



Social Policy Legacies and the Contemporary Development Trajectory of Sri Lanka

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Social Policy Legacies and the Contemporary Development Trajectory of Sri Lanka

Ananda Karunarathna*, Edo Andriesse**

차 례

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(Abstract)

Sri Lanka is one of the lower-middle income countries in the South Asian region, yet it has simultaneously experienced 'High Human Development'. This is all the more remarkable given the 1983-2009 civil war. This paper has two objectives. First, it reviews the reasons for Sri Lanka's considerable human development achievements while still being a low middle income country by synthesizing the existing body of literature on Sri Lanka's socioeconomic development. Second, it provides an assessment of contemporary human developments. How has Sri Lanka fared in the

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last two decades? We pay special attention to the country's health and education policies. Based on a review of secondary sources we conclude that since the end of the civil war, Sri Lanka has experienced a substantial peace dividend. The task for Sri Lanka is to build on this peace dividend, to provide employment in the northern and eastern areas as well as to foster inclusive development throughout the country. The fact that Sri Lanka is classified as a high-human development should be no reason for complacency, given the remaining socio-economic and socio-spatial challenges. Promising industries are medical tourism, maritime logistics and agri-business.

Keywords: Sri Lanka, Human Development, Welfare Policy, Subsidy Policy, South Asia

I. Introduction and Background

During the British colonial period (approximately from 1803 to 1947), Ceylon had experienced many changes, such as the construction of infrastructure, the establishment of plantations and missionary schools, as well as British systems of governance. In the early 20th century it clearly became an economy based on tea, rubber, coffee and coconut products. After independence the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (hereafter simply Sri Lanka) gradually underwent a transformation from agriculture to manufacturing and services. This structural transformation accelerated after 1977 with the introduction of market-based reforms.

Sri Lanka is one of the lower-middle income countries in the South Asian region (World Bank 2015), yet it has simultaneously experienced 'High Human Development' with a human development index of 0.766 (UNDP, 2016) higher than Mexico, Brazil, Thailand and China, but lower than Cuba, Costa Rica and Malaysia. This is all the more remarkable given the 1983-2009 civil war. This paper has two objectives. First, it reviews the reasons for Sri Lanka's considerable human development achievements while still being a low middle income country by

synthesizing the existing body of literature on Sri Lanka's socioeconomic development such as UNDP (2016), World Bank (2015), Cole (2015), Karunathilake (2012), UNDP (2010), IMF (2010), Kanapathipillai (2009) and Arunathilake (2006). Second, it provides an assessment of contemporary human developments. How has Sri Lanka fared in the last two decades? We pay special attention to the country's health and education policies. While development experts often hail countries such as China, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand and obviously the four Asian Tigers/Dragons of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, few studies focus on possible lessons Sri Lanka's achievements might have for other developing countries. This is an omission since Sri Lanka is classified as having a high human development. The United Nations (2015) documented the substantial progress made towards achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs). And the World Bank concluded that Sri Lanka has excelled in overcoming human development challenges typical to a low-income country (World Bank, 2015).

This research work is based on a wealth of secondary data sources, for example data published by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the United Nations, various empirical journal articles, technical reports and books, particularly on the context of development discourse. We present several figures and tables to show relevant trends and patterns. Figure 5 was created using ArcGIS 10.2 software. Section 2 provides an overview of key policy legacies, section 3 describes the current progress of human development of the country including international comparisons and domestic spatial variation, and section 5 looks as the prospects for the future.

II. Welfare and Subsidy Policy Legacies

1. General Continuities

The 1948 – 1977 can be characterized by the implement of various socialist policies. In 1977, two years before Deng Xiaoping's famous economic reforms in China, Sri Lanka embarked on a process that increasingly welcomed market forces. In the 1980s and 90s, Sri Lanka's economic growth averaged about 5 percent, despite a 26-year civil war with various levels of intensity (IMF, 2007). Economic growth benefited the non-war-torn areas culminating in much more pronounced regional disparities (see section 3.4). Before zooming on education and health it is worthwhile to briefly mention certain general continuities.

Several welfare policies have had direct impacts on the quality of life of rural livelihoods. Some policies were implemented before independence. For instance, the first food subsidy initiative, the rice ration programme, was introduced in 1942 to overcome the difficulties of procuring basic consumption items during the Second World War when food supplies became uncertain. Every person (except children under one year) was given a ration book entitling the holder to certain quantities of rice, flour, sugar and other commodities. Retail prices were stipulated and controlled and only in 1978 was the subsidy fully removed from income tax payers, and in 1980 restricted to those with a family income of less than Rs. 300 per month (Hulme et al., 1994). Thus, having fallen from 21 per cent of government current expenditure in 1979 to 4.5 per cent in 1988, welfare expenditure surged back to 12 per cent in 1990 (Kelegama, 2006: 100). These kinds of food subsidy programmes still continue, albeit in different forms and particularly aimed at poor households. For an instance, most of the regional government schools are still conducting effective breakfast programmes.

In 1989 the government initiated a countrywide welfare programmes for rural households. One of the famous welfare programs was 'Janasaviya poverty alleviation program' (Hulme et al., 1994). The key components of Janasaviya consisted of substantial cash and subsistence transfers and credit entitlements to households that had been identified as eligible for support (Stokke, 1998). According to Kelegama (2006: 124) the Janasaviya Programme, as initially designed, implied an income transfer equivalent to almost 20 per cent of GDP to half the population over a two-year period, during which recipients were expected to develop the necessary skills for (self) employment. By early 1993 some 355,124 households had received Janasaviya entitlements under its first three annual rounds (Hulme et al., 1994). Public expenditure on this scheme for the country as a whole constituted about 3.5 per cent of GDP by 1991 (Islam, 1992). This program helped to enhanced rural livelihood cum their productivity at ground level and also can be identified as one of the influential 'bottom-up' poverty alleviation programs.

Another influential scheme is 'Samurdhi' (the meaning of the word is 'prosperity' in Sinhalese) poverty alleviation programme¹⁾ which has functioned as a major subsidy program since 1995. This programme consists of many sub schemes such as welfare (food stamp, subsidy for fuel, nutrition packages for children, pregnant and lactating mothers etc), microfinance, infrastructure development, livelihood development (animal husbandry and fisheries, agriculture, industrial and services), and social and spiritual development (antinarcotics and antismoking child abuse, women empowerment, and cultural and family development (Samurdhi Authority, 2010). At the conceptual level, "small groups" are considered to be the foundation of the program. As of December 2013, the number of small groups in the program was reported at 400,470 and 2.9 million of those members were found throughout the island (Bandara, 2016). In

1) <http://www.samurdhi.gov.lk/> (Accessed: 22/07/2017).

2013, another program called ‘Divineguma’ was introduced under the same authority, to further develop livelihood of rural household. Many housing programmes also (for instance Udagam 1,000,000 housing project) established for the rural farmers.

Himaz (2008) conducted a research on the effectiveness of Samurdhi program for the growth of children and concluded that the Samurdhi improves the height-for-age z-score of a child from a grant-receiving family by roughly 0.40 standard deviations with the impact driven mainly by children between six, and 36 months of age, compared to if they did not receive the grant. There are many branches of Samurdhi banks, functioning throughout the country which promotes rural household’s savings and it contributed to halt the rise of socioeconomic inequality. Particularly, the administrative districts such as Badulla, Monaragala, Rathnapura, Ampara, Hambanthota, Kegalle, Matale, Nuwara Eliya, Trincomalee, Kilinochchi, Vavunia, benefited.

2. Education

In retrospect, the history of education in Sri Lanka goes back to the era of establishment of the Buddhism and it has a close relationship with the Sanskrit language and Buddhist temples. This relationship has been linked with the socio-cultural activities particularly with some of rituals. Therefore, this background urged people to learn Buddhist philosophical thoughts which help to improve social values, morality and ethics. The Ministry of Education (2013), pointed out that ‘the religious knowledge and philosophy of Buddhism were encapsulated into short stanzas which were memorized by the pupils, who were trained to expand the kernel into detailed exhortations when preaching to the people.

According to Wanasinghe (1988), ‘Sri Lanka was the first territory in the Third World to inaugurate, as far back as 1945, an ambitious scheme

of free education from the kindergarten to the university. The Free Education Scheme in Sri Lanka encompasses the Hansard of the State Council of 30 May 1944'. Cole (2015) notes that in Sri Lanka, the term "free education" does not only refer to the fact that the state has, since 1945, provided education to all children free of charge from kindergarten to university. This was based upon the Educational Ordinance of 1939 (Ginige, 2002). A national system of education was established in 1960-61 and major improvements occurred in the 1970s after the 1972 reforms. According to Ariyadasa (1976), the reforms introduced in 1972 changed both the content and the structure of education. The structure was one of 5-3-4 (2 + 2) i.e. five years of primary, three years of junior secondary and four years of senior secondary education. Particularly, new curricula introduced to grade VI in 1972 to grade IX in 1975. The reforms had considered the socio-economic needs of the country, the nature of the learners and knowledge aiming at to democratize the education system.

The strong focus on education continued during the first years of economic reforms. An influential policy establishment was the provision of school text books. This was implemented to all students in grades one to ten on 18 January 1980 (Wanasinghe, 1988). And also, school uniforms program was implemented the same year and provided cloths for all the students annually. These schemes are still functioning by spearheading an effective development particularly at the regional areas. Another scheme is scholarships and bursaries programs; a study indicates that almost all undergraduate students in the university system in Sri Lanka are covered by a scholarship programme (Ranasinghe and Hartog, 2002). These programs also have helped to conquer economic hardships of rural students and to mitigate the inequality of education.

Every year, the government expends a considerable amount of money for the maintaining of free education (primary, secondary, and tertiary)

system. The government, at its various levels, finances both investment costs (for school buildings, furniture, and equipment) and recurrent costs (for teachers and other staff, consumable supplies, school uniforms, meals and text books), as well as administrative and development related expenditure (Arunathilaka, 2006). The total expenditure on education increased from 34.9 million rupees in 1945 to 3,668 million in 1984 (Wanasinghe, 1988) and recently the amount has been increased to 90,000 million rupees in 2016 (Ministry of Finance, 2016). Despite the inflation (6 per cent / forecast) was highly variable over the year but moderated in general, as was the current account deficit²⁾

The many reforms carried out since 1947 have contributed significantly to human capital formation in recent decades³⁾ The Ministry of Education has implemented policies with the mission of ‘to develop an excellent education system which enables students to acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to be future citizens who will perform their roles efficiently and effectively in a modern, globalised, knowledge-driven economy’ (Ministry of Education, 2013). Section 3.3 put the Sri Lankan experience in international perspective.

3. Health

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Sri Lankan health indicators are considerably positive as well as comparatively favourable (see below as well). Similar to education this situation is the result of many effective policy establishments during Sri Lanka’s modern history. Citizens throughout the country are now experiencing free health services and facilities at Island wide government hospitals and health

2) Asian Development Bank, 2017, <https://www.adb.org/countries/sri-lanka/economy#tabs-0-1>. (Accessed: 19/08/2017).

3) <http://www.moe.gov.lk/> (Accessed: 01/06/2017).

centers thanks to the National Health Services. The WHO (2002) pointed out that Sri Lanka has a long tradition of institutionalized and non-institutionalized care for the sick. Ancient kings built hospitals as early as the 5th and 6th centuries AD, with most of these hospitals located in Buddhist monasteries. This indicates the ancient foundation of indigenous healthcare system of Sri Lanka.

Countries like Sri Lanka, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand have invested heavily in education and health care for national development. Investment in literacy and health, including reproductive health, also helped to produce the conditions for later sustained economic growth (Costello and Manandhar, 1999: 66). Sri Lanka has an exemplary record in maternal and child health care. Provision of free education for over 60 years has helped to empower women. Medical care is accessible and provided free of charge (Senanayake et al., 2011). In fact, Sri Lanka has achieved a unique status in the world with health indicators that are comparable with those of developed countries (Karunathilake, 2012). The establishment of the department of Social Services in 1948, and the Health Act of 1953 (Wickramasinghe, 2006: 305), can be identified as key considerations of National Health Services. The principal of the right to health care was set out, while private practice for doctors in the state sector was abolished. She further explained that ‘the Sri Lanka welfare state as it emerged in its 1950s–1960s incarnation’ was very effective in the meaning of social welfare service. Maternal and child health care services can be identified as one of the centre-pieces in health services.

An organized effort to provide maternal and child health services commenced with the introduction of the Health Unit System in the mid 1920’s, which was thereafter extended to cover the entire country (Ministry of Health, 2016). In 1965 family planning was accepted as a part of national health policy and in 1968 the Maternal and Child Health

was set up. During the past few decades Sri Lanka's maternal mortality ratio has made a significant decline from 1650 per 100,000 live births in 1946 to the current level of 32 per 100,000 live births according to 2014. Furthermore, in each village midwives have provided services (9,164 in 2014) service and they have provided all the healthcare programs for children cum mothers, vaccinations and basics nutrition. All services are being providing on free of charges basis.

Based on the discussion above it is safe to argue that the health policies have contributed positively to Sri Lankan society and have facilitated economic growth in the post-1977 era. The Ministry of Health (2016) has reinforced the health services with various policy initiatives in recent years. At present, there are 22 base hospitals, 244 district hospitals and 356 primary care hospitals which are running throughout the country providing free health services. Section 3 builds on section 2 and sheds light on Sri Lanka's contemporary progress.

III. Contemporary Human Development Progress in International Perspective

1. Contemporary Human Development

As is now widely accepted human development is about more than gross national income growth. A person's access to income may be one of the necessities, but it is not the sum total of human endeavor (UNDP, 1990). The human development approach is focused on creating fair opportunities and choices for all people (UNDP, 2015). UNDP describes the concept in three broad cumulative approaches;

- 1) People: the human development approach focuses on improving

the lives people lead rather than assuming that economic growth will lead, automatically, to greater opportunities for all.

- 2) Opportunities: human development is about giving people more freedom and opportunities to live lives they value. In effect this means developing people's abilities and giving them a chance to use them.
- 3) Choices: human development is, fundamentally, about more choice. It is about providing people with opportunities, not insisting that they make use of them. No one can guarantee human happiness, and the choices people make are their own concern.

Within past twenty six years, Sri Lanka has been achieved considerable human development compare to the rest of South Asian countries according to the HDI (Figure 1).

According to the UNDP (2016), Sri Lanka is the preeminent country in the south Asian region in means of fast human development which indicates 73rd of HDI rank with the value of 0.766 is classified under the 'high human development' category. Figure 1 depicts the growing trend of HDI with a clear uptake and also, represents a dramatic progress in the first and half decades (1990 - 2005). This can be considered as one of the best achievements as well as the cornerstone of the quality of life oriented policy establishments which examined in the first part in this paper. This is because the HDI is the combination of many aspects of human development such as life expectancy, education level, and income etc. Hence it indicates such overall picture of human development of countries.

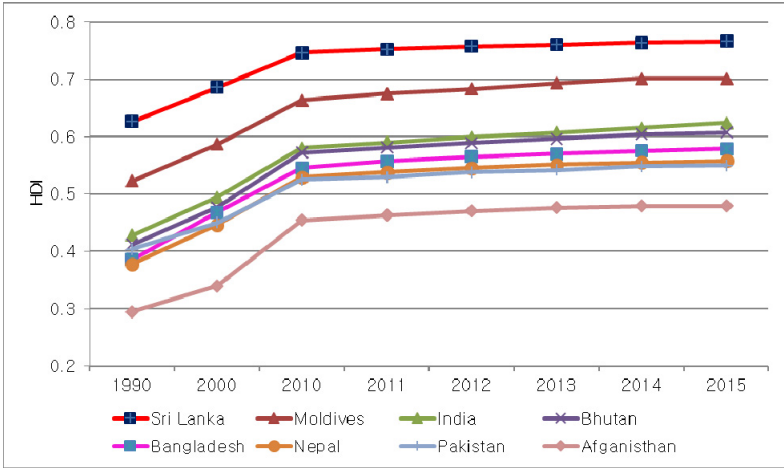


Figure 1: Progress of HDI in the Past 26 Years (1990 - 2015)

Source: Own compilation (2017), based on UNDP, 1990-2016 data.

Another important indication is the country's position in the South Asian region as well among other developing countries. In the context of human development, Sri Lanka is the best achiever of SAARC countries (among eight countries) and also compare to some of other developing countries. Particularly countries like China and Brazil also, can be considered as Newly Industrialized countries. Hence, Sri Lanka represents a unique pattern of burgeoning of human development while being a low income country. Stochastically this uniqueness has been linked with the country's well established effective subsidy and welfare policy legacies.

2. Health (Mainly Mortality and Life Expectancy)

The maternal mortality ratio and the other indices of maternal and neonatal health have shown uninterrupted improvement since 1930. Midwives and the policy to increase their presence has been the key to

success. Public health midwives provide care at the doorstep (Senanayake et al., 2011). Among others, Sri Lanka is predominant by the reduction in both child and maternal mortality in the country (Karunathilake, 2012). In line with this background, Sri Lanka has achieved incredible development in the health sector particularly as a developing nation. From 1990 to 2014, the mortality rate (per 1,000 births) has been declined rapidly, for an instance, from 14.3 to 5.6 respectively (Figure 2). This totally depends on the enhanced health services and education status of mothers. Established policies and subsidy programs also helped to reconcile healthcare anomalies of regional areas.

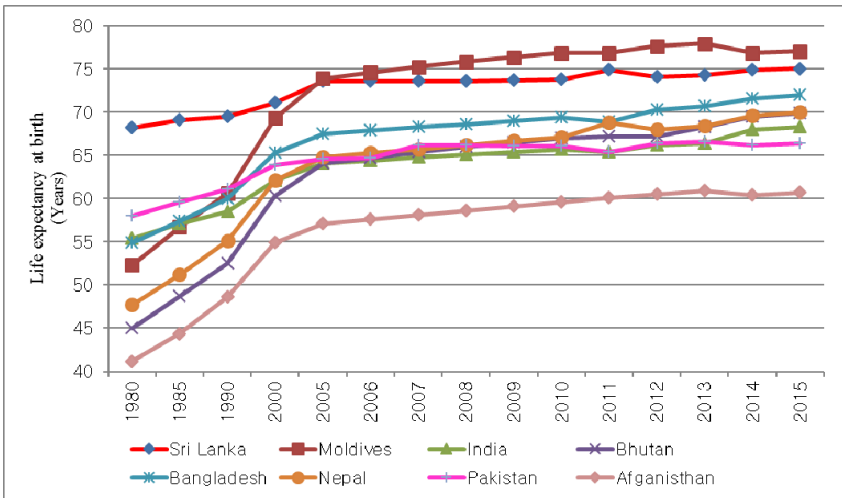


Figure 2: Progress of Life Expectancy (1980 - 2015)

Source: Own compilation (2017) based on UNDP data, many years⁴

The long and health life of Sri Lankan population has been indicated by the achievements of health sector. According to HDR (2016) life

4) <http://hdr.undp.org/en/69206> (Accessed: 12/10/2017).

expectancy is 75 years and since 1980 it has been indicated significant progress, compare to some of South Asian countries such as, Pakistan (66.4), India (68.3), Bhutan 69.9), Nepal (70.0) etc and second to Maldives (77). Figure 3 depicts the impacts of policy legacies on the infant mortality rate. And also, Figure 3 emphasizes very close association between policy establishments and the declining infant mortality rate.

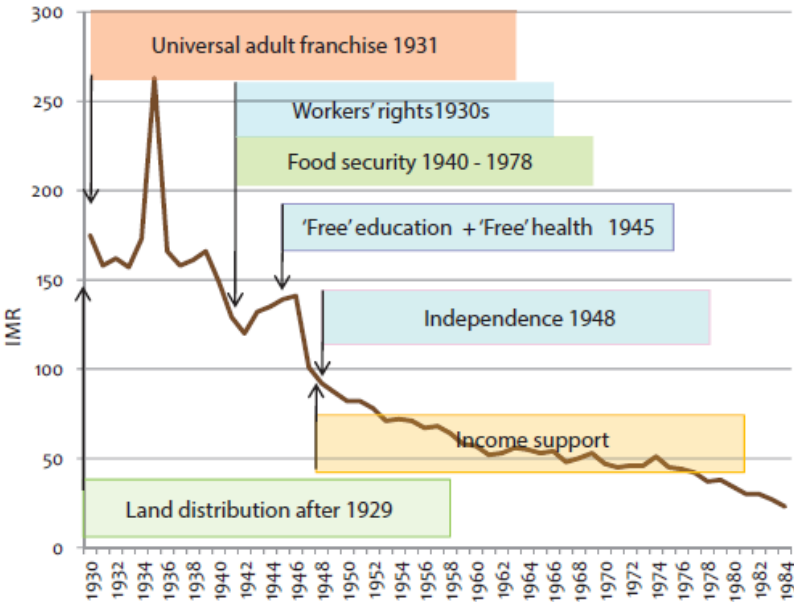


Figure 3: Impacts of Policy Implementations on the Infant Mortality Rate.

Source: Jayasinghe, 2012 cited in UNDP, 2015.

An increasing number of developing nations are now experiencing considerably high life expectancy rates while facing challenging with the increasing proportion of old-age population (population aging). The UNDP pointed out that developing countries such as Malaysia and Sri Lanka have similarly achieved steep declines in neonatal deaths through

simple, home-based, district-level interventions supported through training for health workers and midwives and publicly financed provision (UNDP, 2005).

3. Educational Progress

In Sri Lankan parlance the phrase "free education scheme" has several meanings. First, people use the phrase to refer to the state's provision of primary, secondary, and tertiary education free of charge. Second, it indicates a series of policies and programs that serve to lower barriers to schooling for disadvantaged children, such as provision of free uniforms, textbooks, and midday meals (Cole, 2015). Because of this background, the literacy rate measures the human capital (i.e. productive skills and knowledge) of the population. Only Sri Lanka shows better mean years of schooling as compared to global data (Sharma, 2013). According to the UNDP (2016), Sri Lanka records an outstanding development of education system indicating 10.9 as 'mean years of schooling'. This figure is higher than seventeen countries which are in the 'very high human development' category (see also Figure 4). For example, Singapore (10.6), Hong Kong (10.6), Finland (10.3), Greece (10.3), Italy (10.1), Spain (9.6) are some selected countries. Another preeminent point is that all the Asian countries except Republic of Korea (11.6) and Japan (11.5) are below the Sri Lanka.

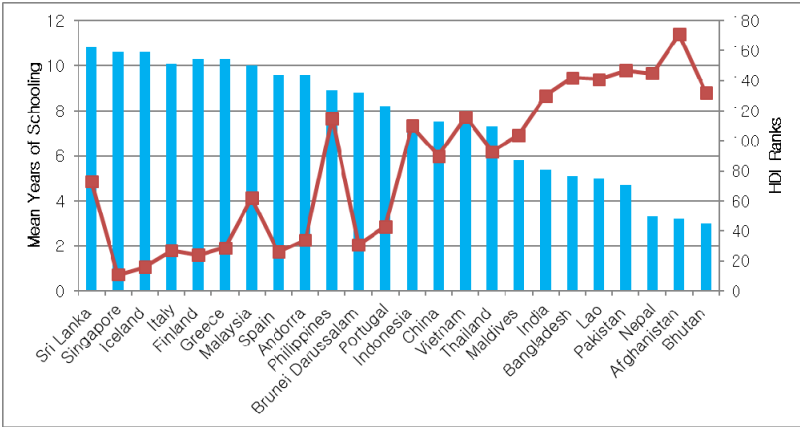


Figure 4: Mean Years of Schooling with their Respective HDI Ranks
 Source: Own compilation based on UNDP data (2016)

Figure 4 represents a comparison of mean years of schooling of 24 countries which are belonging to South Asia, South East Asia, and Europe (except Singapore). Singapore, Iceland, Italy, Finland, Greece, Spain, Andorra, Brunei Darussalam, and Portugal are categorized under the ‘very high human development’ level (UNDP, 2016).

With the higher rate of mean years of schooling, the literacy rate (per cent ages 15–24) has improved from 83 percent in 1990 to 91 percent in 2015. The adult literacy rate (per cent ages 15 and older) increased from 76 percent to 86 percent (UNDP, 2015). In this regards, Sri Lanka indicates much progress of both the adult and youth literacy rates as 91.2, 98.6 (youth female), 97.7 (youth mail) respectively, which both are above the global level. Compared to the adult literacy rate, the youth rate is about to be 100 per cent within next few years and it hints that the human capital of the country has sufficient potentials for productivity acceleration. Main reason behind this significant progress is the “free education scheme” for Cole (2015), based on the abolition of school fees and providing all children an equal chance of achieving educational

success. According to the MDGs country report (UNDP, 2014) Sri Lanka has been successful in achieving all three targets related to universal primary education. Free education and universal health care for more than six decades have contributed to impressive results in education, health and living conditions.

4. Gross National Income (GNI)

Sri Lanka is a lower middle-income country with a total population of 21.0 million people and a per capita income of USD 3,924 in 2015 (World Bank, 2015). Regarding the calculation of HDI, it considers the GNI per capita (ppp\$). According to UNDP (2015), Sri Lankan GNI is 9,779\$ and figure 5 depicts a considerable progress of GNI since 1980.

However, Figure 5 shows that the GNI per capita is Sri Lanka's worst performing HDI component. Some of reasons are might behind this turmoil. On the one hand the welfare cost has constantly engulfed the country's income. On the other hand net foreign earnings from exports (for instance garments products) are insignificant this is because the high material cost (import) of productions. And also, FDI inflows are not much mesmerized particularly in export-oriented industries. Despite Palit and Spittel (2013: xviii) noted in their book that, Sri Lanka having emerged from a decades-long civil war is enjoying an economic revival. In 2010, it was the second-fastest growing Asian economy after China, a fact not lost upon the IMF, which recently upgraded Sri Lanka to middle income emerging market status.

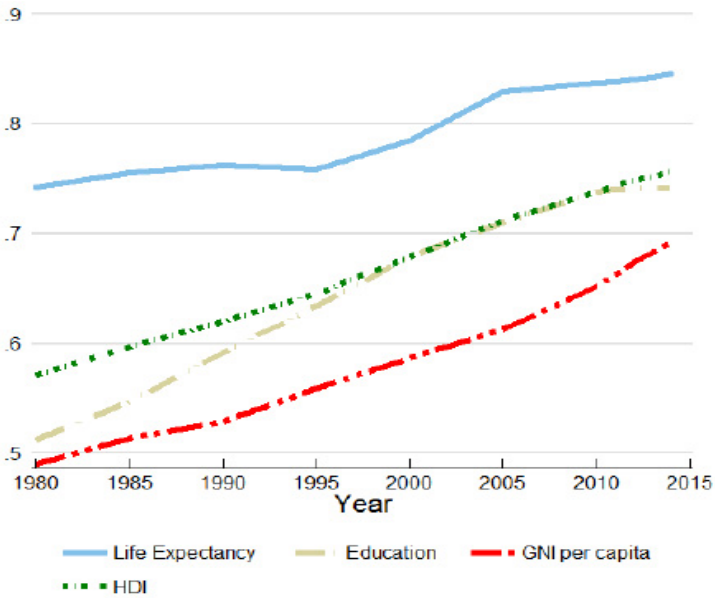


Figure 5: Trends in Sri Lanka's HDI Component Indices 1980-2014.
Source: UNDP, 2015.

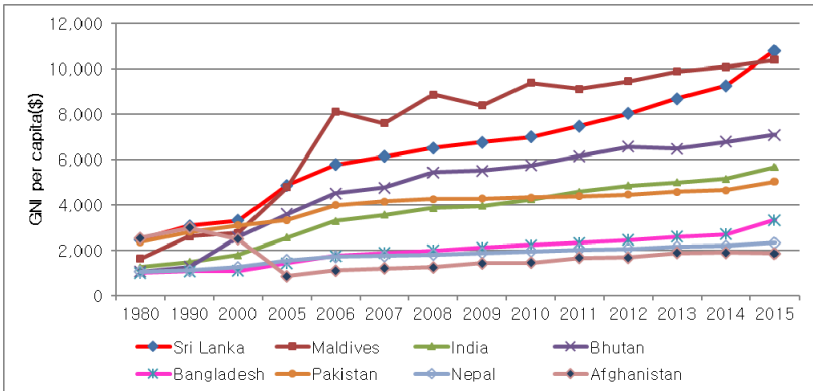


Figure 6: Trends in Sri Lanka's GNI Component Indices Compare to Regional Actors 1980-2015.

Source: Own compilation based on UNDP data (UNDP, 2016, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gni-capita-ppp-terms-constant-2011-ppp>)

Figure 6 depicts that at present, Sri Lanka represents the highest value of GNI (10,789\$) among the regional countries according to UNDP (2016). Above examined achievements have been addressed by scholars and organizations in different viewpoints on the notion of human development of Sri Lanka. Kanapathipillai (2009: 17) revealed her book overall human development as ‘the legacy of a welfare-oriented economic policy since independence has resulted in comparatively high levels of literacy, educational achievement and advancement in health and nutritional levels, as well as in stagnant economic growth with its attendant negative consequences of unemployment and poverty’ (see also Karunathilake, 2012 for a similar point). Although Sri Lanka has done well in overcoming human development challenges typical to a low-income country, its service delivery systems in education, health and other areas should now be adjusted to face new and changing demands typical of a middle income country (World Bank, 2015).

5. Spatial Disparities in Human Development

One of the critical inquiries behind Sri Lanka’s human development relates to the substantial regional variation and the legacy of the civil war. Particularly in war affected areas, during the 26 years of period (war ended in 2009) there were many impediments for the government interventions due to terrorist activities in plenty (e.g. ETTE terrorist controlled areas/ The FBI has described the LTTE as "amongst the most dangerous and deadly extremist outfits in the world" and banned). At present, there are many reconstructions and development activities at war affected areas and more funds are allocated than other areas of the country. However, in this section, we will try to examine existing geographical disparities base on available secondary data. As shows in the Table 1, the overall number of poor household has been declined

from 19.2 per cent to 5.3 per cent within the period in between 2002 to 2013. However, particularly state and rural areas are still consisted of poor households, for example, 8.8 per cent and 6 per cent respectively. As similarly, among administrative districts are also represented some diversities of poverty levels (Figure 7).

Table 1: Percentage of Poor Households

Sectors	Years		
	2002	2009	2013
All Island	19.2	7.0	5.3
Urban	6.2	3.8	1.5
Rural	20.8	7.5	6.0
State	24.3	8.9	8.8

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2015

According to the Figure 7, some of districts such as Mullative (24.7 per cent), Moneragala (18.8 per cent), Mannar (15 per cent), Batticaloa (14.3 per cent), Kilinochchi (10.7 per cent), Badulla (10.4 per cent), Galle (7.7 per cent) are comparatively high in poor households while Colombo (1.1 per cent), Gampaha (1.5 per cent), Vavunia (2.4 per cent), Kalutara (2.5 per cent) are low in the rate. Kelegama (2006 : 28) concluded that there are regional variations on poverty and income distribution is highly skewed in favor of the top two deciles of the population, which are concentrated in the big cities. Particularly war-effeted districts (e.g. Mullative, Kilinochchi, Batticaloa etc.) are high in poor households. Sarvananthan (2007) has carried out a comprehensive study on the economy of the conflict region in Sri Lanka, revealed that huge regional economic disparities exit in the Sri Lanan development trajectory.

Table 2 clearly shows the disparities of gross domestic products by provinces. For examples, in the year 2005 Western province represents 50.4 per cent share while war affected Eastern and Northern provinces are contributed 4.9 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively. Despite Uva province (which is similar to figure 7, Monaragala and Badulla districts) also ensured 4.5 per cent share which is less than the war affected Eastern province. According to Wijerathna, et al. (2014) northern and eastern provinces show tiny improvements in 2011. Particularly regional productions such as rice, onion, green chili, tobacco, livestock, fisheries etc had been effected by the war in both the northern and eastern provinces.

Geographically most hilly districts such as, Badulla and Moneragala are also consist of high rate of poor households due to stagnation of difficulty in livelihood. According to a recent poverty analysis report (Department of Census and Statistics, 2015), the Northern and Eastern provinces, contain some DS divisions which show high poverty incidence in 2012/13 poverty map.

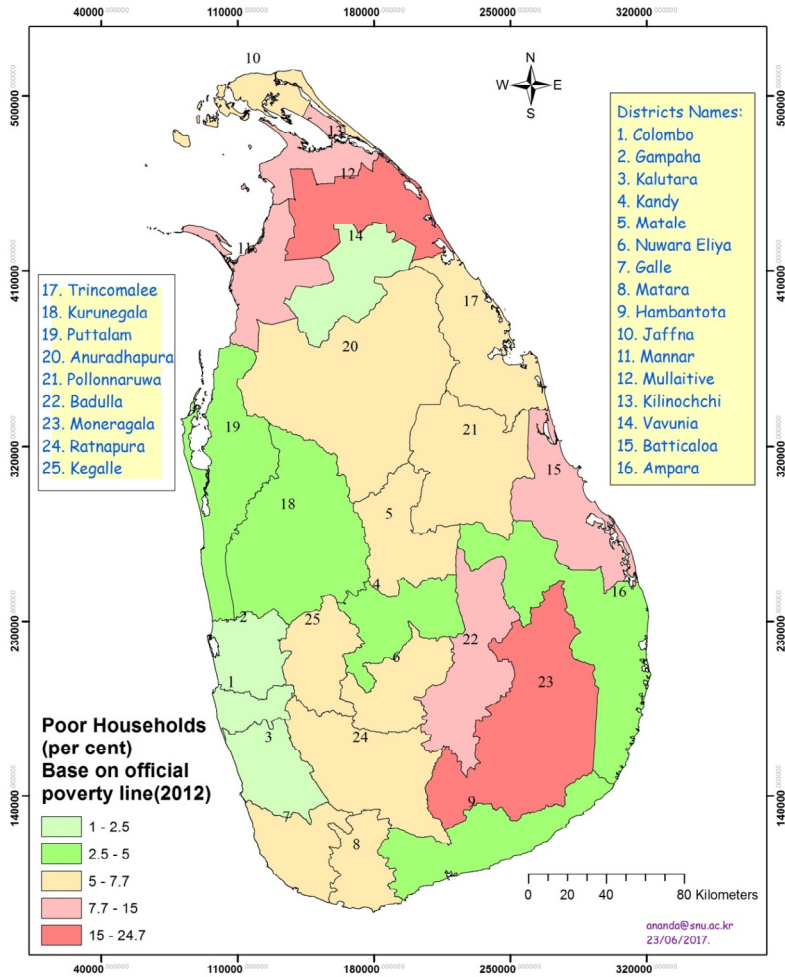


Figure 7: Spatial Patterns of Poor Household based on Official Poverty Line (2012).
Source: Own compilation (2017) based on Department of Census and Statistics' data, 2012.

Table 2: Gross Domestic Products by Province, 1990–2005(per cent)

Province	1990	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005	2011
Central	12.1	12.3	11.8	11.7	10.5	9.2	9.4	9.8	8.5	10.0
Eastern	4.2	4.5	4.7	4.6	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.5	4.9	6.0
North Central	4.8	6.1	6.2	6.3	4.0	4.1	3.7	3.9	4.3	5.0
Northern	4.4	3.8	3.2	3.1	2.8	2.5	2.4	2.7	3.1	4.0
North Western	11.1	9.9	9.6	9.6	12.1	10.4	10.7	9.5	9.0	10.0
Sabaragamuwa	8.1	7.8	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.6	6.4	6.1	6.4	6.0
Uva	8.1	7.8	7.7	7.7	5.0	4.1	4.6	4.4	4.5	4.0
Southern	9.5	9.8	9.7	9.5	8.8	9.6	9.7	9.3	9.0	11.0
Western	40.2	40.4	41.5	42.3	44.3	48.7	48.3	49.7	50.4	44.0
Sri Lankan	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Sources: Sarvananthan, 2007; Wijerathna, et al., 2014.

Table 3: Estimated Poverty Headcount Index of 10 Poorest and 10 Least Poor DS Divisions

	DS division	Poverty Headcount Index	District	Province
10 Poorest DS divisions	1. Manmunai-West	45.1	Batticaloa	Eastern
	2. Koralai Pattu South	37.7	Batticaloa	
	3. Puthukkudiyiruppu	35.7	Mullaitivu	Northern
	4. Thunukkai	34.0	Mullaitivu	
	5. Manthai East	33.7	Mullaitivu	
	6. Oddusudda	33.5	Mullaitivu	
	7. Manmunai South-West	28.9	Batticaloa	Eastern
	8. Siyambalanduwa	28.7	Moneragala	Uva
	9. Maritim Pattu	28.6	Mullaitivu	Northern
	10. Koralai Pattu North	28.0	Batticaloa	Eastern
10 Least poor DS divisions	10. Kelaniya	2.2	Gampaha	Western
	9. Nuwaragam Palatha East	2.0	Anuradhapura	North Central
	8. Kaduwela	1.9	Colombo	Western
	7. Kesbewa	1.9	Colombo	
	6. Negombo	1.7	Gampaha	
	5. Rathmalana	1.6	Colombo	
	4. Thimbrigasyaya	1.3	Colombo	
	3. Sri Jayawardanapura Kotte	1.2	Colombo	
	2. Maharagama	1.1	Colombo	
	1. Dehiwala	0.6	Colombo	

Source : Department of Census and Statistics, 2015 (data 2012/2013).

According to the table 3, nine poorest district secretariats (DS) divisions out of top 10 are located northern and eastern provinces. The disparity between the poorest (poverty headcount is 45.1 per cent) and the least poor (poverty headcount is 0.6 per cent) DS divisions is very high (the average poverty headcount is 6 per cent). And also, administrative districts such as Mullaitivu (28.8 per cent), Moneragala (20.8 per cent), Mannar (20.1 per cent), Batticaloa (19.4 per cent) Kilinochchi (12.7 per cent), and Badulla (12.3 per cent) represent high poverty headcount values compare to the districts such as Colombo (1.4 per cent), Gampaha (2.1 per cent), Kalutara (3.1 per cent), Vavuniya (3.4 per cent).

However, at present there are many developments programs which have been occupied and extended aiming at development of infrastructure and livelihood of these areas. According to the central bank annual report (CBS, 2016: 231), the government continued its social protection schemes for vulnerable social groups through various subsidy schemes, such as Samurdhi/ Divineguma programme, fertilizer subsidy, food nutritional programmes, elders' allowance and special grant for kidney patients etc. Wijerathna, et al. (2014) also points that recent Sri Lankan policy interventions involving targeted public investments in lagging regions are important towards achieving a higher level of convergence in regional per capita GDP over time.

IV. Towards a More Inclusive and Poverty Free Society?

According to the World Bank (2015), Sri Lanka's economy transitioned from a previously predominantly rural-based agriculture economy towards a more urbanized economy driven by services. In 2015, the service sector accounted for 62.4 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), followed by

manufacturing (28.9 percent), and agriculture (8.7 percent)⁵⁾ The economic structure has experienced a dramatic shift from the agricultural sector towards a service based economy (figure 8).

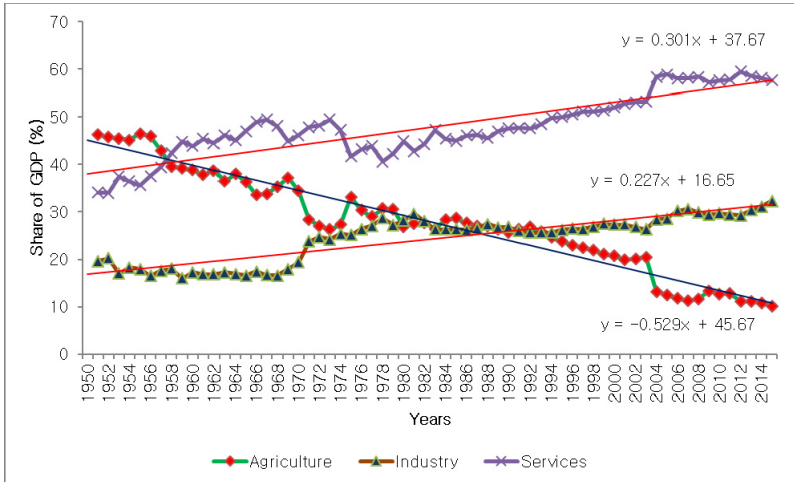


Figure 8: Structural Changes in the Sri Lanka Economic Sectors (1950–2015).
 Source: Own Compilation (2017) based on Central Bank of Sri Lanka’s data (different issues).

The underlying factors for this shift include a decline in the production of public sector plantations, rapid growth in the absorption of rubber in domestic industry and the expansion of manufacturing exports. And also in the service sector, more importantly transportation and communications, finance, retail and wholesale trade, hotels and restaurants, banking, insurance and real estate, government and private services can be identified as dominant service industries which are experiencing dramatic changes. Kelegama (2006: 203) also points that the further liberalization of FDI inflows, the institutional framework to support FDI, initiating of a 200-Garment Factory Program in rural areas

5) <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/overview>, (Accessed: 18/11/2016).

behind the above changes. These reasons helped to trigger significant changes in the economic structure and facilitated the growth of food, beverages, tobacco, textiles, leather, wood products, paper products, and chemical products. In the service sector, information technology and other information services and scientific research and development (R&D) need to be propelled in order to accelerate cutting edge technological innovations.

A crucial factor for the post-2009 (the end of the civil war) development trajectory obviously has been the emergence of a so-called peace dividend. A few of scholars have drawn their attentions on the context of post-war economic development of Sri Lanka; both in a positive and critical light. The conclusion of the war can be identified as the major hinge as well as a windfall which possible to be used as the basement for contemporary economic proliferation. For Gellers (2015), while the country suffered through an internal conflict that lasted for 26 years and ended in May 2009, Sri Lanka has recently produced the highest levels of economic growth in South Asia. Athukorala (2016) emphasized that the “end of the war generated a surge of optimism about the economic prospects for Sri Lanka, with high expectations that the country would embark on a period of sustained economic growth”. Proving this notion of gaining, Athukorala and Jayasuriya (2013) wrote that the GDP growth in 2010 reached 8 percent, up from 3.5 percent in 2009, inflation came down from 22.6 percent in 2008 to 6 percent in 2010, unemployment fell from 5.7 percent in 2009 to 4.9 percent in 2010.

Between 2006 and 2012 the poverty head count ratio declined from 15.2 per cent to 6.7 per cent accompanied by a reduction in the poverty gap from 3.1 per cent to 1.7 per cent. Conversely, in war triggered areas imply rather higher level of poverty as explained above. On the one hand, these figures provoke a crucial concern on peace dividend which possible to be used to conquer existing development impediments

as much as possible. Nevertheless, Athukorala (2016), also argued that the developments in the Sri Lankan policy scene during the post-civil war years do not augur well for the future of the Sri Lankan economy: “After showing remarkable resilience throughout decades of war and conflict, the Sri Lankan economy has failed to capitalize on the window of opportunity presented the end of the military conflict.”

Another intricate and urgent need is the restoration of infrastructure and livelihoods in the war-affected northern and eastern areas. Politicians debate about the exact roadmap for reconstruction, for instance about sequencing of policies, about mechanisms of separation of powers, and about the extent to which decentralization is necessary to ensure peace and prosperity. For Goodhand (2013), in the north and east, the government’s focus is on economic development rather than political devolution. The postwar economic rebound has continued, supported by major infrastructure projects (including roads, railways, ports, airports, the northern power grid, and a Jaffna-Kilinochchi water and sanitation system); increased trade between the Tamil north and Sinhalese south; and the growth of agriculture and fishing. However, among these similarly instigated arguments the urgent need is to be the reinstallation of basics facilities which engulfed by the civil war. Hence, for Athukorala (2016), rapid infrastructure development of rural and conflict affected parts of the country and the promotion of small and medium enterprises were the key policy priorities under the new policy. This is because in the war-affected areas, the human development and livelihood arenas might remain considerably below the average level. For example, Sarvananthan (2016) points that in spite of massive infusion of public capital in the post civil war period, poverty levels in Batticaloa, Kilinochchi, Mannar, and Mullaithivu Districts remains intolerably high, which is yet another indictment of the post-civil war economic strategy in Sri Lanka. We postulate that this vacuum gradually needs to be

fulfilled by upgrading of human capital of these areas in terms of more establishments of education and vocational training facilities. In this notion, Fernando (2013: 140) emphasized that the human capital is considered as a key determinant of economic growth and investing on education to be considered as an effective strategy for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This trajectory is very clear as the country is still experiencing the demographic dividend.

A promising industry nationwide is the tourism industry. Tourism promotion programs like “Tea Tourism” (Fernando, Kumari, Rajapaksha, 2017) based upon the world famous notion of “Ceylon Tea” will propel the wounded economy upwards. This is because for Fernando, Bandara, and Smith (2013), Sri Lanka has historically always been a tourist destination for centuries because of its suitable location and uniqueness. In the post-war context, the arrivals of tourists have proliferated significantly (Figure 9). Overall, it is safe to conclude that since the end of the civil war, Sri Lanka has experienced a substantial peace dividend. The task for Sri Lanka is to build on this peace dividend, to provide employment in the northern and eastern areas as well as to foster inclusive development throughout the country. The fact that Sri Lanka is classified as a high-human development should be no reason for complacency, given the remaining socio-economic and socio-spatial challenges.

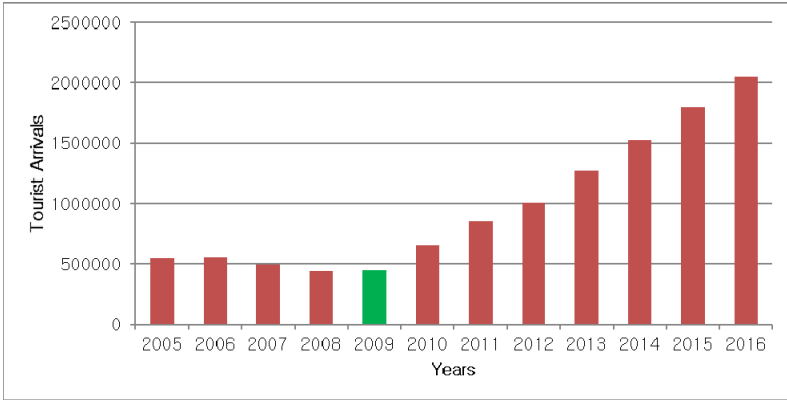


Figure 9: Trends of Tourist Arrivals (2005–2016).

Source: Compiled based on Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority data (2017).

V. Concluding Remarks

Based on the scholarly works which we reviewed in this paper, we have demonstrated that Sri Lanka has experienced significant human development progress; both absolute and relative to other countries in South Asia. Without the civil war Sri Lanka would have been a stellar example in Asia. The country has showed much progress in education and health thanks to the free education and free healthcare services which have become available all around the country as well as effective policy establishments towards the enhancement of wellbeing.

However, various challenges remain. Firstly, the Sri Lankan economy has not been very sufficiently robust, there are fiscal deficits and the country still relies on official development assistance to some extent. In this context, there is an urgent need increase economic productivity as well as to ensure the economic stability in order to attract more foreign investors and facilitate foreign trade. Secondly, the continuous supply of welfare and subsidies to a developing country like Sri Lanka are

challenging in two ways. It will be challenging to offer cheap and good education and healthcare amidst a rapidly increasing population. Furthermore, the country has been depending on foreign aid and remittances. One of the drawbacks of many of subsidy programs is the danger of fewer incentives to work hard and to foster proactive communities. Third, stimulating economic development in the northern and eastern parts of the country is a necessary condition for inclusive development, and tackling socioeconomic and spatial inequalities (CNBC, 2016; Colombo Page, 2017).

Overall, it can be concluded that the ongoing peace dividend and structural changes in the economy will provide sufficient windows of opportunity to eradicate extreme poverty and increasing average living standards. Three promising industries for the future are tourism including medical tourism (Oxford Business Group, 2017), maritime logistics (plugging into the Chinese One Belt One Road initiative) (The Diplomat, 2016) and agri-business (Economy Next, 2017). While modern industries like logistics and medical tourism are essential for innovation and entrepreneurship, agribusiness, preferably high value products like spices, will remain relevant for the rural population. The growth of manufacturing and services cannot compensate for the continuing challenges in rural areas.

Notes

1. It should be noted that the term subsidy is being used interchangeably with support programs, financial support, economic assistance, and government financial transfers etc. (see, Schuhbauera, A., et al., 2017).
2. Athukorala and Jayasuriya (2013), emphasized that the end of the long

civil war in Sri Lanka in 2009 generated widespread expectations of a peace dividend that would enable the country to embark on a period of sustained economic growth. In the aftermath of military victory, there has been a sharp reversal of trade liberalization and a marked shift back towards nationalist-populist state-centered economic policies, reflecting the pressures of resurgent nationalism, an unprecedented concentration of political power in a small ruling group, and the influence of some powerful vested interests. Sri Lanka must change both its political practices and economic policies drastically and urgently to cope with the huge development challenges facing it in an environment of global economic turbulence.

3. See more on postwar reconciliation in Sri Lanka by Thiranagama, Sharika (2013), *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 93-116.
4. Hou, Walsh, and Zhang (2015), have focused that the introduction of the HDI attracted widespread attention, which reflects the general dissatisfaction with the conventional real per capita GDP or real wages as a measure of changes in living standards. The HDI was hailed as an improvement as it extended beyond the purchasing power of private incomes to include the measurement of well-being and the quality of life. In addition, since the per capita GDP and the other components of HDI life expectancy and educational attainment have generally advanced at varying rates over time, this allows a country to evaluate its economic progress in different developmental stages. Consequently, the HDI is increasingly used to set a country's human development goals, policy designs for economic development, and evaluation of such policy measures. More than one hundred countries have already constructed their own national or sub-national HDIs (See, Hou, J., Walsh, P.P. and Zhang, J., 2015, *The dynamics of Human Development Index*, *The Social Science Journal*, Vol. 52, 331-

347).

5. Owen and Videra's (2016), study provides evidence about which country characteristics matter statistically to distinguish among development experiences. To the extent that policymakers need to evaluate a country's development experience, classifications that are based on a broad range of country characteristics have important policy relevance. Secondly, in order to categorize development experiences, they use the method of latent class analysis that accounts for measurement errors in the data and allows for the determination of grouping of countries that best fits the data. This approach stands in contrast to methods that develop a continuous index and then require ad hoc cutoff points to determine groupings, such as the Human Development Index (See; Owen, A.L. and Videras, J., 2016, Classifying Human Development with Latent Class Analysis Soc Indic Res, 127, 959-981, DOI 10.1007/s11205-015-0992-8).

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