
Harmony or Discord Addressing Intergenerational Tensions in Modern Society – A Sri Lankan Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores intergenerational conflict in Sri Lanka through the lens of its post-war society, examining how the legacies of the civil war, shifting cultural norms, and contested notions of human rights and security have created tensions between older and younger generations. Drawing on the author's personal journey—having lived through the entirety of the civil war (1981–2009), losing his father to an assassination by Tamil rebels at the age of 16, and witnessing his mother become a widow at 45—the paper offers an experiential and policy-based perspective. From 2011 to 2015, the author led the National Reconciliation Conference Series at Sri Lanka's foreign policy think tank under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute (LKI), contributing to national efforts toward reconciliation. The paper analyzes how intergenerational discord manifests in political, economic, and social domains and offers strategies to promote understanding and harmony between generations. The analysis presented in this paper is grounded in a qualitative research methodology. Primary data was drawn from the author's first-hand experiences and insights gained through various positions held within the Government of Sri Lanka. Secondary data was sourced from available resources during the development of the paper.

Keywords: Intergenerational Conflict, Sri Lanka, Civil War, Reconciliation, Human Rights