving the emergence of the Muslims as a politically conscious minority and also trying to safeguard their socio-political interests and developing a cultural agency.<sup>28</sup>

For the Muslim community, as they strove to identify themselves separate

*The [Sri Lankan] Muslim community has been distinct in espousing its ‘racial’ Semitic identity comparable to the Aryan (Sinhalese), the Dravidian (Tamil) and Burgher (European mixed race) communities... put[ing] them on a collision course with the Tamil political elite.”*

to the Sinhalese and Tamils, there was a parallel process of a revival in Islamic religious thinking (which was also taking place globally) which helped with the identity formation. It is the religious ties or the concept of the *Ummah* (community) that became a homogenising factor that Muslim representatives refused to consider themselves as a divided community. The Muslim religious formation was empowered by the Iranian revolution in the late seventies as well as the Middle East petro dollars which aided a gradual rise in Islamic religious consciousness. Empowered by this, religious groups started to put another dimension into the Muslim consciousness in Sri Lanka.

Organisations like Jamaat-i-Islami<sup>29</sup> and the Tabligh Jamaat,<sup>30</sup> which have their origins in the Indian Sub-Continent in response to colonial interventions (Hirst, 2011), in particular have been 'blamed' for the 'Islamisation' of Sri Lanka during the last few decades. This has been perceived largely as negative by analysts who feel that this has led to a psychological conflict within the community (McGilvray D. B., 2011) in terms of a tension between the religious and cultural influences of the global Islamic movements as well as religious ideologies of the local context. However, to blame these two organisations solely for the large scale Islamisation of the country is not only naive but it does not take into account other factors and contexts.

Whilst both these organisations are noted for uniting Muslims under an Islamic umbrella to give political weight to a largely constructed religious identity (Imtiyaz A., 2012), there was also an increased social religiosity and display of religious clothing coming from large numbers of Sri Lankan Muslims – men and women – employed on labour contracts in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and the Gulf Emirates, and who on their return to Sri Lanka brought with them the

new Arab traditions and cultures (McGilvray D. B., 2011).

The 'Islamisation' of communities has also largely been influenced and driven by funds and donations from the Middle East mainly Saudi Arabia and the other petro-monarchies, which propagate a certain type of ideology mainly of the 'Salafi / Wahabi' form. What this has ultimately meant is the development of an identity that is at odds with a Sri Lankan identity and departure from what was seen as a 'traditional Sri Lankan Muslim identity'. Whilst the religious revival amongst Muslims has given them a greater appreciation of their own identity, it has also transformed the relations with the ethnic others and has been centred around the perception and propagation of piety in terms of their minority consciousness and the "cultivated distancing of the religious other and promoting a sensibility of community exclusiveness among Muslims" (Mohamed-Saleem, June 2019).

#### **CONTEXT 4: ISOLATION AND EXCLUSION**

A cursory glance at the leadership of most Muslim civil, religious and political organisations shows that there are very few men under 40 (and even fewer women) who are in leadership or playing prominent roles. This has resulted in many feeling frustrated at being marginalised, excluded and not being heard. The lack of consistent engagement and safe spaces has led many to seek other means for engagement and fulfilment, either through professional means like the Lions or Rotary Clubs or elsewhere as the latter platforms are perceived as being 'anti Muslim'.

For the Easter Sunday bombers who came from the upper middle class, this certainly would have been a push factor where despite having the economic capital,

they were consistently ignored, excluded and marginalised from Muslim organisations, realising that they did not have that influence or agency to effect change or make a difference. In this sense, exclusion and marginalisation meant not being provided with opportunity to assume leadership of these various civil society organisations. Thus being marginalised socially from civic organisations would have created a sense of frustration with not being able to articulate a sense of social justice or engage in moving social capital forward.

For marginalised women,<sup>31</sup> the prospects for engagement are even more limited and solace is often found online through WhatsApp conversations, online or through attending Islamic courses.<sup>32</sup> Many of these platforms and avenues are not being curated well and the propensity for women to be radicalised to a greater extent online (Garcia-Calvo, 2017). This can indeed be a push factor that saw a woman being part of the Easter Sunday attacks. Moreover, the isolation felt by Muslim women especially in the public space removes their agency and this can push some towards further radicalisation (Saltman & Smith, 2015).

The above context is presented not to explain away what happened but to identify the prevailing frustrations coupled with political intransigence and a general lack of accountability towards anti-Muslim hate speech. It does not however explain the meticulous planning and groups intent on

violence, and also the lack of awareness or unwillingness to respond by the intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

## CONTEXT 5: POST-CONFLICT RECONCILIATION

The reconciliation conversation both at an international and national level post-2009 did not really engage the Muslim community or truly acknowledge the trauma and hurt it had gone through in the 30-year-old conflict. It is no surprise that the leader of the 21/4 bombers came from the eastern town of Kathankudy which had suffered one of the bloodiest incidents of attacks on a religious site prior to the Easter Sunday attacks.

The history of the conflict is as much around the LTTE and the Sinhala government as it is around Muslim dissatisfaction stemming from two main grievances (Haniffa 2008): the lack of Muslim participation within the conflict and the peace processes<sup>33</sup> and also in 2005 after the tsunami, when a mechanism framed as Tsunami relief was seen to pay little heed to the losses suffered by the Muslim areas that it sought to address. Muslims felt that there was little acknowledgement of the loss they suffered as a community and the memory of their dead and those still suffering was not sufficiently

*For marginalised women, the prospects for engagement are even more limited and solace is often found online... The isolation felt by Muslim women especially in the public space removes their agency and this can push some towards further radicalisation*

given credence. This sowed the seed of doubt within the Muslim community, resulting in mistrust and a major disconnect between them and the Government explain McGilvray and Raheem (2007, 34).

The 30-year-old conflict fuelled competing conceptions of nationalism and further led to the polarisation of communities. An Asia Foundation survey in 2011 showed that as the country emerged from decades of civil war, new challenges relating to ethno-religious dynamics were palpable. It further revealed that although the war had ended, people were worried about extremist religious views and violence, particularly in multi-ethnic areas (Sabharwal & Chinn, 2012). Another study conducted showed that “post war ethnic relations among resettled communities are deeply divergent than convergent. The absence of shared values and persistent distrust and suspicion, now marks the composition of the multi-ethnic in former conflict zones” (Thaheer, Peiris, & Pathiraja, 2013). The rise of the anti-Muslim violence post-2009 is a testament to this distrust and suspicion.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1) INTEGRATING CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

There can be no binary thinking around CVE programs in Sri Lanka, that are stripped of complexity and that are done in a vacuum not understanding the history or current context of structural inequalities (political/economical/social/ inter and intra community dynamics). Structural factors that can fuel support for violent extremism, like corrupt governance and inequality, are often intertwined with individual-level vulnerability factors, such as a search for identity or a need for quick answers to issues of injustice.

Under these circumstances, individuals can be drawn to black-and-white answers that seem to offer simplicity, clarity, and certainty, with an identifiable in-group/ out-group dynamic that offers a sense of community and belonging to help people make sense of the world. Thus, there is a need to understand state-perpetrated violence and injustice, the level of exclusion that different constituents face within a community and between communities (Global Centre on Cooperative Security, 2019).

There is thus a need to integrate and strengthen conflict sensitivity,<sup>34</sup> to understand the context of Sri Lanka; to understand the interaction between the intervention and the context; and act upon the understanding of this interaction – to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts. This forms part of the essential ‘do no harm’ principles to which all practitioners should subscribe. By bringing this into the thinking, it will help practitioners to think through how to minimise negative impacts of a programme and maximise the opportunities to do good.

It also allows practitioners to assess both intended and unintended consequences – and understand how their project interacts with VE and wider conflict dynamics.

This is particularly important in the Sri Lankan context, as at a community level the highly sensitive and political nature of PVE programming means that the mere existence of this programme can exacerbate and create tensions within a community. The fear is that a securitisation of the Muslim community could follow the same path as what happened with the Tamil community during the previous conflict, which was used by successive governments to legitimise power against the minorities.

## 2) UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Civil society organisations represent a bulwark against violent extremism (Bhulai, 2017). A variety of constituents including religious and political leaders will have to work together to tackle many of the ongoing developmental, political, and socioeconomic challenges within Sri Lanka that often give rise to an environment conducive to violent extremism. However, in doing this, there has to be space provided for diversity (young people, women, social, ideological) to be able to meaningfully contribute and influence the conversations. If a large portion of those affected by violent extremism are young people, it does not make sense that decisions on how to address them do not have those who understand first-hand what the challenges are. These initiatives include producing educational entertainment that challenges extremist narratives, improving relationships between communities and local government, and promoting research

and understanding to better recognise local factors contributing to the spread of violent radicalisation.

The language used has to also change as often the narrative frequently references the need to target 'at-risk communities' or 'vulnerable youth', thereby labelling entire populations based on the presumption that they may or may not commit violence. This approach can be highly discriminatory, leading to the stigmatisation of minority, ethnic, religious, indigenous or 'age'-related groups. Taking a broader approach, rather than 'capturing' those on the fringes of risk, is also complicated and can miss focus on those who actually need the intervention or support. A whole community may display vulnerability factors, but this does not mean that any of the individuals within the community are ever likely to engage in acts of violence.

### 3) REFRAMING NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY

There is a need to de-securitize the identity of Muslims as the Muslim community comes under the spotlight, calling into question, faith, religious and cultural practice. Whilst there is a need for the government to avoid the securitisation of Muslims and their identities, there is a need for internal reflections within the Muslim community for them to answer internally some hard questions. What is at stake is how the Muslims identify themselves. To a large extent the shape this discourse takes will not only depend on the macro political environment, but a reimagining of the Muslim identity. This will have an important role to play in shaping the future of these discourses and addressing some of the causes for violent extremism within the community.

In defining themselves Muslims, both in an ethnic and religious form, the identity of the Sri Lankan Muslim community has

been developed and evolved not only based on ethno-nationalist tendencies but also from a theological and spiritual basis. Thus it is clear that there is a paradox in the Muslim identity and that the Sri Lankan Muslim community is at best a complex mix of different ideologies and thought processes. Faith is not only a theological marker (a religious motivator) but also an identity marker (a communal galvaniser), which means there remain tensions and fault lines along racial and religious lines.

By identifying themselves ethnically as 'Muslims', politically constructed from the late 19th century, the Muslim political elites played on blurring the distinctions between faith as a theological marker (religious motivator) and faith as an identity-marker (communal galvaniser). This meant that the Muslims energetically constructed their 'racial' identity as a distinct ethnic group that is founded on religious and cultural identity. They interchanged religious motivators and communal galvanisers as and when it suited them. Largely helped with a renaissance in Islamic theological movements and thinking globally, the concept of Muslim representation in Sri Lanka evolved into theological and ideological formations on top of political representations. It is this that provides a challenge, with respect to the classification and representation of the Sri Lankan Muslim as an ethnic identity, whilst the generic definition of Muslim does not relate to an ethnic representation but to a religious connotation.

It follows therefore that there needs to be a holistic re-imagining of Sri Lankan Muslim identity, expression and agency and an approach to the conversation. There needs to be a rethink about the identity for the Muslim community (and beyond). The revisiting of the concept that the community is not just homogenous Muslims but heterogeneous and made up

of multiple identities. The re-imagination of the community identity has to include rethinking what the Muslim community is, what it represents and what ultimately it identifies with. The role that they carve out for themselves is dependent on them being seen as part of the solution and not as an additional problem. This comes back to the fact that they need to articulate a comprehensive narrative linked to identity (based on their Islamic principles of ethics) that takes into consideration the whole community and country. The community cannot and must not shed its religious allegiances, and thus a rethinking of the identity has to start from understanding how one approaches Islamic reformation.

#### **4) NOT INSTRUMENTALISING BUT INTEGRATING RELIGION**

Since religion is an integral part of Sri Lankan society with a dialogical experience existing between communities, any CVE process needs to integrate religion. This is also what comes out of a conflict sensitivity analysis that one does on Sri Lanka. Faith has a relationship with identity formations and ethnic expressions. The language of faith and spirituality need to be institutionalised as are the practices of compassion, culture of peace, respect and forgiveness as a space for religious actors is provided and encouraged to utilise their social capital whilst demystifying narratives. There must be inclusivity in representation by insisting on multi-religious and multi-intra faith group

designs (Abu-Nimer, 2018).

There is a need to avoid linking Islam as a religion or Muslims as people and communities with CVE/PVE campaigns, for example by avoiding the use of terms like “Islamic terrorism”, “Muslim terrorists”, “jihadists”, etc. This can help delink Islam from VE. In addition, there is a need within the Muslim community to demystify the narrative around Jihad and to remove misconceptions around war and violence committed in the name of religion. There needs to be more discussion on the role of Islam and non-violence and conflict-

resolution. As Qamar ul Huda says “Scholars do not mystically divert jihadists from violent extremism; rather they have trained a new cadre of young sophisticated scholars already versed as practitioners in CVE and conflict resolution” (Huda, 2019).

In addressing extremism with the Muslim community, it is important not to reinforce prevailing short-sighted approach of singling out Muslims only. Extremism exists in all faith and non-faith communities where a minority of adherents tend to manipulate their faith and tradition by justifying violence and exclusion. In fact, massive

atrocities have been committed by misusing religions (including Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism) throughout modern history. This does not mean providing legitimacy for the acts of violence, but making sure they are put into historical

*Since religion is an integral part of Sri Lankan society with a dialogical experience existing between communities, any CVE process needs to integrate religion.*

and theological contexts.

Conversations will have to also engage on controversial issues, especially those relating to national policies regarding religious freedom, self-determination and that delve into deeper into analysing structures of violence – not just the symptoms. This requires professional mediation and curation that allows participants to work through issues but are able to understand and explain their short- and long-term solutions in a language that they understand and accept.

Faith leaders and religious institutions need to create and engage in activities that promote socio-economic development and cultural interactions that builds mutual co-dependence. Thus more investment in economic and educational programs that look at functional coexistence might help the propensity for inter community radicalisation. This does mean that the state has to follow up with ensuring basic security.

### **5) TACKLING MARGINALISATION, ENCOURAGING POSITIVE ACTIVISM**

Positive activism needs to be supported, encouraged and promoted. This will enable people to channel frustrations and ideas about social change into something positive. There needs to be a safe space to be radical (without being judged or targeted): bold, different, awkward and dissenting. This is an important antidote to radicalisation that leads to violence. Both within the Muslim community and outside, there needs to be an opportunity to encourage dissent, rebel and to be able to challenge hierarchy. More space and opportunities to engage in civil, political and religious organisations have to be created to engage young people in non-violent alternatives that respond.

Special attention also must be paid to women, but gender is more than just

focusing on women and does not stand alone from other social factors. It may be more productive to think of gender as a frame of analysis that incorporates all people. Gendered expectations play a role in why some women and men choose to a path of violence and others do not, although the same gendered expectations can lead to very different results. The expectation placed on men, for example, to be a breadwinner and protector, including expectations to ‘protect’ or control ‘one’s women’ be it at the personal, family or community level, can lead some men to violent radicalisation or not. It is different for women with different roles and responsibilities.

People face different layers of vulnerabilities based on their gender and age, from the heightened risk of physical and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to a shift in gender roles. Women can experience having to take on multiple roles in the family and public sphere as pressure is placed on the male members of their families, or they are killed, incarcerated or have their mobility curtailed. In some cases because they are not allowed in a public space, or their mobility is curtailed, they are vulnerable to the online space, which if not curated or addressed, means that the threat of misinformation and misperception is very real.

Understanding gendered push and pull factors for joining or not joining groups as well as investigating the role of gender in creating various kinds of pressures and vulnerabilities, rather than assuming men and women play specific roles, is an essential part understanding how to work in Sri Lanka given its history.

## CONCLUSION

What the literature on radicalisation and violent extremism teaches us is that neither education nor economics can help explain any one individual's violent activism (Burke, 2019). Instead there are multiple factors that lead to radicalisation. Terrorism is a social activity. Ideas spread and are reinforced among peers, married couples, old school friends and families. These ideas are simple. They explain complex events, identities, and histories through a rudimentary and binary narrative. Neither education nor wealth is proof against them, nor is poverty or ignorance.

The lesson from Sri Lanka follows the same logic: it is not only the role of state violence as a driver of radicalisation but the political infrastructure fronted by elites that can be real sources of grievances and exclusion. In the absence of civil society and religious leadership and accompaniment, this can produce a constant sense of insecurity, marginalisation and frustration that drives recruitment to radical groups. Thus, a countering violent extremism narrative aimed purely at a securitised Muslim without understanding the history of Sri Lanka in particular will be inadequate and also wrong if it doesn't take into account the previous violent uprisings from other communities. It is important to understand how these dynamics intersect as well as the interconnectedness between politics, identity, and religion. These are

*It is not only the role of state violence as a driver of radicalisation but the political infrastructure fronted by elites that can be real sources of grievances and exclusion.*

intertwined, and in the face of structural inequalities towards social mobility and the attitude of the state towards minorities and state sponsored violence. It is a build-up of frustrations and helplessness brought about by the intransigence and insularity of political, religious and civil leadership and the disconnect with the grassroots and rural areas and an attractiveness of a certain ideological narrative that goes unchallenged that creates these ripe conditions.

This must also be the starting point for examining causes and origins of violence in the Muslim community. The social, political and/or economic grievances that could motivate communities to rebel violently against the dominant actors (Gurr, 1993) did exist for the Muslims particularly those living in the East (in a similar vein to the radicalisation of Tamil and Sinhala youth) and also particularly after

2009, with the rise of anti-Muslim hate speech and violence by radical Sinhala Buddhist groups, often through state complicity. This is not withstanding the weakness of Muslim political actors within the Government or the Muslim religious and civil society leadership to adequately address exclusion and the move towards violent radicalisation or push for accountability. The Government has to address these underlying push factors that give rise to isolation and exclusion and give oxygen to those preaching a violent extremism agenda.

So, what is the answer to the question posed as to what the Muslim community should do now? The way forward must be one about a re-imagination of what the Muslim community is, represents and ultimately identifies with. It must include thinking about how well the community manages the formation of attitude towards 'other' ethnicities and practices adopted to mitigate negative attitudes. Violent and twisted narratives need to be challenged and countered. There cannot be any room for these types of ideologies, however these ideologies proliferate when given oxygen by external circumstances. In this regard, much work is needed by the Muslim community to work towards possible behaviour change to experience 'other' communities. Their need for separation, to be identified and exist separate from the ethnic/religious other, came as a consequence of being compressed between two dominant groups who were engaged in a conflict with each other – a conflict that was itself primarily about identity and existence. Much has to be done to break these silos whilst addressing some of the key systemic and structural failures.

However, countering violent extremism in Sri Lanka will have to not only consider the formation of the Muslim identity, but also the identity of other ethnic groups and how they fit into the mosaic of a national identity – one that is not politically contested. This requires a wider perspective than is being currently discussed, and therein lies the danger. As long as there is no drive to build a multi-ethnic nation, we can expect the Sri Lankan Muslim and generally minority problem to continue (Haniffa 2008).

---

This paper is a follow up from *Insights*, Issue no. 6, 'Tackling Challenges for the Sri Lankan Muslims in the wake of the Easter Sunday attacks', June 2019, The Cordoba Foundation.

## AUTHOR PROFILE

**\*DR AMJAD MOHAMED-SALEEM**



\*Dr Amjad Mohamed-Saleem is a political and social scientist with extensive knowledge and experience on peace building, humanitarian affairs and development work. He has a particular interest in interfaith engagement with a focus on South Asia. He has worked for different international organisations on peace building and humanitarian action.

Mohamed-Saleem currently sits on the board of the Joint Learning Initiative for Faith and Communities and is a member of the Advisory Board for the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform. He is a regular contributor to *Fair Observer and New World Order*; an alumni of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP) and a Hive Global Leaders Fellow.

Mohamed-Saleem has an M.Eng from Imperial College, London, an MBA from Manipal GlobalNxt University and a doctorate from Exeter University, UK, where he explored the transformation of Muslim Identity in Sri Lanka.

## ENDNOTES

1. Whilst Sri Lanka has different ethnic groups, the main classifications are: Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim (Moor). Muslims are classed separately because of a slight difference in culture, food and dress and are further divided into Moors, Malays and so on. Within the Sinhala and Tamil ethnicities, there is a further division based on religion. For the former it is Sinhalese Buddhists, Christians and Muslims and for the latter there are Hindus, Christians and Muslims.
2. This was perhaps one of the most shocking aspects of the attacks in terms of the profiles of the bombers who came from middle class families with money and influence yet were radicalised to carry out these violent attacks (Frayer, 2019).
3. Radicalisation in itself is not necessarily a problem, it can be a force for good when the urge for social change is done without violence and has positive, peaceful and constructive outlets. However, the danger arises when radical movements / individuals start to use fear, violence and terrorist activities to achieve their ideological aims (Bartlett and Miller 2012).
4. One way of conceptualising the factors that may lead to violent extremism is the idea of 'push' and 'pull' factors:
  - 'Push Factors' may include: marginalisation, inequality, discrimination, persecution or the perception thereof, the denial of rights and civil liberties; and environmental, historical or socio-economic grievances, whether actual or perceived.
  - 'Pull Factors', by contrast, might nurture the appeal of violent extremism at the individual and psycho-social level. monetary benefit, protection or safety for a person's family, sense of belonging, revenge, personal empowerment, religious rewards, etc.
5. When they took control of Sri Lanka in 1796, the British had little understanding of the history and customs of the island (Rogers J. D., 1990) and faced with people speaking a variety of languages, wearing a number of costumes, and following different religions, began to exert control on the native population so they could be "counted, objectified and divided into social groups" (Wickramasinghe 2006, 45) by problematically devising categories such as nation, race, religion and caste through which they imposed a sense of difference on their subjects.
6. For example, in the 1871 census, where 'race' appeared for the first time, there were seventy eight 'nationalities' and twenty four 'races' (Wickramasinghe N., 2006). However by the 1881 census, the number of 'races' had reduced to seven: Europeans, Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors, Malays, Vedddhas and others (Wickramasinghe N., 2006).
7. Section 29(2) of the Soulbury Constitution, independent Ceylon's first, states: "No law shall make a person or any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions are not made liable. No law shall confer on persons of any community or religion any privilege or advantage which is not conferred on persons of other communities or religions. Any law made in contravention of sub section (2) shall to the extent of such contravention be void". This only restricted parliament from enacting discriminatory laws but gave no protection against discriminatory practices (International Crisis Group, 2007).
8. For example, lectures given to recruited members of the Front were based on Marxism-Leninism as the Front identified perpetuation of a dependent economy through neo-colonialism (Fernando 2008).
9. Bush (2003) explains this as a politics of exclusion where if you were from the wrong family, wrong caste and had no finances, you had no chance to stand for political office.
10. For example, the 1972 constitution subjected the judiciary to political control and declared Buddhism as the state religion while giving other religions the freedom of worship. It removed a section safeguarding the rights of minorities and replaced it with a clause on Fundamental rights. (L. Farook 2009).
11. The controversial policies for university admissions in particular aimed at improving the opportunities for rural Sinhala youth had conversely struck at the very heart of Tamil middle class, affecting the economic mobility of Tamils from Jaffna.
12. The first demands for a separate Tamil state as a bargaining position in the hope of reaching a compromise of a devolution package were made. The devolution package was to give some autonomy to the northern and eastern territories (where Tamils were dominant). This was something that the State would never accept, as it was felt that this would lead to national fragmentation.
13. In 1981, following violence after local government elections in Jaffna, the main library (the second largest in Sri Lanka and the main library for Tamil material in the country) was burnt down. Its destruction, mainly perpetrated by rioting Police, was not only interpreted by Tamils as a deliberate attack on Tamil learning, culture and history, but as justification of the inability for Sinhalese and Tamils to coexist (Nissan and Stirrat 1990).
14. The Sri Lankan government mishandled the political situation following Black July. There was no open condemnation from the Sinhalese ruling elite or state institutions neither were any meaningful immediate measures taken to prevent the violence against the Tamil civilians from spreading to the other parts of the

island from Colombo (Imtiyaz and Stavris 2008).

15. This led to the mass migration of Tamils seeking refuge to places like Canada, UK and US (close to a million Tamils fled Sri Lanka to the west) thereby encouraging support for the 'Tamil' cause. This was one of the darkest days in Sri Lanka's history and often referred to as 'Black July', particularly as the security forces did very little to help the Tamils, supposedly at the orders of the government. Later on evidence has shown that the government of the day were complicit in the anti-Tamil riots

16. Between 1987 and 1990, the Sri Lankan Government was effectively fighting uprisings on two fronts: one in the north with the Tamils and one in the south with Sinhala youth influenced by leftist communist tendencies. In the south, the uprising was dealt with a brutality that set aside almost all pretence of legality with death squads, mass human rights abuses and disappearances. A similarly heavy-handed approach was also enacted in the North and has been part and parcel of the State mechanism (regardless of which party is in power) since then.

17. A disastrous attempt by the Indian government to interfere both militarily and politically in the conflict in 1987.

18. On 3 August 1990 2 mosques in Kattankudi, a densely populated Muslim town on the eastern seaboard were attacked. In similar fashion, LTTE gunmen drove up to the mosques, locked the doors to prevent escape and began firing into the crowd inside with automatic weapons. More than 100 men and boys were killed.

19. Without any warning in the third week of October 1990, LTTE cadres went from village to village in the Northern Province, announcing over loudspeakers that Muslims had 48 hours to leave LTTE-held territory with just the clothes on their backs (and little money) or face reprisals (A. Imtiyaz 2011). In Jaffna, Muslims were given only two hours to leave and permitted to take just 150 rupees (\$1.40) with them (Ali 1997). There are of course varying accounts of what exactly happened that fateful day, but it has been reported that the displaced Muslims left behind as much as 5,000 million rupees (\$46 million) worth of property and valuables (ICG 2007). They eventually settled around the capital Colombo or in an area called Puttalam (3 hours north of Colombo) where they have been in refugee camps ever since.

20. The end of the conflict in May 2009 was controversial with the massive humanitarian crisis that triggered the displacement of about 280,000 people who were kept in refugee camps in the north looked after by the government and NGOs and international condemnation around human rights violations committed at the end of the conflict.

21. On June 15 2014, the southern town of Aluthgama became a focal point for ethnic clashes between Sinhala and Muslims (Tegal, 2014). For a couple of days, violence ensued in an eerie comparison to the 1983 pogrom that

had taken place against the Tamils.

22. For example, on 28 March 2013, Fashion Bug, a popular Muslim owned garment chain store was attacked (BBC News Asia, 2013b). Footage shows Buddhist monks leading a crowd of people and then throwing stones at the warehouse in Pepiliyana, while the police stood by and failed to stop the events from unfolding (ibid). In particular the Secretariat For Muslims (SFM) itself has recorded 284 incidents of threats, attempted attacks, harassment, incitements and provocations directed at Muslims in 2013 (Secretariat for Muslims, 2013).

23. For the elite Muslim community leaders at that time, the term 'Moor' put forward by the Portuguese and then adopted by the Dutch and subsequently by the British, was not a mistake but deliberate because the people these colonial had encountered in Sri Lanka were "a class of people who resembled in religion and other characteristics, the Arabs of Spain" (Nuhman M. A., 2007, p.128). Nuhman (2007) further cites many writings from that time especially of I.L.M Azeem which says that the Portuguese also had been in India before visiting Sri Lanka. There they had encountered Muslims as well but had not given them the name of 'Moors' which was only given to the Muslims in Sri Lanka.

24. Refer to *Insights*, Issue no. 6 (Mohamed-Saleem, June 2019).

25. In order to preserve a religious identity, government institutions were established to look after the maintenance of mosques and charitable trusts, with the development of the Muslim Mosques and Charitable Trusts or Waqfs Act of 1956 (Nuhman M. A., 2007). These effectively had the effect of ensuring solidity to the identity formation of the Muslim community, which very much focuses centrally around the practice of faith, and the primary place to worship.

26. Historically Muslim political elites have claimed that "the Muslim community had a separate identity and that they were neither Tamils nor Sinhalese but Moors of Arab origin with different cultural, dress and social practices.

27. The legislative council was set up by the British between 1833 – 1912, to engage with all ethnicities within Sri Lanka had previously had a representative of the Tamil-speaking community to represent both the Tamils and the Muslims. This was later reformed in 1889 when a Muslim nominated representative was included in the council (Ameerdeen, 2006).

28. Largely brought about by the arrival of Ahmad Orabi Pasha in exile from Egypt, the Muslims in Sri Lanka, at the peak of their economic prosperity were receptive to new influences, namely the concept of a transnational Muslim identity with the concept of a 'revival' of Islamic thinking (Asad M. K., 1993). Orabi Pasha is also credited with arousing in the Muslim community searching for a separate identity, this fascination with the Fez cap which came to be seen as a symbol of the Muslim identity of many of the politicians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The fez cap was seen as this link

with the Ottoman Empire to express this 'other' identity. It has since died down but wearing the fez cap is seen as a cultural piece of many Muslim households in Sri Lanka especially during a wedding when the groom is sometimes seen to wear the cap.

29. Jamat-i-Islami is a Muslim organisation that originated out of Pakistan which explores Islamic reformation with the hope of acquiring political leadership (Qazi 2017), however it is important to note that in Sri Lanka, the Jamat Islami which was inspired by the Pakistani Jamat-i-Islami, has no political ambitions and is more interested in social welfare and the spiritual upliftment of the community. In this case, the Sri Lanka Jamat Islami is similar to the Jamat-i-Islami of India, which is an independent entity also focused on social welfare and spiritual upliftment.

30. The Tablighi Jamaat was formed in India in 1926 with the aim of creating an atmosphere of spirituality, solidarity and purpose which involves reviving the faith of weaker Muslims (Taylor 2009).

31. It has been suggested that the experience of living within a society that denies them full civil rights and economic opportunities may lead some women to perceive participating in terrorism as a way of acquiring liberty, emancipation, respect and equality. On the other hand, violations of women's human rights may also deepen the feelings of alienation, isolation and exclusion that may make individuals more susceptible to radicalisation. In this context, some research has suggested that personal trauma may be one of the fundamental motivations for woman's involvement in violent extremism.

32. Many of these women are often young, having been married early (one of the weaknesses of the Muslim marriage and divorce act regulations in Sri Lanka where there is a dispute on how young girls can be to be married) and find themselves vulnerable to online radicalisation and grooming.

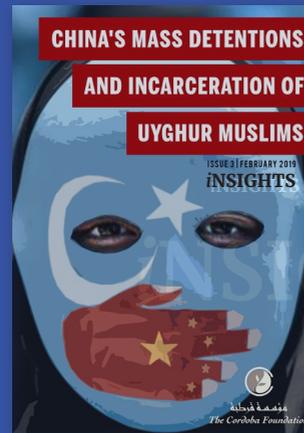
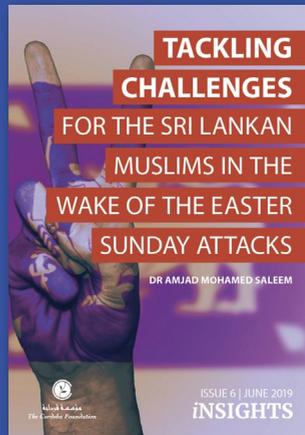
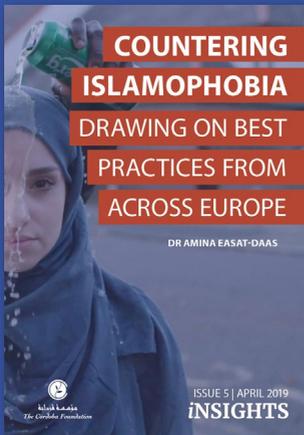
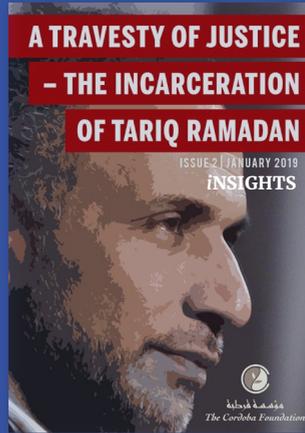
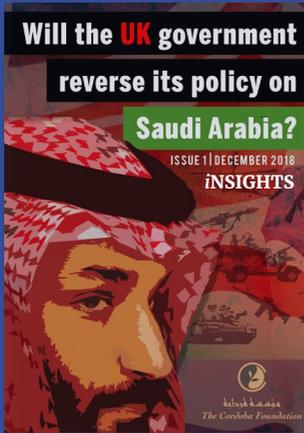
33. In 2002, when the Cease Fire Agreement was signed between the government and the LTTE, the manner in which the agreement was entered into, with Muslim members of the government and the Muslim Peace Secretariat consulted rather late in the process and allowed only very minimal input. This was seen as a betrayal of the Muslims by the government. In the wake of the CFA, the alternatives for the Muslim community was to seek their own path in the peace agreements.

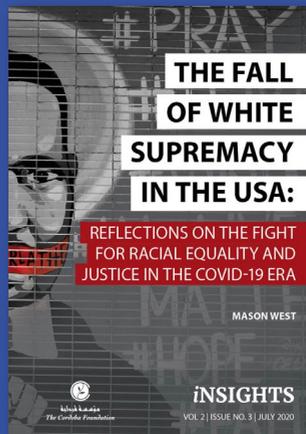
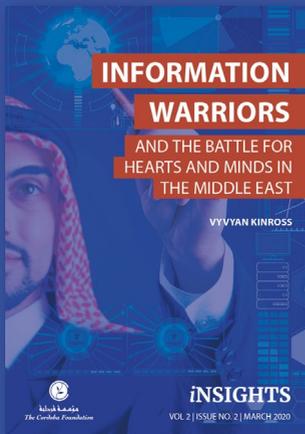
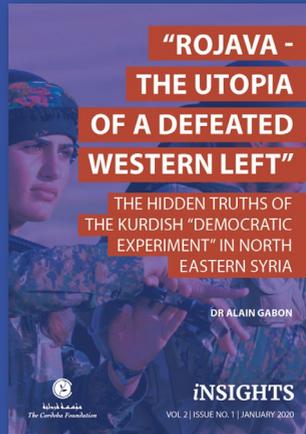
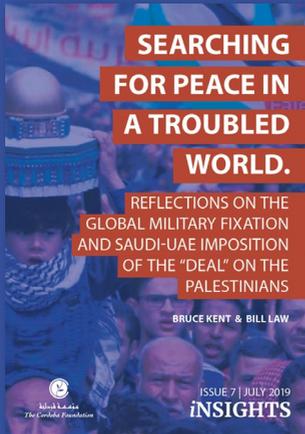
34. Conflict-sensitive programming – whether working around the conflict, in the conflict or actively on the conflict – concerns ensuring the intervention does not exacerbate the root and/or proximate factors, or ignite pre-existing or new triggers of conflict.

## REFERENCES

- Abu-Nimer, M. (2018). *Alternative Approaches to Transforming Violent Extremism: The Case of Islamic Peace and Interreligious Peacebuilding*. Berghof Foundation
- Al Jazeera English. (2019). *World Leaders Condemn Easter Sunday Blasts*. 21 April. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/world-leaders-condemn-easter-sunday-blasts-sri-lanka-190421074138039.html>
- Ali, A. (1997, Oct). The Muslim Factor in Sri Lankan Ethnic Crisis. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 17(2), pp.253-267.
- Amarasingam, A., & Fuller, L. (2019, May '17). *Sri Lanka is Burning Again*. Retrieved May 17, 2019, from *Washington Post*.
- Ameerdeen, V. (2006). *Ethnic Politics of Muslims in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Centre for Minority Studies.
- Asad, Kamal. (1993). *The Muslims of Sri Lanka under the British Rule*. New Delhi: Navrang.
- Bandarage, Asoka. (2009). *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy*. New York: iUniverse.
- Bartlett, Jamie, & Carl Miller. (2012). "The Edge of Violence: Towards Telling the Difference between Violent and Non Violent Radicalisation." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24 (1): pp.1-21.
- BBC News Asia. (2013b, Mar 29). *Sri Lanka crowd attacks Muslim warehouse in Colombo*. Retrieved March 29, 2013 – BBC News: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21973292>
- Bhulai, R. (2017). *Going Local: Supporting Community-Based Initiatives to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism in South and Central Asia*. GCCS.
- Burke, J. (2019, Apr 25). *Why Sri Lanka attackers' wealthy backgrounds shouldn't surprise us*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/25/why-sri-lanka-attackers-wealthy-backgrounds-shouldnt-surprise-us>
- Bush, D. K. (2003). *The Intra-Group Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka - Learning to Read Between the Lines*. Ottawa: Palgrave Macmillan
- Deegalle, Mahinda. (2007). "Buddhist Monks and Political Activism in Sri Lanka." In *Can Faiths Make Peace? Holy Wars and the Resolution of Religious Conflicts*, by Philip Broadhead and Damien Keown, pp.134-148. London: I.B. Tauris & Co.
- Farook, L. (2009). *Nobody's People: The Forgotten plight of Sri Lanka's Muslims*. Colombo: South Asia News Agency Publication
- Feith, D. (2010). Tamil and Sinhala Relations in Sri Lanka: a Historical and Contemporary Perspective. *Global Change, Peace & Security (formerly Pacifica Review: Peace, Security & Global Change)*, 22(3), pp.345-353.
- Fernando, Jude Lal. (2008). *Religion, Conflict and Peace in Sri Lanka: The Politics of Interpretation of Nationhoods*. Dublin: LIT.
- Frayer, L. (2019, Apr 25). *Bombers Who Carried Out Attacks In Sri Lanka Were 'Well-Educated'*. Official Says. <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/24/716664302/bombers-who-carried-out-attacks-in-sri-lanka-were-well-educated-minister-says?1567332547853>
- Garcia-Calvo, C. (2017, Apr 17). *'There is no life without jihad and no jihad without hijrah': the jihadist mobilisation of women in Spain, 2014-16*. Real Institute Elcano: [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/riecano\\_en/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_in/zonas\\_in/ari34-2017-garciacalvo-jihadist-mobilisation-women-spain-2014-2016](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/riecano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/ari34-2017-garciacalvo-jihadist-mobilisation-women-spain-2014-2016)
- Global Centre on Cooperative Security. (2019). *Integrative Complexity Interventions to Prevent and Counter Violent Extremism*. Global Centre on Cooperative Security. <https://www.globalcenter.org/publications/integrative-complexity-interventions-to-prevent-and-counter-violent-extremism/>
- Gowrinthan, N. (2019, Apr 26). *Sri Lanka Is Already Drawing the Wrong Lessons From the Attacks*. Foreign Policy: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/26/sri-lanka-is-already-drawing-the-wrong-lessons-from-the-attacks/>
- Gunawardana, R.A.L.H. (1990). "The People of the Lion: the Sinhala identity and ideology in history and historiography." In *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of the Conflict*, by Jonathan Spencer, pp.45-86. Routledge.
- Gurr, T. (1993). *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*. Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Hellman-Rajanayagam, Dagmar. (1990). "The Politics of the Tamil Past." In *Sri Lanka; History and the Roots of the Conflict*, by Jonathan Spencer, pp.107-124. Routledge.
- Hemachandra, Samal. (2018). "Trends in Youth Radicalisation in Sri Lanka." In *Trends in Youth Radicalisation in South Asia*, by Gamin Keerawella and Akshay Senanayake, pp.47-64. Colombo: RCCS.
- Hirst, J. S. (2011). *Religious Traditions in Modern South Asia*. Routledge.

- Holdaway, Lucy, & Ruth Simpson. (2018). *Improving the impact of preventing violent extremism programming: A toolkit for design, monitoring and evaluation*. International Alert, London: UNDP.
- Huda, Q.-u. (2019, May 9). *The Role for Religion in the Fight Against ISIS*. Center for Global Policy: <https://www.cgpolicy.org/articles/the-role-for-religion-in-the-fight-against-isis/>
- Imtiyaz, A. (2012). Identity, Choices and Crisis: A Study of Muslim Political Leadership in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, pp.1-17.
- Imtiyaz, A. R., & Mohamed-Saleem, A. (2015). Muslims in post-war Sri Lanka: understanding Sinhala-Buddhist mobilisation against them. *Asian Ethnicity*, 16(2), pp.186-202. doi:10.1080/14631369.2015.1003691
- Imtiyaz, A. R., & Stavris, B. (2008). Ethno-Political Conflict in Sri Lanka. *The Journal of Third World Studies*, 25(2), pp.135-152.
- International Crisis Group. (2007). *'Sri Lanka's Muslims caught in the crossfire'*. Geneva: International Crisis Group.
- Irshad, Q. (2019, May 10). *Sri Lanka sets hotline report increasing anti-Muslim harassment in the wake of Easter Sunday attacks*. Retrieved May 17, 2019, *The Telegraph*: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/05/10/sri-lanka-sets-hotline-report-increasing-anti-muslim-harassment/>
- Jayawerdena, K. (2003). *Ethnic and Class Conflict in Sri Lanka: The Emergence of Sinhala-Buddhist Consciousness: 1883-1893*. Colombo: Sanjiva Books.
- Johansson, A. (2007). *A Third Way: The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress discourse struggle between Islamism and nationalism*. Master's thesis, Centre for Theology and Religion, Lund University.
- Kapferer, B. (1988). *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- McGilvray, D. B. (2008). *Crucible of Conflict: Tamil and Muslim Society on the East Coast of Sri Lanka*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- McGilvray, D. B. (2011). Sri Lankan Muslims: between ethno- nationalism and the global ummah. *Nations and Nationalism*, 17(1), pp.45-64.
- McGilvray, D. B., & Raheem, M. (2007). *Muslim Perspectives on the Sri Lankan Conflict*. Washington, DC: East-West Centre.
- Mohamed-Saleem, Amjad. (2019, Jun). *Tackling Challenges for the Sri Lankan Muslims in the wake of the Easter Sunday attacks*, Insights, Issue 6, The Cordoba Foundation.
- News18. (2019, June 12). *Sri Lanka to Implement UN Security Council's Measures on Counter-terrorism*. <https://www.news18.com/news/world/sri-lanka-to-implement-un-security-councils-measures-on-counter-terrorism-2183767.html>
- Nissan, Elizabeth, and R.L. Stirrat. 1990. "The Generation of Communal Identities." In *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*, by J Spencer, 19-44. London and New York: Routledge.
- Nuhman, M A. 2007. *Sri Lankan Muslims: Ethnic Identity within Cultural Diversity*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies.
- Rogers, John D. 1990. "Historical Images in the British Period." In *Sri Lanka: History and Roots of Conflict*, by Jonathan Spencer, 87-106. London: Routledge.
- Rogers, John D. 1994. "Post-Orientalism and the Interpretation of Premodern and Modern Political Identities: The Case of Sri Lanka." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53 (1): 10-23.
- Rotberg, Robert I. 1999. "Sri Lanka's Civil War: From Mayhem toward Diplomatic Relations." In *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg, 1-16. Washington D C: Brookings Institution Press.
- Sabharwal, G., & Chinn, L. (2012, 07 11). *Asia Foundation: Notes from the Field*. <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2012/07/11/new-survey-in-post-war-sri-lanka-examines-ethno-religious-relationships/>
- Saltman, E., & Smith, M. (2015). *Till Martyrdom Do Us Part: Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon*. London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue.
- Saleem, Amjad. (2020). *Remembering the Easter Sunday Victims in the Shadow of Covid-19*. 14 April. [https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central\\_south\\_asia/amjad-saleem-sri-lanka-news-coronavirus-covid-19-easter-sunday-attacks-south-asia-news-38948/](https://www.fairobserver.com/region/central_south_asia/amjad-saleem-sri-lanka-news-coronavirus-covid-19-easter-sunday-attacks-south-asia-news-38948/)
- Samarajiva, Indi. 2019. *They Knew: The Easter Attacks In Sri Lanka*. <https://medium.com/@indica/they-knew-the-easter-attacks-in-sri-lanka-fbebdcd57e63>.
- Secretariat for Muslims. (2013, January). *Perceptions and Documentation of Hate Crime*. Secretariat for Muslims: <http://bit.ly/1vCc3jy>
- Tegal, m. (2014, 06 22). *The Sunday Leader*. [www.thesundayleader.lk/2014/06/22/the-burning-fires-of-aluthgama/](http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2014/06/22/the-burning-fires-of-aluthgama/)
- Thaheer, M., Peiris, P., & Pathiraja, K. (2013). *Reconciliation in Sri Lanka: Voices from Former War Zones*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies.
- The Asia Foundation. (2011). *National Values Survey 2011, Colombo, Sri Lanka*. Colombo: The Asia Foundation.
- Wickramasinghe, N. 2006. *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities*. London: Hurst.





All back issues are available to download for FREE!

[thecordobafoundation.com](http://thecordobafoundation.com)



مؤسسة قرطبة

*The Cordoba Foundation*

info@thecordobafoundation.com  
www.thecordobafoundation.com

*Cultures in Dialogue.*



Twitter @CordobaFoundati(The Cordoba Foundation)