

# **Sri Lanka: Ethnic Conflict and Conflict Management Process**

**Dr. Prashant Amrutkar**

## **ABSTRACT**

South Asia is the region of conflicts in various manners. Ethnic Conflict is one of the important forms of conflict which affects peace and stability of the region.

The complexity and magnitude of the Sri Lankan conflict have grown over the last five decades, making it one of the most protracted and devastating conflicts in the world today. With the prolongation of conflict, the chances for establishing peace have become distant, the gap between two communities (Sinhalese and Tamils) has widened and new elements have been introduced to the conflict.

The case of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka is much more complex business than a simple straight forward confrontation between a once well entrenched minority the Tamils and powerful but insecure majority the Sinhalese. It is a classic case of a sense of relative deprivation.

The exploration of the failure of the peace process in the island points to a combination of internal and external factors that impede the establishment of a liberal democratic political structure. Despite its reputation as a Third World democracy, the Sri Lankan polity has, since independence, increasingly developed into an illiberal democracy. Although possessing nominal features of a democracy, the Sri Lankan political system is saturated with highly undemocratic elements. Amongst these elements, the ethnocisation of the society, confrontational politics and violence are specifically addressed by this study.

The 1983 black July riots in Sri Lanka (The riots which began in the night of July 24, 1983) converted it in to one of the most notorious killing fields in the world. There are two conflicting parties named Sri Lankan government (represents the Sinhalese) and the LTTE (represents Tamil community). The conflict was stopped at the end of Velupillai Prabhakaran (LTTE leader) by the Sri Lankan army on May 19, 2009. But there is a question about the peace management process adopted by the government.

This paper tries to criticize so called peace process through military action against LTTE. There is a need to study this problem from the psychological, developmental and humanitarian point of view.

This paper analyzed the deep rooted seeds of the problem, its historical background, its various domestic and international angles and perceptions, and International angles as well as regional implications of the Sri Lankan Tamil insurgency. The nature of the problem, the effect of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka on regional security, the militarily remediation of the problem by Sri Lankan government and its result is focused here.

Finally, the study identifies the contemporary role of diaspora communities as a severe hindrance to a lasting peace in the country. Thus the analysis concludes that lasting peace in the island is possible only through the promotion of genuine liberal democracy, both from within and outside.

At last suggestions for future peace, stability and development have been put forward.

## **Introduction**

*If the discrimination, terrorisation and marginalisation of the Tamil people continue, it won't be long before a Prabhakaran clone surfaces. The challenge before the "victor" is to display humility, large-heartedness and justice.<sup>[1]</sup>*

As the news of the end of LTTE supremo V. Prabhakaran sank in, one's mind thinks that the beautiful island nation of Sri Lanka is shaken by the flames of ethnic conflict during last thirty years and the number of times the government and people of Sri Lanka hoped that the ethnic conflict would end and peace is possible in the tiny nation savaged by violence, terrorism and fear.

Now this is better time to look back at the of Sri Lankan government's conflict management process and to suggest some remedies for future peace building process.

## **Ethnic conflict**

An ethnic conflict or ethnic war is a war between ethnic groups often as a result of ethnic nationalism. They are of interest because of the apparent prevalence since the Cold War and because they frequently result in war crimes such as genocide. Academic explanations of ethnic conflict generally fall into one of three schools of thought: primordialist, instrumentalist or constructivist. Intellectual debate has also focused on the issue of ethnic conflict which has become more prevalent

since the end of the Cold War, and on devising ways of managing conflicts, through instruments such as consociationalism and federalisation.<sup>[2]</sup>

### **Primordialist accounts**

Proponents of primordialist accounts of ethnic conflict argue that “ethnic groups and nationalities exist because there are traditions of belief and action towards primordial objects such as biological features and especially territorial location.”<sup>[3]</sup> The primordialist account relies on a concept of kinship between members of an ethnic group. Donald Horowitz argues that this kinship makes it possible for ethnic groups to think in terms of family resemblances.

There are a number of political scientists who refer to the concept of ethnic wars as a myth because they argue that the root causes of ethnic conflict do not involve ethnicity but rather institutional, political, and economic factors. These political scientists argue that the concept of ethnic war is misleading because it leads to an essentialist conclusion that certain groups are doomed to fight each other when in fact the wars between them are the result of political decisions. Opposing groups may substitute ethnicity for the underlying factors to simplify identification of friend and foe.

### **Ethnic conflict in the post-Cold War world**

Although the study of ethnic conflict has a long history, genuine interest in ethnic conflict beyond the comparative political science subfield dates from the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, both of which were followed by ethnic conflicts that escalated to violence and civil war.

One of the most debated issues relating to ethnic conflict is whether it has become more or less prevalent in the post-Cold War period. At the end of the Cold War, academics including Samuel P. Huntington and Robert D. Kaplan predicted a proliferation of conflicts fuelled by civilisational clashes, tribalism, resource scarcity and overpopulation.

### **Ethnic conflict regulation**

A number of scholars have attempted to synthesise the methods available for the resolution, management or transformation of ethnic conflict. John Coakley, for example, has developed a typology of the methods of conflict resolution that have been employed by states, which he lists as: indigenization, accommodation, assimilation, acculturation, population transfer, boundary alteration,

genocide and ethnic suicide.<sup>[3]</sup> John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary have developed a taxonomy of eight macro-political ethnic conflict regulation methods, which they note are often employed by states in combination with each other.<sup>[4]</sup>

They include a number of methods which are clearly morally unacceptable.

- Methods for eliminating differences: 1. Genocide 2. Forced mass-population transfers 3. Partition and/or secession (self-determination) 4. Integration and/or assimilation
- Methods for managing differences: 1. Hegemonic control 2. Arbitration (third-party intervention) 3. Cantonisation and/or federalisation 4. Consociationalism or power-sharing

In the light of this discussion the case of Sri Lankan ethnic conflict can be studied.

### **Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka**

The Sri Lankan Civil War was a war fought on the island of Sri Lanka. Beginning on July 23, 1983, there was an on-and-off insurgency against the government by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (the LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers), a separatist militant organization which fought to create an independent Tamil state named 'Tamil Eelam' in the north and the east of the island. After a 30-month-long military campaign, the Sri Lankan military defeated the Tamil Tigers in May 2009.<sup>[5]</sup>

For over 25 years, the insurgency caused significant hardships for the population, environment and the economy of the country, with over 80,000 people officially listed as killed during its course.<sup>[6]</sup> The tactics employed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam resulted in them being branded as a terrorist organization in 32 countries, including the United States, India, Australia, Canada and the member nations of the European Union.

After two decades of fighting and three failed attempts at peace talks, including the unsuccessful deployment of the Indian Army, the Indian Peace Keeping Force from 1987 to 1990, a lasting negotiated settlement to the conflict appeared possible when a cease-fire was declared in December 2001, and a ceasefire agreement signed with international mediation in 2002.<sup>[7]</sup> However, limited hostilities renewed in late 2005 and the conflict began to escalate until the government launched a number of major military offensives against the LTTE beginning in July 2006, driving the

LTTE out of the entire Eastern province of the island. The LTTE then declared they would "resume their freedom struggle to achieve statehood" <sup>[8]</sup>

In 2007, the government shifted its offensive to the north of the country, and formally announced its withdrawal from the ceasefire agreement on January 2, 2008, alleging that the LTTE violated the agreement over 10,000 times. <sup>[9]</sup>

Since then, aided by the destruction of a number of large arms smuggling vessels that belonged to the LTTE, <sup>[10]</sup> and an international crackdown on the funding for the Tamil Tigers, the government took control of the entire area previously controlled by the Tamil Tigers, including their de-facto capital Kilinochchi, main military base Mullaitivu and the entire A9 highway, <sup>[11]</sup> leading the LTTE to finally admit defeat on May 17, 2009. <sup>[12]</sup>

## **The Beginnings of the Ethnic Conflict:**

### **The Pre-Colonial Situation**

The peopling of Sri Lanka has been a continuous process of migrants from India with indigenous and other earlier migrant groups. The Sinhala or Sinhalese (74%) constitute the major ethnic group; the Sri Lankan Tamils, who inhabit the north and east form 12.6% and the group known as Indian Tamils (19<sup>th</sup> century migrants for work on plantations) 5.6% of the population. While Muslims constitute the third largest ethnic group (7.4%), there are also small minorities such as Burghers (people of mixed decent), and Malays. All the major groups in Sri Lanka belong to a similar ethnic mix of migrants from various parts of India, especially South India, to which there have been Southeast Asian, Arab and European admixtures. In spite of this, each ethnic group today has a distinct identity with strongly held myths of origin; the Sinhala believe that they are Aryans from Bengal, the Tamils claim pure Dravidian origin, and the Muslims aspire to decent from Arabs.

The history of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is the history of emergence of consciousness among the majority community, the Sinhala, which defined the Sri Lanka society as Sinhala-Buddhist, thus denying its multi-ethnic character. The growth of this consciousness impinged on the minorities in Sri Lanka to the extent that internal resolution of the problems becomes impossible.

The Sinhala dominated the country from about 5th century BC and succeeded in establishing a kingdom with its centre in the North Central Province of the island. The term 'Sinhala' was first used to

indicate the royal family of the island, then extended to cover the royal retinue and then further extended to include the people; this social process dating to about the 6th century AD is simultaneously the process of the ethnic consolidation of the Sinhala people.<sup>[13]</sup> The Sinhala kingdom which controlled the entire island most of the time entered into relations both of alliance and hostility at various periods with the Chola, Pandiya and Chera Kingdoms of South India. There were frequent invasions from these kingdoms, and also frequent alliances and intermarriage of the four royal families. There were thus strong links with India, especially South India. This long history of links with South India is still present in popular Sinhala consciousness, with perhaps the aggressive acts being best remembered.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, certain developments in Sri Lanka determined its ethnic demography in a decisive way with effects that have continued to the present {1}. The demographic distribution lays down a territorial basis for the major ethnic groups; in the case of the Tamils, the territorial concentration grew into a concept of a 'traditional Tamil Homeland'. This did not arise for Muslims since they were scattered over the whole island, with a majority presence in only a part of the Eastern province.

Religion also played a dominant ideological role in ethnic consolidation. Buddhism, introduced from India in the third century BC, became the religion of the Sinhala as well as the state religion. Hinduism remained the religion of the Tamils. Apart from the conversion of a section of both Sinhalese and Tamils to Christianity during the colonial period, the incongruence between Sinhala and Buddhist on the one hand, and Tamil and Hindu on the other increased.

## **The Colonial Period**

Social and economic developments during the early colonial period under the Portuguese and then the Dutch - commercialization of agriculture, the registration of title to land, registration of births and deaths, proselytization - contributed towards a freezing of ethnic boundaries {2}. This meant in effect the consolidation of the Sinhala community in the central and south-western parts of the island and of the Tamil community in the north and on the eastern seaboard. Economic developments during the occupation of the island by the British gave rise to two other phenomena which made the ethnic picture in Sri Lanka even more complex.

1. The coffee plantations established by the British in the 19th century brought to Sri Lanka, as plantation labour, a population of over one million Tamil workers from South India. These were at first

seasonal migrants but with the development of tea plantations the majority became permanently domiciled on the plantations. The question of their citizenship rights became an issue that subsequently sored relationships between India and Sri Lanka.

2. Economic developments during this period were mainly in the central and western areas of the island. This left the Tamil community in a disadvantaged position. They sought to overcome this by moving in large numbers to employment in the state services, in the private sector and by entering the learned professions. This process was helped by the growth of educational facilities in English in the Tamil regions, particularly the Jaffna peninsula. This meant not only that large numbers of Tamils migrated to the southern and central regions for purposes of employment but also that Tamil traders established themselves in these regions.

The local bourgeois thus created multi-ethnic, but predominantly Sinhala, with Burghers and Tamils too entering the various professions and the state services. The Sinhala bourgeois found its expansion constrained in various areas. The main import and export trade was dominated by the British and Indians and retail trade throughout the country by Muslim and Chettiar traders. Sinhala traders could not break into these areas because of a lack of access to finance which was controlled by British bankers or South Indian Chettiars. The Sinhala professionals and the educated "petit-bourgeois" also felt this competition in so far as they had to vie with Burghers and Tamils for state and private employment. Workers at their own level found themselves confronted with migrant workers from Kerala and Tamilnadu as well as with workers of indigenous minority groups.<sup>[14]</sup>

These barriers to their advancement were perceived by the Sinhala at all levels as being caused by the non-Sinhala elements. To understand why economic antagonisms should be perceived in ethnic terms, one must examine the way in which the Sinhala asserted a sense of national identity as the basis for winning political reforms which would give them more power.

### **Sinhala Buddhist identity**

In asserting a Sinhala identity and in legitimatizing Sinhala control of the country's polity, the leaders of the Sinhala revivalist movement reconstructed an image of the Sinhala past using many elements of the 'origin' mythology like Sri Lanka becomes the land of Sinhala and the land of Dharma - the Buddhist doctrine. The belief was that the survival of the Buddhist religion was dependent on the survival of the Sinhala people; the people surviving as long as they espoused the doctrine and

controlled the land consecrated to the religion. Thus the religion, the people and the land were bound together in an indissoluble unity.

Such a revivalist ideology attempted to establish a Sinhala - Buddhist hegemony of the island antagonistic to non-Sinhala, non-Buddhist groups. It is this Sinhala-Buddhist consciousness that has resulted in the denial of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character of Sri Lankan society and in a refusal to accept the collective rights of other minority groups. This Sinhala Buddhist identity is against all foreigners and minorities. Over the last 100 years, it has been asserted against Muslims, Christians, Tamil plantation workers, Malayalis and Sri Lankan Tamils.<sup>[15]</sup>

### **Political Reforms and reasons of conflict:**

The agitation spearheaded by the political reformers of the early 20th century.

- 1. Unsolved question of citizenship:** the question of citizenship of migrant plantation labour from south India was not been solved by the government.
- 2. Divide and rule policy:** The British Governor (following the old stratagem of divide and rule) had nominated members to the legislature on the basis of ethnicity
- 3. Ethnic representation:** The unity of bourgeois broke down over the question of ethnic representation. These reforms of 1931 did not meet with the favour of minority ethnic groups. The constitution would ensure the dominance of the Sinhala majority.
- 4. Unequal economic development:** the development was mainly in the central and western areas of the island. The Tamil community was in a disadvantaged position. The government refuses to allocate certain scarce resources to Tamil areas and sometimes even shelved internationally sponsored development projects in these regions.
- 5. Sinhala control over the countries polity:** The constitution was enacted in the face of minority protests and minority fears were realized in 1936 when a totally Sinhala Board of Ministers was chosen.
- 6. The emergence of ethnic based organizations.** This was justified by the Sinhala "Maha Sabha's leader, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike.



7. The revivalist ideology amongst Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony was not accepted to the rights of minority groups.

8. The Sinhala-educated intelligentsia reiterated the ideals of Sinhala-Buddhist resurgence which are against the English speaking members of the upper class which wielded economic and political power

9. The promotion of Buddhism as the national religion stirred a wave of anti-Tamil feeling

**10. Replacement of English by Sinhala:** In 1956 Bandaranaike replaced English by Sinhala as the only official language. It had the unfortunate effect of alienating the Tamil-speaking part of the Sri Lankan society.

**11. Reduction of Tamils from civil services:** The enactment of new language policy as a means not only of reduced the position of Tamils in state services. Tamils were seriously underrepresented in terms of ethnic percentages in the state services. <sup>[16]</sup>

**12. Ethnic Sinhala hegemony in the field of education:** In the 1970s by the system of 'standardization' for science students, whereby 'the minimum entry requirements for a Tamil student were higher than for a Sinhala medium student.' <sup>[17]</sup> This was clearly discriminatory and created the impression that the government deliberately reduced the opportunities available to Tamil youth in government service. This was an explosive grievance in a community that had long looked on education as the main means of social and economic advancement {3}.

**13. State-aided colonization:** After 1930 and soon Sinhala settlements began to appear in the predominantly Tamil eastern province as well. This led to a shift in demographic patterns. (for example, in the Trincomalee district there was an increase of the Sinhala population from 20.7% to 33.6% between 1946 and 1981.) This process of state-aided colonization was seen not only as a threat to the political status of Tamils in the affected areas, but also as a threat to existence of the Tamils as a community with its own linguistic and cultural identity.

**14. Radicalising the Tamils:** Ethnic outbidding had contributed to anti-Tamil action, and the next wave of anti-Tamil riots, in 1958, again saw Sinhalese hoodlums operating with utter impunity. In many cases, the police failed to move against the rioters, a clear sign that the minority could no longer trust Sri Lanka's institutions to operate impartiality. Sinhalese radicals retaliated by staging large anti-Tamil riots in 1977 and 1981. Shockingly, official security forces and government supporters played a

major role in these. In July 1983, orgiastic anti-Tamil riots spread like wildfire across the country, killing thousands of Tamils.

**15. Institutionalized Sinhala political hegemony:** The republican Constitution of 1972, while proclaiming Sinhala as the official language, declared that Buddhism had the 'foremost place' in Sri Lanka, thus almost affirming a Sinhala-Buddhist state. It is precisely the history that persuaded the Tamils that co-existence with the Sinhala in a single polity was no longer possible.

**16. Illiberal Governance:** The 1978 Constitution gave the presidency near-dictatorial powers, which both President Jayewardene and Ranasinghe Premadasa (1988–93), used freely against the separatists.

These are the main reasons for ethnic conflict or civil war in Sri Lanka.

### **The Tamil Factor In Politics**

The Tamil ethnic group sought to counter this growing discrimination by demands at a political level.

**1. Demand of balanced representation:** Before independence, the Tamil Congress unsuccessfully demanded balanced representation - 50% seats for the Sinhala and 50% for the combined minority ethnic groups.

**2. Federal political structure and autonomy:** Later, in the face of continuing discrimination, a Federal Party emerged which asked for a federal political structure that would give Tamils a degree of autonomy in the areas inhabited by them, as well as adequate representation at the centre.

**3. Separate state:** It was in this period of accelerated demands and rejection that Tamil political leaders concluded in 1976 that only a separate state could ensure the security and welfare of the Tamil people, a state carved out of the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka to be called 'Tamil Eelam'.

**4. Use of parliamentary democratic process:** While the established political party of the Tamils - the 'Tamil United Liberation Front' (TULF) - was demanding a separate state and using parliamentary democratic processes towards obtaining it.

**5. Adoption of blood shade:** Some Tamil youth, dissatisfied with the non-violent policies of the TULF, formed groups which took up arms in the same cause {4}.

It is only necessary to state that it led to a protracted and bitter war in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka during the course of which the state security forces were guilty of severe excesses, attacks on civilians and serious violations of human rights of the Sri Lankan citizens, while the armed groups in turn resorted to brutal killings of both the Sinhala civilians and those Tamils thought of as 'informers'. The number of deaths has been estimated at 6000 by the government and 15000 by Tamil groups; damage to property is incalculable.

### **Main phases of conflict**

In the Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka there are six phases of conflict named Eelam War-1, 2, 3 and 4. India's military intervention through IPKF (Indian peace keeping forces) is also a part of conflict. The last and concluding phase of conflict was 2007 onwards.

### **Eelam War I - (1976 to 1987)**

In this initial phase of civil war, the process of politicization of Tamil youth in the North and the East started to form militant groups. The most prominent of these groups was the TNT, which changed its name to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam or the LTTE in 1976. The LTTE initially carried out a campaign of violence against the state

### **Indian involvement (1980 to 1990)**

India became involved in the conflict in the 1980s for a number of reasons, including its leaders' desire to project India as the regional power in the area and worries about India's own Tamils seeking independence. India became more actively involved in the late 1980s; the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord was signed on July 29, 1987, by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President Jayewardene. Under this accord, the Sri Lankan Government made a number of concessions to Tamil demands, including a devolution of power to the provinces, a merger—subject to later referendum—of the Northern and the Eastern provinces into the single province, and official status for the Tamil language (this was enacted as the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka). India agreed to establish order in the North and East through a force dubbed the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), and to cease assisting Tamil insurgents. Militant groups including the LTTE, although initially reluctant, agreed to surrender their arms to the IPKF, which initially oversaw a cease-fire and a modest disarmament of the militant groups.

The signing of the Indo-Lanka Accord, so soon after JR Jayawardene's declaration that he would fight the Indians to the last bullet and there was a question on India's peace mission. While most Tamil militant groups laid down their weapons and agreed to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict, the LTTE refused to disarm its fighters.<sup>[18]</sup> The IPKF then tried to demobilize the LTTE by force and ended up in three year long full-scale conflict with them.

The IPKF also soon met stiff opposition from the Tamils. simultaneously, nationalist sentiment led many Sinhalese to oppose the continued Indian presence in Sri Lanka. The calls for the withdrawal of the IPKF from both sides of the Sri Lankan conflict grew. This was the failure of the Indian peace mission.

Support for the LTTE in India dropped considerably in 1991, after the assassination of ex-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi by LTTE. India remains an outside observer to the ongoing peace process, with frequent demands by many groups for an extradition of Velupillai Prabhakaran.<sup>[19]</sup>

### **Eelam War II - (1990 to 1993)**

### **Eelam War III - (1994 to 2005)**

### **Eelam War IV - (2006 to 2008)**

The 1990 - 2008 phase was full of conflict and blood shade. This included LTTE's attack on Sri Lankan arm forces, suicide bombing on political leaders, army officers and crowded places and civilian areas, in the southern and western part of government controlled areas in Sri Lanka. The struggle between LTTE and Arm forces for capturing and maintaining control over the North and Eastern part of Sri Lanka was the continues chain of struggle in this era.

### **The last phase of conflict (2008-2009)**

In the last phase of conflict arm forces capture LTTEs stronghold area like Parappakandal in Mannar District, the town of Mallavi,<sup>[20]</sup> troops had captured Kilinochchi, which the rebels had used for over a decade as their de facto administrative capital.<sup>[21]</sup> The entire Jaffna peninsula was captured by the Sri Lanka Army by January 14, 2009,<sup>[22]</sup> On January 25, 2009, SLA troops captured Mullaittivu town,<sup>[23]</sup> on February 5, 2009, the military captured the last Sea Tiger base in Chalai<sup>[24]</sup> The Sri Lanka Air Force openly vowed to destroy the entire leadership of the LTTE.<sup>[25]</sup> The Sri Lankan government officially pulled out of the Ceasefire Agreement.<sup>[26]</sup>

This stage of the war has been marked by increased brutality against civilians and rapidly mounting civilian casualties. On March 26, 2009, the military claimed that there was only one square kilometre left in Tamil Tiger control outside the no-fire zone. Less than three years ago, the LTTE controlled 15,000 km<sup>2</sup>. On April 21, 2009, Sri Lankan troops reportedly launched a 'final assault' against the LTTE, especially targeting its leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran.

### **May 16: President declares victory**

Sri Lankan president, Mahinda Rajapaksa declared victory on May 16, 2009. However, the war did not end until the following day. Sri Lankan troops raced to clear the last LTTE pockets of resistance. As the last LTTE strongpoint crumbled, Sri Lankan troops killed 70 rebels attempting to escape by boat. The whereabouts of LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran and other major rebel leaders were not certain; however, Sri Lanka's government announced that Prabhakaran was dead on May 17, 2009.<sup>[27]</sup> Several other important LTTE commanders committed suicide. Upon hearing news of the Sri Lankan victory, people celebrated in Colombo.

There are two ways to see the victory of Sri Lankan Government in the conflict,

1. First, the failure of peace process by government and
2. Second, the failure of maintaining the liberal democratic structure in Sri Lanka.

### **Failure of Peace process and liberal democratic political structure:**

The exploration of the failure of the peace process in the island points to a combination of internal and external factors that impede the establishment of a liberal democratic political structure. Despite its reputation as a Third World democracy, the Sri Lankan polity has, since independence, increasingly developed into an illiberal democracy. Although possessing nominal features of a democracy, the Sri Lankan political system is saturated with highly undemocratic elements. Amongst these elements, the ethnocisation of the society, confrontational politics and violence are specifically highlighted in this case.

There were some diplomatic steps forwarded by Sri Lankan government and LTTE during conflicting period, which are supported to create and maintain positive atmosphere for peace talk.

**1. Bandaranaike - Chelvanayakam Pact of 1958** - S.W.R.D.Bandaranaike, Prime Minister and leader of the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) arrived at an understanding with the leader of the Federal Party (the Bandaranaike - Chelvanayakam Pact of 1958) which gave Tamils a degree of regional autonomy, including control of the land settlement in their areas. However, Bandaranaike had to abandon the pact in the face of opposition from the United National Party (UNP) and was killed by a monk in 1959.

**2. Peace talks in Thimphu** - Peace talks between the LTTE and the government began in Thimphu in 1985, but they soon failed, and the war continued.

**3. Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord** – This accord was signed on July 29, 1987, by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President Jayewardene. Under this accord, the Sri Lankan Government made a number of concessions to Tamil demands, including a devolution of power to the provinces, a merger—subject to later referendum—of the Northern and the Eastern provinces into the single province, and official status for the Tamil language (this was enacted as the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka). India agreed to establish order in the North and East through a force dubbed the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), and to cease assisting Tamil insurgents. Militant groups including the LTTE, although initially reluctant, agreed to surrender their arms to the IPKF, which initially oversaw a cease-fire and a modest disarmament of the militant groups. But after stiff opposition of Sri Lankan people and LTTE, IPKF unable to do its job and the problem still continues.

**4.** In the 1980s and 1990s, successive governments enacted a number of official acts to appease the Tamil community, including recognizing Tamil as an official language and merging the Northern and the Eastern Provinces of the country.

**5.** A tentative ceasefire held in 1990 as the LTTE occupied itself with destroying rival Tamil groups.

**6.** A ceasefire was agreed in January 1995, but the ensuing negotiations proved fruitless.

**7.** By mid-2000, human rights groups estimated that more than one million people in Sri Lanka were internally displaced persons, living in camps, homeless and struggling for survival. As a result, a significant peace movement developed in the late 1990s.

**8. Norway's mediation** - February 2000, Norway was asked to mediate by both sides, and initial international diplomatic moves began to find a negotiated settlement to the conflict. <sup>[28]</sup>

9. **Unilateral ceasefire** - Hopes for peace gained ground as the LTTE declared a unilateral ceasefire in December 2000, but they canceled it on April 24, 2001, and launched another offensive against the government.

10. Towards the end of 2001, however, following the attacks of 9/11, the LTTE began to declare their willingness to explore measures for a peaceful settlement to the conflict.

11. On December 19, amidst efforts by Norway to bring the government and the Tamil Tigers to the negotiating table, the LTTE announced a 30 day ceasefire with the Sri Lankan government and pledged to halt all attacks against government forces. <sup>[29]</sup> The new government welcomed the move, and reciprocated it two days later, announcing a month long ceasefire and agreeing to lift a long standing economic embargo on rebel-held territory. <sup>[30]</sup>

12. **Signing of Memorandum of Understanding-** The two sides formalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on February 22, 2002, and signed a permanent ceasefire agreement (CFA). Norway was named mediator.

13. **Peace talks in Phuket** - The much-anticipated peace talks began in Phuket, Thailand on September 16, and 5 further rounds followed in Phuket, Norway and Berlin, Germany. During the talks, both sides agreed to the principle of a federal solution and the Tigers dropped their long-standing demand for separate state. This was a key compromise from the LTTE, which had always insisted on an independent Tamil state and it also represented a compromise from the government, which had seldom agreed to more than minimal devolution. Both sides also exchanged prisoners of war for first time. <sup>[31]</sup>

14. **Peace talks in Geneva** - The Norwegians continued efforts produced a breakthrough when both parties agreed on February 7, 2006, that new talks could be held in Geneva, Switzerland on February 22 and February 23. These talks were reported to have gone "above expectations", with both the government and the LTTE agreeing to curb the violence and to hold further talks on April 19–21. <sup>[32]</sup>

15. Both parties agreed to unconditionally attend peace talks in Geneva on October 28–29, 2006. <sup>[33]</sup> However the peace talks broke down due to disagreements over the reopening of the key A9 highway, which is the link between Jaffna and government controlled areas in the south.

16. Political pressure was placed on Mahinda Rajapaksa to find a political solution to the conflict and he called for a meeting with parliamentarians allied with the Tigers in March 2009, but they refused until the government resolved the humanitarian crisis faced by civilians trapped in the fighting.<sup>[34]</sup>

17. On May 8, 2009, a group of independent United Nations experts called on the Human Rights Council to urgently set up an international inquiry to address the “critical” situation in Sri Lanka amid fighting between the Army and Tamil rebels.<sup>[35]</sup>

All these and other events show that government of Sri Lanka as well as LTTE was stepping forward for peace in the region but the result was not positive.

## **Conclusion**

The tortured history of Sri Lanka’s peace process versus its ethnic minority is well known. Various aspects are behind it like the colonial history, ethnic outbidding, ethnic hatred, gap of development between two communities, development of illiberal democracy, the ethnocisation of the society, unfaith upon diplomatic ways and failure of democratic process.

Not only the domestic elements but sometimes the ethnic disturbances in a country are exploited by a neighboring state India. Any active involvement of India in this highly violated issue is a part of India’s dominant hegemonic role in the South Asian continent. India worries about her own Tamils seeking independence. The latter was particularly strong in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where ethnic kinship led to strong support for independence for Sri Lankan Tamils. India, through its intelligence agency R&AW, provided arms, training and monetary support to a number of Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups, including the LTTE. The LTTE's rise is widely attributed to the initial backing it received from R&AW. In this manner Indian involvement is a big factor for this conflict.

The contemporary role of diaspora communities as a serve hindrance to a lasting peace in the country. The revivalist ideology amongst Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony was not accepted to the rights of minority groups. The promotion of Buddhism as the national religion stirred a wave of anti-Tamil feeling. All anti Tamil policies of Sri Lankan government widen the gap between two communities. And radicalizing the Tamils and anti-Tamil riots in 1958, 1977, 1981 and July 1983(Black July) was done a job as oil in the fire.



There was a peace process adopted by Sri Lanka government and LTTE , like peace talk in Thimphu in 1985, Geneva, Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord on July 29, 1987, in Phuket, Thailand on September 16, 2002. Both conflicting sides agreed to ceasefire many times but there was no permanent ceasefire agreement among them. Norway was asked to mediate by both sides, and initial international diplomatic moves began to find a negotiated settlement to the conflict. But unfortunately it was helpless and the problem becomes unsolved. The unsuccessful deployment of the Indian Army and the Indian Peace Keeping Force from 1987 to 1990 was also the step forward for peace keeping.

But at last government of Sri Lanka used its ultimate force and gave full stop to the diplomatic way of peace process. There arises a question of the peace management process of Sri Lankan government, in which the international community became just a spectator, the international organization like UNO which did nothing to protect rights of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

### **Some Suggestions for Peace**

Peace and stability in Sri Lanka is possible through some positive steps which all as follows.

1. The government of Sri Lanka should seriously have dialogue with the Tamils.
2. The government must concentrate on healing the wounds in relationship between the Sinhalis and Tamils in the State.
3. **Economic development:** The government should work on economic development and solving unemployment problem of Tamils because massive number of poor unemployed youths are being easily allured by the insurgent groups.
4. The civil society especially every sane person, the NGOs and the community associations should come forward and work for peace.
5. **Decentralization and devolution:** Issues of decentralization and devolution of power lie at the core of the solution of ethnic conflict.
6. **Equality:** Equal status and equal opportunities to all communities will maintain the brotherhood in the society.
7. **Assimilation:** absorbed and incorporate people and ideas into a wider society or culture.

8. **Diplomatic Ways:** In future Sri Lankan government should adopt diplomatic ways to solve confrontation.

9. **Arbitration: (Third party intervention)** There are various pattern mainly conflict waging, mediatory, intervention to care for human rights, etc.

10. **Contonization:** A political or administrative subdivision of a country. In this case of conflict federal political structure and autonomy is the solution.

To sum up with what Bhupinder Brar has argued that South Asia should be looked as “a ‘region of region’ rather than as a ‘region of states’<sup>[36]</sup> the suggestion followed from my belief that ‘regions’ are culturally and socially more natural and historically more deeply entrenched in South Asia than are the states.

Finally, the study identifies the contemporary role of diaspora communities as a severe hindrance to a lasting peace in the country. Thus the analysis concludes that lasting peace in the island is possible only through the promotion of genuine liberal democracy, both from within and outside.

## References

1. Edirippulige, Sisira, Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka: obstacles to the peace process, (<http://hdl.net/2292/723> )
- 2 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic\\_conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnic_conflict)
3. John Coakley (1992) The resolution of ethnic conflict: Towards a typology, International Political Science Review 13(4), pp. 343-358
4. John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary (1993) ‘Introduction: The macro-political regulation of ethnic conflict’, in John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary (eds.) The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation: Case Studies of Protracted Ethnic Conflicts, London: Routledge, pp1-40
5. "Rebels admit defeat in Sri Lankan civil war | detnews.com | The Detroit News".detnews.com.<http://www.detnews.com/article/20090518/NATION/905180344/1020/Rebels-admit-defeat-in-Sri-Lankan-civil-war>. Retrieved 2009-05-30.
6. Sri Lanka military, rebels trade death toll claims Reuters India - March 1, 2008
7. "Ceasefire raises Sri Lankan peace hopes". Guardian. February 22, 2002.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,3604,655451,00.html>.

8. "Sri Lanka's war seen far from over". Amal Jayasinghe (AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE). July 14, 2007. <http://washingtontimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070714/FOREIGN/107140037/1003>.
- 9 "Government takes policy decision to abrogate failed CFA". Ministry of Defence. 2008-01-02. [http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20080102\\_12](http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20080102_12). Retrieved 2008-01-02.
10. "Sri Lanka Navy destroys the 10th LTTE arms ship 1700 km off Dondra". Sri Lanka Navy. 2007-10-08. <http://www.navy.lk/index.php?id=482>. Retrieved 2007-11-19.
11. Sri Lankan Forces Capture Last Major Rebel Base in Northeast, Bloomberg.
12. <sup>a b</sup> From correspondents in Colombo. "Tamil Tigers admit defeat in civil war after 37-year battle". News.com.au. <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,27574,25496902-401,00.html>. Retrieved 2009-05-17
13. Gunawardena, R.A.L.H. - 'The People of the Lion' Sinhala Consciousness in History and Histography in "Ethnicity and Social Change", Colombo, 1985 pp. 55-107
14. Jayawardena, Kumari - "The Rise of the Labour Movement in Ceylon", Durham, N.C., 1972. - "Ethnic and Class Conflicts in Sri Lanka", Colombo, 1986.(chapter 3 and 5) 15.
- Ibid 16.
- Abeysekera, C. - 'Ethnic Representation in Higher State Services' in "Ethnicity and Social Change", Colombo, 1985. pp.243 17.
- Bastian, Sunil - 'University Admission & the National Question', in "Ethnicity and Social Change", Colombo, 1985.pp.220
18. "Tamil rebels abduct 2 rivals, Sri Lankan military says". Associated Press. 12 December 2006. <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/latestnews/20061228/43353.htm>
19. "Tamil Nadu demands Tiger extradition". BBC. 16 April 2006. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1932835.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1932835.stm)
20. Gamini Gunaratna, Sri Lanka News Paper by LankaPage.com (LLC)- Latest Hot News from Sri Lanka (2008-08-01). "Sri Lankan troops enter Tigers' final frontier". Colombopage.com. [http://www.colombopage.com/archive\\_08/August1145347CH.html](http://www.colombopage.com/archive_08/August1145347CH.html). Retrieved 2009-05-17
21. "Kilinochchi captured in devastating blow to LTTE". Hindu.com. <http://www.hindu.com/2009/01/03/stories/2009010357740100.htm>. Retrieved 2009-05-17.
22. "Last Tamil Tiger bastion 'taken'". BBC News. January 25, 2009. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7849684.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7849684.stm). Retrieved 2009-01-25.
23. "Last Tamil Tiger bastion 'taken'". BBC News. January 25, 2009. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7849684.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7849684.stm). Retrieved 2009-01-25.

24. "Army captures last sea tiger base & clears entire Visuamadu area". Ministry of Defence. February 5, 2009. [http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20090205\\_08](http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20090205_08). Retrieved 2009-02-05.
25. "Government ends ceasefire with Tamil Tigers". Agence France Presse. January 2, 2008. <http://www.france24.com/france24Public/en/archives/news/world/20080102-sri-lanka-tamil-tiger-cease-fire-end.php>
26. "Is LTTE chief Prabhakaran dead? Yes, says Lanka govt". <http://news.in.msn.com/international/article.aspx?cp-documentid=3016836>. Retrieved 2009-05-17.
27. "Norway role in Sri Lanka peace plan". Susannah Price (BBC News). February 1, 2000. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/627281.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/627281.stm)
28. "Sri Lanka rebels announce truce". BBC News. December 19, 2001. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/1719133.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1719133.stm).
29. "Sri Lanka enters truce with rebels". BBC News. December 21, 2001. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/1723419.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/1723419.stm).
30. <sup>a b</sup> BBC News, Timeline: Sri Lanka
31. "Sri Lanka foes to 'curb violence'". BBC News. February 24, 2006. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/4742208.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4742208.stm)
32. "Sri Lanka - Tamil Tigers OK Talks With Sri Lanka : Tamil Tigers Agree to Unconditional Talks With Sri Lankan Government". BHARATHA MALLAWARACHI (Conflict and Religion). October 3, 2006. [http://conflict-religion.boker.tv/news/conflicts/hinduism/sri\\_lanka\\_tamil\\_tigers\\_ok\\_talks\\_with\\_sri\\_lanka\\_tamil\\_tigers\\_agree\\_to\\_unconditional\\_talks\\_with\\_sri\\_lankan\\_government](http://conflict-religion.boker.tv/news/conflicts/hinduism/sri_lanka_tamil_tigers_ok_talks_with_sri_lanka_tamil_tigers_agree_to_unconditional_talks_with_sri_lankan_government)
33. Sri Lanka says final standoff with Tigers approaches.
34. "Urgent international scrutiny needed in Sri Lanka, say UN rights experts". UN. May 8, 2009. <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=30740&Cr=Sri%20Lanka&Cr1=>. Retrieved 2009-05-11
35. Bhupinder Brar, SAARC: If Functionalism Has Failed, Will Realism Work?, South Asian Survey, Vol.10, no. 1 (2003), p. 40

## NOTES

{1} When the hydraulic economy and civilization that had flourished in the north-central plains came to an end, the Sinhala people migrated to the rain-fed areas in the central and south-western regions of the island. The north-central plains reverted to jungle with a few scattered villages. With little control

from the Sinhala kingdom, the Tamil people became concentrated in the northern and eastern coastal regions that were closest to that part of the Indian mainland also populated by Tamil speaking people; eventually Tamils of northern region established the Jaffna Kingdom at the end of the 13th century.

{2} The Portuguese arrived in Sri Lanka in 1505 and occupied the south-western littoral of the island and in due time, the northern and eastern coastal regions. The Dutch succeeded them in 1658 and, as did Portuguese, ruled the Sinhala and Tamil areas as separate regions. During this period, the Sinhala Kingdom continued to exist, first in the south-west and then in the hill country in Kandy. The British succeeded the Dutch in 1796 and eventually subdued the Kandian Kingdom in 1815. In 1833 they brought the whole island, i.e., the areas occupied by the Sinhala and Tamils, within one administrative unit.

{3} This system was replaced in 1978 by a system of 'standardization' that was designed to give equal opportunities to students from educationally disadvantaged areas. However, since Jaffna was classified as an educationally-advanced area, the net effect was very much the same.

{4} These include, among others, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), PLOTE (Peoples Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam), EPRLF (Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front), and EROS (Eelam revolutionary Organization of Students).