POLITY

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ONE YEAR OF PEACE

The fact that one year of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the UNF government and the LTTE has produced mixed outcomes is hardly surprising. Given the ferocity with which Sri Lanka s ethnic war had been conducted for over two decades, even one year of relative peace without war, violence, death and destruction is no mean achievement. The war, at least for the moment, has receded to the background and a political process, with its unavoidable imperfections, has now emerged as a parallel trajectory to determine the future course of Sri Lanka s ethnic conflict. In this backdrop, the most constructive outcome of one year of the MOU is that the cease-fire arrangement, despite regular reports of its violation mainly by LTTE cadres, continues to provide an uninterrupted backdrop for negotiations between the government and the LTTE.

An assessment of the political engagement between the UNF government and the LTTE needs to proceed from the point that the MOU signed by the two sides in February 2002 did not envisage the termination of the war and the resolution of the ethnic conflict. Its aims and objectives were in fact limited. It sought to provide the basis for conflict de-escalation which could in turn create an atmosphere conducive for negotiations between the two sides. To that extent the one year of the MOU has produced primarily a positive and constructive outcome.

But the past year of the negotiation process has also been replete with dimensions that can only be described as constituting the fragility and vulnerability of the political conditions of peace in Sri Lanka. Key among them is the absence of political consensus among the major political forces in Sinhalese society, resulting in some degree of uncertainty about the future of the negotiation initiative. The continuing unwillingness of the PA leadership to come to terms with the relative success of UNF-LTTE engagement and President Kumaratunga s frequently expressed hostility towards negotiation, determined by considerations of narrow partisan interests, are indeed components of a larger problem that seem to haunt the Sinhalese polity. Actually, one interpretation of President Kumaratunga s continuing attitude of hostility to the UNF-LTTE negotiation is that factions of the Sinhalese ruling elite are quite ready to seize any excuse to undermine a political process that is likely to recognize the Tamil community as equal partners of a democratic polity. That perhaps is how the politically conscious sectors in the Tamil society view the PA s continuing reluctance to extend support for the present negotiation process.

Meanwhile, for its part, the LTTE has also demonstrated its unpreparedness, and even unwillingness, to reform itself in a pluralistic, democratic direction even under conditions of no war. Some of the LTTE s activities during the past year, which are usually construed as violations of the MOU, have merely reinforced the argument of critics that the LTTE is basically an entity beyond reform. There appears to be a clear disjuncture between the LTTE s political commitments made at press conferences following negotiation rounds, and the behavior of its leaders and cadres on the ground. This situation

has also made somewhat unstable the UNF government s position with regard to the outcome of the negotiation process. In fact, the government has not been communicating the impression that it has a grip over the way the future processes are shaping up.

While the skeptics of the Sri Lankan negotiation process continue to find enough reasons to feel satisfied with their negative forecasts, there have also surfaced very clear signs of the future of the peace process being determined by external actors. There has now emerged a powerful coalition of international actors directly involved in Sri Lanka s ethnic conflict. These international custodians of Sri Lanka s peace include the US, Canadian and Japanese governments, the European Union, the United Nations, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and some powerful institutions of global civil society. Quite interestingly, India appears to keep away from this international coalition. Despite India s reluctance to identify itself with these international efforts to change the course of Sri Lanka s conflict, the global powers appear to be ready to take political risks in bringing the LTTE to the political mainstream.

In Sri Lanka s domestic politics, peace as much as war is intensely politicized. Peace, as the parties to the negotiation have conceptualized it, appears to have potential losers as well. This is perhaps why throughout the past year of cease-fire and negotiation there has been a great deal of unrest and tension in the Eastern Province and among the Muslim people. Most of the Muslim political groups in the Eastern Province appear to be quite apprehensive about the outcome of the UNF-LTTE talks. They seem to think that in an eventual peace deal, the Muslim interests

would be ignored and the Muslim community would be forced to accept the political hegemony of the Tamils. Quite importantly, some Muslim political groups brought this point to the attention of the government and the international community by means of protest as well as violence. Although some Muslim representatives have been included in the negotiation team, politicized Muslim groups are not satisfied. Deep divisions within the Muslim community have also provided some impetus for greater radicalization of the Muslim stand towards the UNF-LTTE negotiations. A lesson that needs to be learned from the past year s tension in the Eastern Province is that there is a tripartite ethnic character to Sri Lanka s conflict as well as a possible solution to it.

The key political breakthrough that occurred during the past year of MOU revolves around the claim made by the LTTE negotiators that the movement would opt for a federalist alternative within the framework of internal self-determination. However, for some reason, the UNF government has failed to push this breakthrough forward. Neither do the Norwegian mediators appear to have seized this rare opportunity for further political discussions along the idea proposed by the LTTE. What seems to have happened instead is allowing the federalist breakthrough to fall by the wayside. While the energies of the UNF government and the LTTE have been largely spent on sorting out issues like MOU violations, the negotiation process has already lost the political momentum initiated by the LTTE s federalist turn. The federalism and regional autonomy issue will certainly return to the negotiation agenda, but only in a very clinical manner with no political enthusiasm as such.

Obviously, the negotiation process has both negative and positive dimensions and the past year s experience encapsulates the limitations as well as potentialities of political engagement between the government and secessionist rebels. Among many pointers to the future that one may gather from that experience is that the peace process would invariably be a protracted endeavor. Negotiation is only one of its components. Perhaps, the most constructive outcome of the negotiation initiative may not be the resolution of the conflict, or the termination of the war, but the severing of the link between the ethnic conflict and war. If the democratic political process can emerge as a strong alternative to war and violence, that will hopefully lead to creating conditions for transforming the conflict in a direction of sustainable peace. **P**

A PROMISE OF PEACE

Radhika Coomaraswamy

While the rest of the world seems to be marching to war, Sri Lanka, wearied by a military stalemate after 18 years of war, is walking slowly, haltingly and surprisingly toward peace.

It is a peace tempered, however, by the remembrance of the 64,000 people who have been killed. The yearlong cease-fire between the government and the rebels, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, has not generated a spirit of celebration.

Mistrust between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese majority remains strong, and the campaign by the Tigers to consolidate their control of the areas they dominate is making everyone uneasy. Nonetheless, there is some reason for optimism. Both sides seem to have realized that a military victory is neither possible nor desirable — at least for the moment.

The Tigers failed in their campaign to expel government forces from the north in 1997 and 1998. Besides, they realize that even if they had succeeded, the international community would have refused to recognize them as a separate state because of their appalling history of suicide bombings and assassinations. Peace gives the Tigers an opportunity to gain legitimacy.

The government, too, seems to recognize that war won t work. It is clear that without a peace a Sinhalese-dominated army will always face resistance in the Tigers stronghold, the north and east; that the Tigers and their sympathizers will always be able to disrupt the rest of Sri Lanka; and that the death toll of an all-out war will not be internationally acceptable. For these reasons the government of Ranil Wickremesinghe seems committed to peace through negotiations.

In addition, the cease-fire has had tangible benefits. The economic growth rate for the last quarter exceeded 5 percent, up from a 1 percent decline a year ago. With the help of international reconstruction money, people who fled war are returning to their homes, land is being cleared of mines, and commerce is reviving.

The Tigers, meanwhile, have declared that they are willing to explore a federalist model as an alternative to a separate state — an important shift in their thinkingAnd because of the work of Norwegian mediators, negotiators on both sides seem committed to resolving conflicts in the peace process through committees and expert groups rather than by the piecemeal efforts of earlier negotiations.

If Sri Lanka is to thrive, the international community needs to continue to press for respect for human rights and to make sure that funds for reconstruction are not squandered. The Tigers will have to adapt, learning to respect the rights of their own people and embracing a democratic ethos.

And Sri Lankans have to start imagining themselves differently, to accept the plurality of their heritage and the multiethnic nature of their society. Judging from the outpourings by both Sinhalese and the Tamils in the national newspapers and journals since the peace process began, however, that will be a long time in the making. ■

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TAIWAN, TALIBAN, TALIWAN?

Ram Manikkalingam

I n the third round of peace talks the United National Party-led government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers agreed to search for a federal political solution within a united Sri Lanka. After more than nine months of evasion of any political discussion of the ethnic conflict, this is a welcome development. They must, however, follow through on this. Anxiety about not jeopardizing relations may yet tempt the UNP-led government to avoid pursuing difficult questions about the permanent political settlement. But evading a discussion about a permanent political solution will not be the same as evading a permanent solution. If they avoid working out a permanent political settlement, the solution on the ground will become the permanent solution. There is a distinct possibility, though not yet probability, of a de facto state in the North and East of Sri Lanka emerging as such a permanent solution. What will this state look like?

Taiwan

T he first possibility is a Taiwan-style de facto state setup in the North of Sri Lanka. This state, like Taiwan, would not be recognized by the international community (e.g. the United Nations) as a legal state. However, absence of official recognition will not preclude key members of the international community from granting it tacit recognition through a range of ties, from economic to even defence agreements. This state would be a highly globalized state with strong ties to global markets, including neighbouring Sri Lanka for both exports and imports. The political structure of the state will be autocratic and it will be ruled by one political party, in this case the Tamil Tigers. Political dissent will not be tolerated. However, other communities — Sinhalese in Trincomalee and Muslims in the East will be, provided they accept Tiger rule and desist from making political claims along ethnic or any other lines. Hopes for democracy will have to be pinned less on the internal agitation of human rights and political activists and more on the possibility that participation in the global market will compel even the most autocratic regime to establish some elements of the rule of law to enforce business contracts. Although a Taiwan-style Eelam may not lead to a stable peace, it may still lead to an unstable peace on the basis that business is good for peace and peace is good for business.

Taliban

T he second possibility is a Taliban-style de facto state setup in the North of Sri Lanka. This state will be governed by an extremist interpretation of Tamil nationalism. It will oscillate between grandiose visions of extending Tamil rule over parts of South India at the risk of alienating India, or limiting its rule to the North of Sri Lanka in order not to antagonize India. Either way it will seek to build ties to Tamil extremist elements of India s South. While this Taliban-style Eelam will also have global dealings, its political and business dealings will be primarily with organizations that engage in humanitarian and relief assistance, or that are manned by the Tamil diaspora, or that are extra-legal such as money launderers and arms dealers. Depending on whether or not the adjacent political entity, the government of Sri Lanka, is providing it with support its behaviour will range from petulance — when it gets everything it wants — to provocation when it does not get everything it wants. It is not possible for this situation to last long without deteriorating into war. While Sri Lanka will prevail in this war, the cost of this will be the total destruction of the North and East. The remnants of the Muslim and Sinhala communities living in those areas, along with other Tamils who do not accept autocratic rule will be expelled or killed in the run-up to the war. Tamils who are too poor to flee and the diehards who support the Taliban-style Eelam will remain fighting.

Taliwan

T he third possibility is a Taliwan style de facto state that includes elements of Taiwan and Taliban. This state will combine the narrow militarist ideology of a Taliban-style state with the economic strength of a Taiwan-style state. It will have successful business dealings with the global economy, ranging from the licit to the illicit. This will enable the state to simultaneously develop economically and re-arm militarily. The Taliwan-style state will be torn between military aggression and economic growth. While its narrow ideology and military strength will lead it to provoke conflict, its economic success from business dealings will lead it to avoid conflict. However, Taliwan-style Eelam will be unstable because there will be no internal political reform. Local businessmen will lack the moral courage and foreign businessmen the economic stakes to push for reform. The militarists will point to the success of business to thwart reform. Its military strength combined with its economic efficiency will make such an Eelam a formidable military machine. If Eelam goes to war, Sri Lanka will have to keep on fighting but at a tremendous cost. This de facto state will lead to the destruction of the entire island. It is still too early in the peace process to know which one of these de facto states will emerge. However, it is not too early to know that if the peace process is not concluded with a federal system where all people can live as political equals, one of these will. ■

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A COMMENT ON THE PEACE TALKS: PROVINCIALIZING VITAL ISSUES

Sumanasiri Liyanage

I have often been asked what my stand is on the current peace process, usually followed by the question as to whether the peace talks between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would be successful. Both questions are difficult to answer for two reasons. The first question raises a related question: what is meant by the on-going peace process? Does it mean just the on-going negotiations between the LTTE and GOSL? Secondly, the success of peace talks depend s on many variables; and the behaviour of those variables are extremely difficult to predict. So one can think of scenarios, but not of exact developments. In this article, I intend to deal with the first issue leaving the second question for a future note. However, my discussion on the first question may touch upon certain aspects related to the second question as well.

In this article I argue that what is meant by the current peace process cannot be reduced to the peace engagement between the GOSL and the LTTE. It also includes the activities and suffering of groups (especially ethnic) and individuals and their peace engagements. It may be true that the negotiations between the GOSL and the LTTE (so-called Track 1) are a key to the success of peace; but attempts to place this Track 1 negotiations as central to the process may lead to a provincializing of issues that are central to other actors. This article is an attempt to answer the question: can provincialization of issues outside the Track 1 negotiations be justified?

The current peace process began after the December 2001 Parliamentary Election that brought in the United National Front to power. Ever since the capture of Elephant Pass by the LTTE, it has been clear that the armed conflict between the security forces of the GOSL and the LTTE was trapped in a mutually hurting stalemate. Thus, the LTTE in December 2001 declared a unilateral cessation of hostilities for a period of one month. The previously Chandrika Kumaratunga Government also expressed its willingness for negotiation indicating that the GOSL was prepared even to de-ban the LTTE if it would show its readiness for negotiations. However, the signs of the imminent fall of the People s Alliance government and its unpopularity in the South might have caused the LTTE not to engage in serious talks with the PA government.

Risky Venture

On the other hand, increasing problems within might have stopped the PA government from entering into a risky and somewhat adventurous venture. A situation conducive for negotiation developed with two accidental events, namely, (i) the international campaign against terrorism after 9/11, and (ii) the change of government in Sri Lanka. So a 'mutually hurting stalemate' in association with two 'happy accidents' seemed to have paved the way for two conflicting parties to enter, or rather re-enter, a negotiation path for the fourth time. So the process unleashed by the actions of two principal parties to the conflict has now advanced from a unilateral cessation of hostilities to scheduled formal direct mediated talks between the GOSL and the LTTE. This process was facilitated by the signing of the MoU in February 2002.

According to PAFFREL, the objectives of the ceasefire agreement are to "implement confidence building measures and provide certain interim benefits to the parties concerned and the general public while paving the way for a smooth transition to the negotiation stage of the peace process." The process that began with the signing of the MoU, however, has had many facets. Nonetheless, in hegemonic conflict discourse these many facets have been marginalized or totally neglected by placing the central focus on the bilateral process between the LTTE and the GOSL. The conflict analysts so far have emphasized the importance of 'trust-building' measures in the process. The agreement between the GOSL and the LTTE has survived in spite of recorded violations of the MoU by both parties. According to the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission, the LTTE has committed 146 violations of the MoU while the GOSL is responsible for 28 violations.

The international players, especially the USA and the EU, have been deploying both the carrot and the stick to keep the two contending parties, especially the LTTE, in the process. I feel that so far the progress in this front is satisfactory mainly for two reasons. First, the GOSL has adopted an accommodative strategy even in the face of the LTTE adopting a somewhat competitive strategy without a significant positional shift.

Accomodation

It appears that the GOSL gave in, in certain respects, to the LTTE, even going beyond the MoU provisions. For example, it has agreed to allow the armed naval personnel of the LTTE to use the Eastern coast sea route. One may even speculate that the GOSL tactics are similar to Chamberlain's tactics vis- -vis Hitler and that these tactics would bring in the same results. The highly accommodative approach of the GOSL may be explained by two factors.

Firstly, is as I have explained elsewhere, the UNF government's pragmatic approach justifies such an accommodative approach. It seems to believe that 'peace' at any cost would help the economic recovery and it would gradually impose on the LTTE the logic of the market and power that includes short-term gains, corruption and luxurious lives. The second factor is the UNF government's faith and dependence on the international community. The supporters of the government is led to believe that if the LTTE recommences military operations, the international community especially the USA would teach the LTTE a lesson.

The success of the MoU based agreement has been also due to the fact that neither of the contending parties are in a position right now to recommence a fresh military campaign for many reasons. The GOSL as well as the LTTE before they entered the peace agreement experienced a serious shortage of man power, equipment and financial resources.

Maintaining control over Jaffna imposed a heavy burden for the Sri Lankan economy not only because of the phenomenal rise in military expenditure but also because of the possible risk of the LTTE attacks on economic centers of the island. While the international campaign against terrorism is still fresh, the LTTE may find it is riskier to recommence a fresh armed attack on the security forces.

Whatever the reservations one may have about the process described above, any individual who stands for non-violent conflict resolution has a duty to support the on-going peace process. However, as I stressed earlier, the process may not be reduced to this bilateral process. Almost all the parallel processes (so-called Track 2) revived after the parliamentary election in December 2001 revolve around this bilateral process.

Parellel Tracks

A ccording to the realistic approach, the relationships between the various tracks are linear and presuppose the bilaterality of the conflict. In addition to these parallel processes, several other processes have also been unleashed by the signing of the MoU and these processes are provincialized in the dominant conflict discourse as well as in the peace campaigns. These provincialized issues may be peripheral to the bilateral negotiation process, but central to certain groups and individuals. What are these processes? Why should these processes be treated as part and parcel of the on-going peace process? Why should those attempts at peripheralization of certain issues be questioned and corrected?

Four processes that are now at work can be idenified. They are:

(1) marginalization of Muslims;
(2) child and forced recruitments by the LTTE;
(3) violation of democratic rights by the GOSL and the LTTE; and
(4) an adoption of a competitive strategy by the UNF government against the opposition in the South.

I will discuss them briefly in the remaining section of the article. The MoU has almost totally neglected the issue of Muslims especially in the Eastern Province. Unfortunately, the perspective documents prepared by one conflict resolution NGO have done the same. This nearly total absence of the issue of Muslims in the MoU, the idea of a future interim administration controlled by the LTTE and the continuous LTTE harassment of Muslims in the Eastern Province have made Muslim lives there insecure and their future uncertain.

When the clashes occurred between Tamils and Muslims in Muttur and Valachchanei, the government run media and the media supporting the government placed the blame on Muslims and tried to show a link between Muslims in the Eastern Province and Al-Quaeda of Osama Bin Laden. If this process continues unabated, Muslims comprising nearly one-third of the Eastern Province population would be degraded to near slavery living under the behest of the LTTE. Much has been written about child recruitment by the LTTE in the post-MoU period. The Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International in their reports and news releases have repeatedly charged the LTTE on violation of the rights of children. The LTTE has used the post-MoU situation to strengthen its combat forces by forcefully recruiting children and youth in the Northern and Eastern provinces. Parents, especially mothers of young children, have no peace under the MoU guided peace process. And the MoU does not include necessary mechanisms to stop undemocratic action and to protect the rights of individuals.

Similarly, both the LTTE and the GOSL are trying to restrict the democratic rights of the opposition. The government with its media oligarchy has so far successfully restricted the flow of information about the peace process. The LTTE has not given any room for the opposition in the North. The MoU has facilitated this process by disarming only other para-military groups. Fourthly, the UNF promised in its election platform that it would not go for piecemeal constitutional changes and constitutional changes will be introduced only after arriving at a consensus of all the parties.
However, the recent attempt to introduce amendments to the constitution just before the talks shows that the UNF wants to satisfy the LTTE by restraining Presidential powers. While the UNF government adopts an accommodative strategy vis- -vis the LTTE, it seems to have taken a competitive strategy vis- -vis the main opposition parties in the South. This may appear as a continuation of confrontational politics common in post-1970 Sri Lanka; but I believe this confrontational strategy of the UNF government is something integral to the nature of the on-going peace process.

Peace Deal

O ne may argue that in a prolonged and intractable conflict like the Sri Lankan conflict, conflict resolution should adopt a gradual strategy, one step at a time. For the success of any peace attempt, it may be necessary to strike a deal with the LTTE. Of course, these arguments hold some weight.

But the argument is theoretically flawed. The GOSL can easily strike a deal with the LTTE; I think at this stage a de facto state in the guise of an interim administration would be acceptable to the LTTE. It seems that the LTTE does not intend to go beyond this demand in this round of negotiations. My argument is that the current attempt to strike such a deal in itself has unleashed other processes described above. The issues associated with those processeses may seem to be peripheral; but since those issues are central to groups and individuals trapped in the conflict, those process would disrupt the entire peace process. The GOSL and the LTTE may think that they can deal with those 'disruptive' elements high handedly in the south and the north, respectively. However, such an attempt will totally destroy the peace process. Peace is a process and it's a many sided process to transform violent structures, systems, contexts, attitudes, values and individuals.

The MoU has facilitated a process to reduce violence in one sector; however it has facilitated an increase in violence in other sectors. This process should not be separated and should be treated as part and parcel of the same process. I am not arguing that everything can be done at the same time; sequencing and timing are important. What I argue is that if a process unleashed in one front results in an intensification of violence in other fronts, then we have to think about correcting measures and mechanisms.

Leon Trotsky once said: "there are seven keys in the musical scale. The question as to which of these keys is better Do, Re, or So, is a nonsensical question. But the musician must know when to strike and what keys to strike." It seems to me our peace specialists have selected a "better" key, and strike that key alone. ∎

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HOWARD FAST

The death occurred recently of Howard Fast whose novels in the 1940s and 1950s made him one of the best-known Americans of the time — especially in SouthAsia. Fast had a link with Sri Lanka through his first cousin Rhoda Miller the journalist, who married Joseph de Silva Rhoda s column in the *Ceylon Daily News* of the 1970s writing as Outsider was popular and, hard-hitting.

The New York Times reports:

Howard Fast, 88, whose best-selling historical fiction often featured the themes of freedom and human rights, elements in his own tumultuous political journey through the blacklisting of the 1950s, died at his home in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. Fast was one of the 20th century s busiest writers, turning out more than 80 books — plus short stories, journalism, screenplays and poetry — in a career that began in the early 1930sWith novels like Citizen Tom Paine (1943), Freedom Road (1944) and Spartacus (1953), Fast won popular acclaim for authenticity and detail, creating stories that even his critics admired as page-turners. Fast s fiction was always didactic to a degree, opposed to modernism, engaged in social struggle and insistent on taking sides and teaching lessons of life s moral sides and teaching lessons of life s moral significance, and he liked it that way.

Since I believe that a person s philosophical point of view has little meaning if it is not matched by being and action, I found myself willingly wed to an endless series of unpopular causes, experiences which I feel enriched my writing as much as they depleted other aspects of my life, he said in a 1972 interview. At his best, in a novel like The Last Frontier (1941), about the flight in 1878 of the Cheyenne Indians to their Powder River home in Wyoming, he achieved powerful effects through imaginative objectivity. His output was slowed but not entirely interrupted by the blacklisting he endured in the 1950s after it became known that he had been a member of the Communist Party and then refused to cooperate with the House Un-American Activities Committees. He served three months in a federal prison in 1950 for contempt of Congress after he refused to produce the records of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee. ∎

REDESIGNING THE PEACE PROCESS

Kumar Rupesinghe

The first anniversary of the signing of the Cease-Fire Agreement is an opportunity to collectively engage in reflecting on what challenges lie ahead to bring about a negotiated solution to the civil war. International experiences show us that negotiated solutions to civil wars have been rare. Since 1800 only one third of all civil wars have ended through negotiations. Since 1945 that ratio stands at 25 per cent. The lesson that we need to draw from this is that the peace process is extremely fragile and cease-fire agreements are but a first step in the long road to a negotiated settlement. In the light of international experiences and lessons learned in four previous failed negotiations in Sri Lanka we should evaluate how the current peace process can achieve a negotiated solution.

Architecture and Design

The challenge facing the country is how to redesign a process, which can prevent a recurrence of war. Whether Sri Lanka can transcend a highly fragmented competitive political culture and the distrust and bitterness engendered by a twenty-five year protracted conflict will depend on the political management of a complex process. If there are any lessons that can be learnt from our own experience and successful negotiated settlements elsewhere, it is that the process design should be inclusive of significant stakeholders. What is required is to move away from a two-party negotiation process to a multi- party stakeholder dialogue and work towards building a comprehensive peace-building strategy.

The Cease-Fire Agreement

The premise upon which the Cease-Fire Agreement is based is the recognition that both sides have reached military parity. The LTTE is not a defeated army. It controls territory. Confidence building measures amongst the people and trust building amongst the two parties is the centerpiece of the Cease-Fire Agreement. Both sides have come to an understanding that core issues would be postponed indefinitely until a specific set of circumstances would enable both sides to implement equitable power sharing and decommissioning of weapons.

Role of the Facilitators

The role of Norway has been a key factor in the facilitation process. The most important consideration is that Norway has won the trust of both parties to the conflict. Both are convinced that Norway has no hidden agenda. The Norwegian facilitation exercise has ensured proper communication between the two parties at multiple levels. The opposition parties have however questioned the impartiality of the Norwegians but this is more to do with domestic politics and political competition.

The Cease-Fire Agreement also provided the establishment of an International Monitoring Mission composed of Scandinavian Monitors who would be required to monitor the implementation of the Cease-Fire Agreement. These monitors have demonstrated their neutrality in the evenhandedness of their criticisms of the Government and the LTTE. Their moral authority and rulings have been accepted as final by both sides. Their impartiality has been severely tested in numerous ceasefire violations, sometimes at the risk of their lives. Cease-fire violations will take place again and again but what is important to note is that these violations are effectively monitored and procedures put in place to address these issues.

The immediate effect of the peace dividend is the absence of direct violence where the guns are silent. This has resulted in over ten thousand lives being saved and about fifteen thousand not maimed or injured during the period of the cease-fire. The peace dividend is experienced in different ways by the population. Whilst the people of the South have experienced peace and tranquility there is considerable turbulence in the North where the people still experience the presence of 40,000 troops, restrictions on fishing and restrictions on the freedom of movement. The presence of High Security Zones in Jaffna and the inability of citizens to reclaim their land and houses is a constant source of concern and frustration. In the East there are periodic disturbances, demonstrations and tension over extortion, child abductions and insecurity experienced by the Muslim people.

Negotiations Strategy

The principles that guide negotiations must be singularly focused on producing win-win solutions. No other option is acceptable. The process which was designed and the sequencing of events proved to have moved away from positional bargaining to problem solving. Unfortunately this problem-solving approach is not reflected at the meetings of the 3 committees established by the parties. For example, the debacle over the handling of the High Security Zones by the Committee on De-escalation and Normalization was an important case of positional bargaining which eventually led to this important committee being dissolved. The High Security Zones lies at the heart of the negotiations and is too complex and sensitive a matter to have been referred to a committee.

This problem should have been taken up through a problem-solving approach at the highest political level. The stakes are indeed very high here with the Government concerned with the security of the State and the LTTE concerned with human security and the rights of the displaced and their right of return to their homes. The choice of asking General Nambiar from India to engage in a fact finding mission and present a report on security regarding the High Security Zone is eagerly awaited whilst the LTTE has denounced the report even before it has been released.

There is a more fundamental problem in the methodology and manner in which the negotiations are conducted. Negotiations are held every six weeks in a high profile and much publicized drama where both parties are undertaking what can be called a high-risk negotiations strategy All the stakes are centered on one negotiations table. There is little work done in between the sessions. In other similar endeavors such as in El Salvador and South Africa there were numerous committees at the political level and at the expert level to work on detailed and complicated questions. Failure in any one committee does not entail a breakdown of the entire process. The current linear and high profile strategy means that a success story has to be produced at each round of talks. This strategy may encounter diminishing returns with a skeptical public.

Whilst problem solving seems to be the method used at the High Table there have been concerns raised as to the content of the discussions. It is difficult for the population to learn if high table meetings are based on principled discussions or accommodating to each other s needs. The more the two parties lean on each other the more concessions are provided. The more such concessions are provided the more estranged the two parties get from their own constituencies. It is important to understand this psychology of dependence. The two parties are dependent on each other and the facilitator is dependent on the two parties. It is obvious that there should be a more broader based negotiations strategy.

The absence of a separate Muslim representation at the negotiations is another significant lacunae in the process. This problem continues to be a source of great discomfort and anxiety to the Muslim population in the Eastern region.

Communications

Effective communications between the parties and stakeholders is a prerequisite to a successful negotiations strategy. It would be a fatal error to assume that trust building and confidence building should be restricted to the two parties. Neither the Government nor the LTTE has a well-planned communications strategy. Consulting and informing stakeholders requires a more structured process. They also need to inform strategic constituencies of civil society. This does not happen. The LTTE on the other hand makes bellicose statements outside the negotiations table, which are contrary to the spirit of the agreement. These flaws in the communications strategy should be rectified through a multi-level communications strategy.

Burden Sharing

In a situation where both sides have been trapped in a violent relationship spanning 25 years it requires third parties to share the burden. A significant achievement of the Government has been the willingness of the international community to share the burden by being prepared to shoulder the cost of relief, reconstruction and development. They have also created a normative framework where the donor community can use their leverage to discipline the parties to respect international obligations with regard to human rights and democracy. Such arrangements also ensure a security blanket in case the talks fail. The engagement of UNICEF with regard to child soldiers and efforts to sign a protocol on this subject with the LTTE is a significant achievement. The decision of the human rights community to engage with the LTTE has already produced some interesting results. It has led to an agreement where the LTTE is prepared to accept the Sri Lankan Human Rights Commission as an oversight body for human rights monitoring. The recent decision by the LTTE to propose a Federal Constitution may also have been a result of international pressure. The entry of Japan into the peace process and its willingness to spearhead the donor consortium for Sri Lanka expands the umbrella and enhances the division of labor based on comparative advantage.

India has maintained equidistance from the formal negotiations. India has also provided a standby loan of over $100 million as a credit line for the purchase of Indian goods and has made it clear that whilst it has grave reservations about the LTTE it remains supportive of the peace process and supports the Sri Lankan Government.

Stakeholder Analysis

A significant aspect of the design of the peace process as a whole is the lack of a proper inclusive process where other stakeholders are involved. This lacuna is a fundamental flaw in the process design. A strategy needs to be evolved not only for bi-lateral negotiations between the principle parties i.e. the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE, but multilateral negotiations with other political parties in the South and the North. A structure needs to be evolved to ensure a mechanism for consensus. Such a mechanism was suggested sometime ago by the LSSP to create a Parliamentary Committee, but this proposal was not followed through. The PA has suggested that an opposition member should be represented at the talks. This proposal has been rejected. Serious consideration should be given on how the opposition could be represented at the various committees, which are being formed at various levels.

A policy of exclusion and ownership will undermine the foundations upon which a just peace needs to be built. In the Israel—Palestine conflict the two parties to the conflict, the Labor Party of Israel and the PLO representing the Palestinians failed to involve other key stakeholders such as the Likud party in Israel and Hamas

in Palestine, which led to a breakdown of the process. In South Africa on the other hand the process design was inclusive in that all political parties which came to over 20 political parties were brought into a multi-lateral dialogue, whilst bi-lateral discussions continued between the National party and the ANC. The challenge for the government is how to broad base the negotiations strategy by creating a multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Apart from sporadic attempts to mediate between the UNF and the PA there has been no systematic and structured effort to bring about a bi-partisan agreement between the two parties. The minimum requirement should be that all parties agree to a formula, which agrees that there will be no recurrence of war. Such a memorandum of understanding should make concrete proposals, which ensure that even if the cease-fire agreement breaks down that scenarios are developed to explore options and safety nets against a return to war.

There is some concern that there can be a likelihood of an early election sometime this year. Nobody wants elections, particularly when the people have given an overwhelming mandate to the government on three occasions to go for a negotiated solution. Elections under the present circumstances would become highly polarized and divert the attention of the country from the decisive problem of obtaining a negotiated solution.

The Muslim Factor

T he Muslims in the Northeast constitute a major stakeholder in the negotiations process. Relations between the Muslims and the Tamils in the North and East remain turbulent but also incidents of violations against Muslims have substantially decreased. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress has also undergone a serious split in its ranks. Political unrest is at its highest in the eastern region with the recent demonstration in the South Eastern University where over 65,000 people seemed to have called for a separate power-sharing unit for the Muslims in the Eastern region. Whilst it would be attractive to both parties to weaken the Muslim factor in the long run this would harm the entire process. It is very important that the Muslim dimension is given proper recognition by all the parties.

Role of Civil Society

R ecent polls taken by the Center for Policy Alternatives show a significant decline of support in the South. The decline in support is due to a number of reasons. An important one is the astronomical rise in the cost of living where the real incomes of people have been halved. Another is that the opposition parties are succeeding in casting doubts as to the direction of the peace process as a whole. Significant actors in civil society continue to be by-standers.

Civil society should be critical stakeholders of the process. Civil society is neither an appendage of government nor is it a permanent opposition. Civil society has not succeeded in building a viable peace movement capable of voicing its own agenda on the direction of the process. In a democracy the role of civil society institutions is to articulate stakeholder interests to officials in Track 1, and contribute significantly to policy making through effective lobbying.

We need a sustained and deeper dialogue process between civil society institutions and the two parties to the conflict. Currently the process is too exclusive. Whilst important gains have been achieved by citizen initiatives, such as initiating policy dialogue towards a federal solution, the decision to form a women s committee, lobbying to appoint a human rights expert was the work of significant civil society interventions. We need to broaden this base and create a citizens consultative forum, which can engage in such a dialogue both with the North and the South.

Finally then we require not only a monitoring of the cease-fire agreement but mechanisms to monitor the direction of the peace process as a whole. Such a citizen initiative to monitor, evaluate and rectify the process through concerted action is vital for the health of the process. ■

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ETHNIC IDENTITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

Devanesan Nesiah

Traditionally ethnic identity has been defined in terms of race and descent. In some societies race has remained the most significant factor but in many, with the progressive discrediting of race theories, the emphasis shifted to cultural features. Because the various cultural features may not be correlated, the focus frequently, but not always, settled on language. In a few, the critical feature was religion, history, territory, or citizenship.

Even the non-racial definitions such as language pose problems. For example, many middle-class Sri Lankans and a large proportion of Sri Lankan expatriates speak English, even in their homes; in effect, their mother tongue is English. But does this redefine their ethnicity? Similarly, most Sri Lankan Muslims speak Tamil at home and their children have their schooling in the Tamil medium, but increasing proportions of Muslims speak Sinhala or English at home and their children have their schooling in the Sinhala or English medium. But does this redefine their ethnicity?

All of us have multiple identities, which is healthy. Group identities are as necessary as individual identities; so is pluralism. Without distinctive group and individual features, life would be unbearably bland. On the other hand, few would wish to belong to a society in which there is total correlation of all features of group identity — the ultimate end product of ethnic cleansing.

Identity and Community

The most pragmatic basis of ethnic identity may be a sense of community. Do all Sri Lankans have the same ethnic identity? Are those categorized as Kandyan Sinhalese and Low-Country Sinhalese of the same or different ethnic identity? Are those categorized as Sri Lankan Tamils, Malaiyaha Tamils and Muslims of the same or different ethnic identity? Since we all have multiple identities, there can be no definitive answers to these questions. Perhaps it is just as well. But this is not to deny that some identities are felt to be more important than others and, in particular, politically more potent.

Our civil war relates to perceptions of ethnic identity and loyalties, and felt grievances linked to these perceptions. Conflicts cannot be overcome by mere definition or redefinition of ethnicity; nor can ethnic identities be foisted on any community or individual. We all need to decide for ourselves what our ethnic identities are, and which of these is most salient in any particular context. In national politics one identity may surface as the most salient, in local politics another, in literary matters a third, in religious life a fourth, and so on. Moreover, the weights we attach to these identities may change over time.

For example, up to the mid-20th century, the Kandyan Sinhalese sought recognition as a distinctive ethnic community, with special political and administrative structure to secure and sustain their welfare. This was accepted and special provisions were made for the socio-economic development of the Kandyan areas and the Kandyan Sinhalese population. In addition, all revenue divisions were categorized into Kandyan Sinhalese, Low-Country Sinhalese and Tamil, with separate cadres of Divisional Revenue Officers serving these areas. Recruitment to each of these three service cadres was exclusively from the community concerned. Perhaps Kandyan Sinhalese no longer claim a distinctive ethnic identity requiring separate political and administrative structures. It is for them to decide on this matter and not for others to dictate to them. On the other hand, it is possible that Muslims and Malaiyaha Tamils, earlier subsumed within the Tamil category in respect of the D.R.O. service, may now wish to be recognized as distinctive ethnic communities. Again, it is for them to decide and not for others to dictate to them. If there are conflicting perceptions, the leadership of the communities concerned could seek to resolve them amicably. This may be particularly important in respect of political and administrative institutions. On this issue, as on many others, there are perceived ethnicity correlated differences but also, happily, attempts to resolve them through dialogue. This is of the essence of self-determination.

Self-determination may take many forms including:
i) External self-determination (secession).
ii) Internal self-determination extending to autonomy for groups defined territorially, but with boundaries drawn with due consideration paid to ethnic identity.
iii) Internal self-determination reflected in special rights for minority groups within a larger politically entity, as recognized in Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and in the U.N. General Assembly s 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

The original LTTE demand was for (i) above; it now appears that it will settle for (ii) (which was the ITAK/TULF demand through the third quarter of the 20th century), falling back on (i) only in the event of a total breakdown in negotiations. The long-standing LTTE commitment to the first option seems to be receding. The SLMC position has not been finally formulated but, clearly, it will be based on the understanding that the Muslims have a distinct ethnic identity; the alternatives appear to be (ii) or (iii) above depending on whether the arrangements worked out between the government and the LTTE adequately meet Muslim concerns. For the Muslims, (ii) could be in the form of a self-governing Muslim majority South

East region; (iii) could be in the form of constitutional safeguards and institutional arrangements protecting the rights and promoting the welfare of Muslims but without the establishment of a self-governing South East region. For the Malaiyaha Tamils, (i) and (ii) may not be feasible, and their focus is on(iii).

Not every federalism/regional autonomy regime is based on internal self-determination. For example, a regime of regional autonomy based on river basins (as has been proposed) will not meet the objectives of internal self-determination. Perhaps that proposal is designed precisely to frustrate such objectives. Subject to the need for territorial contiguity, a degree of correlation with the ethnic identity of the population resident in it is an essential ingredient. On the other hand a federation of exclusively, mono-ethnic regions will not be viable in a multi-ethnic country. Such a situation will surely provoke ethnicity-based conflict and, inevitably, the center will seek to re-impose its hegemony over the regions exclusively peopled by minority population. A healthy and enduring relationship between the center and the periphery requires, at all levels, both power sharing and openness to pluralism.

Indian Case

A look at India will be instructive. Firstly, even after more than half a century, the ill effects of separation (partition) continue to foul politics and ethnic harmony, and to generate violence in both India and Pakistan. Second, through adopting a federal (or quasi-federal) constitution, India went some distance towards meeting the aspirations of internal self-determination. But due recognition was not given to linguistic identity, and there were eruptions of linguistic nationalism in many regions, with demands for the redrawing of state boundaries and, in some cases, secession.

The Indian leadership initially opposed it, but was eventually compelled to concede the principle of linguistic reorganization of states, i.e. internal self-determination on the basis of linguistic identity. Contrary to the fears of the Indian leadership, the reforms proved to be unifying and integrative in respect of all-India nationalism. Centre-periphery and inter-state disputes have not disappeared (it would be unrealistic to expect that they ever will), but those generated by linguistic nationalism have largely subsided. In particular, the movement in South India, particularly Tamil Nadu, for secession has disappeared. The realization of an acceptable measure of internal self-determination has undermined the case for external self-determination.

The lesson is that all facets of ethnic identity, viz. language, religion, etc., have the potential to play positive or negative roles in national integration. We may also note that because of the principle of contiguity, even after reorganization, every Indian state retained a degree of pluralism. Since then, the degree of pluralism has increased through free movement of the population across India, further enhancing the unity and integrity of that country. This development has been facilitated, not hindered, by the adoption of linguistic homelands which ensured that:

(i) No linguistic group felt threatened with loss of identity.
(ii) Those who wished to live in a territory administered in their mother tongue were free to move into such a territory ; and those who wished to move into another, for whatever reasons, were also free to do so.

Regional Autonomy

I s regional autonomy a half way house to separation? If so, why have those fighting for secession, whether in Sri Lanka or elsewhere, sought to sabotage rather than support the functioning of devolved institutions? In one sense, the various gradations of internal self-determination may be seen as spanning the gap between external self-determination and a unitary regime. This is so in respect of the powers devolved from the center to the periphery. But, in other respects, to move from a unitary regime to internal self-determination is to move in the opposite direction, away from secession — morally (in terms of justification), politically (in terms of the feasibility of that option) and in international law (extending to respect for the territorial integrity of the state).

The transformation from a (failed) unitary to a (new) plural regime is, invariably, the outcome of extended negotiations resulting in both a contract between the leaders of the groups previously in conflict and a fresh constitution. That contract, if honoured by either side, imposes moral and political pressure against unilateral repudiation by the other. Both within the country and beyond, the new constitution, in contrast to the failed one it has replaced, has a compelling legitimacy. Moreover, in international law, the recognition of the right to internal self-determination and the adoption of appropriate agreed constitutional and administrative reforms will serve to delegitimize the right to external self-determination —*vide* extract below from Devanesan Nesiah, Tamil Nationalism, Marga Monograph Series, 2001 (pp. 22-24).

In international law, the right to secede is only one of the options and even that option cannot be exercised unilaterally. In fact this question was posed by the Governor in Council of Canada to the Supreme Court (1998) as follows:

...[Is] there a right to self-determination under international law that would give the National Assembly, legislature or government of Quebec the right to effect the secession of Quebec from Canada unilaterally?

In response, the Supreme Court of Canada (1998) set out its opinion very clearly:

126. The recognized sources of international law established that the right to self-determination of a people is normally fulfilled through internal self-determination a people s pursuit of its political, economic, social and cultural development within the framework of an existing state. A

right to external self-determination (which in this case potentially takes the form of the assertion of a right to unilateral secession) arises in only the most extreme of cases and, even then, under carefully defined circumstances

127. The international law principle of self-determination has evolved within a framework of respect for the territorial integrity of existing states

130. ... There is no necessary incompatibility between the maintenance of the territorial integrity of existing states, including Canada, and the right of a people to achieve a full measure of self-determination. A state whose government represents the whole of the people or peoples resident within its territory, on a basis of equality and without discrimination, and respects the principles of self-determination in its internal arrangements, is entitled to the protection under international law of its territorial integrity.

134. A number of commentators have further asserted that the right of self-determination may ground a right to unilateral secession when a people is blocked from the meaningful exercise of its right to self-determination internally The Vienna Declaration adds credence to the assertion that such a complete blockage may potentially give rights to a right of secession.

We note that the Canadian Supreme Court and much of the literature on the subject (e.g., Steiner and Alston, 2000) draw a clear distinction between internal and external self-determination. Effective provision for internal self-determination (e.g., federalism combined with non-discrimination), far from paving the way for unilateral secession, delegitimises any recourse to it. On the other hand, the denial of due internal self-determination could legitimise a right of secession.

Finally, is there a widely recognized understanding of the term internal self-determination ? Perhaps we may settle on the broad definition offered in the above quoted judgments of the Canadian Supreme Court, viz. a people s pursuit of its political, economic, social and cultural development within the frame work of an existing state. ■

THE ECONOMICS OF PEACE:
THE WORLD BANK, INFORMATION ASYMMETRIES, AND THE POST-CONFLICT INDUSTRY

Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake

Would it not be simpler, if the government could dissolve the people and elect another?
(Bertol Brecht)

Knaves will tell you that it is because you have no property that you are un-represented. I tell you, on the contrary, that it is because you are unrepresented that you have no property.
(English Chartist Bonterre O Brien, 1846, quoted in Elizabeth Wood, *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador*, CUP, 2000)

Introduction

Wars, including struggles for ethno-national self-determination and representation are fought to change the power-property status quo. If a peace process fails to adequately acknowledge and address issues of economic and social inequality that structured the conflict, while balancing changes wrought in the war years against return to the pre-war power-property status quo, it may result in an unsustainable peace that becomes a blue print for renewed violence, years or decades later. Thus, in a recent book published by the Washington-based United States Institute for Peace, titled *Effects of Violence on Peace Processes,* John Darby notes: Of the thirty-eight formal peace accords signed between January 1988 and December 1998, thirty one failed to last more than three years. Darby suggests that the reason for this state of affairs is that stopping wars is far more difficult than starting them, and that when political violence is ended by a ceasefire it reappears in other forms to threaten the peace process. He suggests that a peace process must be forward looking and potential spoilers of the peace must be on board, for if not they may destabilize the peace process. In Sri Lanka this would include potential spoilers who may use local conflicts and social and economic inequality that are not directly related to the macro armed conflict between the LTTE and GoSL.

A number of studies of the two decades-long armed conflict in Sri Lanka have noted that the war was not simply an ethnic af fair but rather a complex emer gency. The war was sustained and fuelled by a range of global and local actors and factors including rural poverty, unemployment, and caste marginalization (particularly in northern Tamil society and in the deep south). The majority of those who fought, died, and were disabled on both sides were drawn from the rural poor. Additionally, in the last decade a war economy that developed a self-sustaining momentum emerged, as a number of trans-national actors and networks, from the diaspora to the military and humanitarian industry stabilized and sustained the conflict dynamic as the economy structured into a war economy. While a range of political actors and elites made profits through corruption, terror and taxation the military became the leading employer of a class of marginalized youth from low-caste communities in the north and south alike. Simultaneously, as Professor Tudor Silva of the Centre for Poverty Analysis has noted, economic inequality and poverty cleavages tended to be ethnicized and politicized due to the circular dynamic of poverty and ethnic conflict (cf. Mayer, Rajasingham- Senanayake, Thangaraja, 2003). The connection between rural poverty and the sustainability of peace has been made in other studies of peace settlements. In *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador*, Elizabeth Wood suggests that peace processes that address economic re-distribution including land reform have a better chance of long-term success. Wood s arguments are relevant for Sri Lanka. Yet in the current post-conflict settlement discussion while the issue of power redistribution via a devolved and federated system has received high priority, issues of social and economic inequality are not being addressed in any systematic fashion.

Free Market and Social Justice

The presumption on faith propounded by the Minister for Economic Reforms seems to be that the free market would take care of social and economic justice issues that fuelled the conflict la the Washington Consensus (World Bank and IMF). There has been relatively little discussion of the political economic transformation to society that 20 years of war had generated. Debate on post-conflict reconstruction policy is largely framed by legal-bureaucratic considerations at the national level as to how power vested in a highly centralized state may be devolved to the regions? The public debate considerably influenced by global recipes for post-conflict reconstruction focused on (neo-liberal) institution building and constitution design and the need for good governance. In the context, it is not hard to see how economic hardship and social disaffection caused by spiralling costs of living, unemployment exacerbated by layoffs, a sealing on public sector

hiring for structural adjustment programs (SAPs), and privatization of essential services including public utilities (the standoff between the multinational gas duopoly Shell and Laufs and the Consumer Protection Authority being exemplary), may be used by peace spoilers who have significant constituencies among those who bare the brunt of the current phase of economic restructuring which in most parts of the world had demonstrably increased socio-economic disparities and cleavages (Cf. UNDP Human Development Report 2000).

In this context, the question may be raised as to why the GoSL and the LTTE have chosen or been impelled to chose the World Bank to be the custodian of the post-conflict fund? And on what basis? Historically, the United Nations is the international organization charged with and experienced in dealing with post-conflict reconstruction (East Timor being a recent example). Moreover, the UN agencies despite numerous critics have a relatively open attitude to human security, local voices, priorities and knowledge systems than has the World Bank, since it is not so closely allied to international finance and corporate interests, and in the grip of what Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel prize winning economist and ex-Vice President of the World Bank, terms market fundamentalism in his book *Globalization and its Discontents*. Is the World Bank then a more or less neutral actor or will it ensure that the peace is structured to suit the agendas of international finance and corporate capital while making Sri Lanka vulnerable to fluctuating global financial markets as the world economy goes into recession (as occurred in Argentina)? As conflict, security and development are increasingly linked will it disburse funds to projects that have a less capital friendly and more social justice focus?

These questions must be asked by the Sri Lankan public who support the peace process and wish to ensure its sustainability. There are other reasons for concern. A range of social conflicts have escalated in Latin American countries that undertook uncritical structural adjustment programs (SAPs) that made them vulnerable to fluctuations in global financial markets at the behest of the World Bank and IMF (riots in Argentina being a recent dramatic case). Likewise, historically, international finance capital, dictators and military juntas have been allied to safeguard their interests and deflect social justice issues embedded in complex conflicts. In this respect, the controversial analysis of violent conflict coming out of the World Bank research project led by Paul Collier on The Economics of Civil War, Crime and Violence is not encouraging. Collier claims that it is greed rather than grievance, (as if these are not relational terms). He suggests that the profits made by war lords and armed groups explain violence. He thus rules out economic grievance as a cause of violence. While this kind of analysis may explain the proposed Bush-Blair resource war on Iraq, it is telling in its misguidedness and ignorance of local issues, international political economic and global power/knowledge hierarchies that structure complex conflicts in the global south, and does not augur well for a sensibly theorized post-conflict reconstruction program supervised by the Bank in Sri Lanka. If the World bank is to be the custodian of the post-conflict fund the

question arises: will the peace dividend become available to those marginal communities and social groups that were most brutalized and instrumentalized by the war economy? In short, would a neo-liberal post-conflict peace that exacerbates socio-economic disparities as SAPs and sector adjustment programs are pushed through along with post-conflict reconstruction, and the questionable promise of long-term economic growth despite the growing global recession enable a sustainable peace? Is this constellation of actors and interests a recipe for a new cycle of violence that may destabilize the peace process in Sri Lanka? To answer this question it may be relevant to look back on how almost two decades of armed conflict was represented and analyzed in the World Development discourse in Sri Lanka.

Representing Development: 'Growth with War' and other Sustainable Myths

During the Second and Third Eelam wars (1990-2001), a public myth existed in the south of Sri Lanka that relatively high levels of economic growth could be sustained in the island while an expensive armed conflict was waged in the North-East provinces.[1] As the People s Alliance government went ahead with structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and privatization of various profitable and debt-ridden government holdings just as the previous UNP government had done, the numbers of BMWs and Alfa Romeos that cruised the highways and bi-lanes of Colombo, the southern capital, were on the rise. Signs of a growing economy and a market for luxury goods were apparent in the larger cities and in the display of sophisticated weapons to and communications technology in the security sector. The Central Bank projected national growth figures of five percent, a figure that helped the ruling party to win local and national elections and attract foreign investment. International development organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, and UNDP projected similar growth figures.

The late 1990s were years of converging national statistical percentages in Sri Lanka. While defence spending was five percent of GDP, donor assistance also hovered at around five percent GDP. That international aid might subsidize the armed conflict given fungibility of aid was not missed by a number of commentators. Yet if research staff in leading national institutions of higher education such as the University of Colombo could not use the internet because the Ministry of Higher Education could not pay its telephone bills and the library could not buy books and journals due to the toll of the war economy on the education sector that was being restructured, the international financial institutions turned a blind eye to military spending despite widely known and rumoured corruption in the military sector and the defence ministry. While structural adjustment to education, health etc., sometimes bringing long overdue reform to these sectors were on the cards, structural adjustments of the military and state s coercive apparatus was not on the cards.

Indeed, the IMF appeared to systematically underestimate the Sri Lanka government s underestimation of its own military expenses (discussion with IMF representative at ICES —August 2001) while the Sri Lanka government seemed to practice home grown military Keynseanism.[2] The continuing failure of the international development industry to address military budgets of governments at war with segments of their populations remains the scandal of international development industry. In Sri Lanka the growth rate of about five percent in the late 1990s despite the war seems to have been used to bolster the argument that neo-economic liberal structural adjustments works — even in conflict situations.What was ignored was that after almost two decades of armed conflict the rural economy seemed to be substantially and increasingly dependent on non-productive activity, i.e., war making (cf. Dunham 2000).

During these years, national statistics impervious to the law of averages, that excluded the under-performing north and eastern conflict affected provinces were produced by the Central Bank and seconded by organizations such as the World Bank and UNDP. It was suggested that excluding the northern and eastern provinces from national statistics was insignificant since population densities in those provinces were low, and would not affect per capita calculations.

Of course, statistics and information on the conflict zones were highly politicized, particularly given claims and counter-claims regarding human rights violations, numbers of displaced people, and food aid to be sent to the war zones. During the years of the third Eelam war that started in 1995 with the collapse of the peace process that had commenced when Chandrika Bandaranaike-Kumaratunge became President, the military frequently and possible correctly argued that the LTTE was inflating figures and skimming excess aid.

The information lacuna arising from the politicization of information and the difficulties of information gathering in the war zones was compounded by the censorship on media and reporting from the northeast. Because of difficulties of information gathering in the conflict zones, national data on health, education and literacy excluded the war-deprived and traumatized regions of the island. International evaluations along with national statistics on many social and economic matters provided impressionistic and often grossly misleading and optimistic scenarios of the life and livelihood in the conflict zones. It was rarely mentioned that transport was literally by bullock cart in the uncleared or LTTE held areas, given the fuel and fertilizer embargo, while the economy and market had been bombed into the dark ages, and food security eroded.[3]

The information lacuna in turn perpetuated a number of myths that sustained the conflict, both at the level of policy as well as in popular discourse. As the conflict escalated in the 1990s, the notion that growth with war is possible appeared to be the operative fiction in policy circles. Meanwhile the conflict generated a war economy with military service becoming the leading income generation project for young men from rural areas even as it generated new forms of social and economic inequality and marginalization (eg. Muslim-Tamil conflicts in the east coast). That Sri Lanka, the South Asian leader in social indicators, may be slipping in health and education, and mortgaging its future as the numbers of disabled increased, and the economy structured into a war economy, with the rural sector increasingly dependent on soldiers wages was not mentioned. Of course a second scenario of Sri Lanka s conflict-development nexus that focused on the social costs of war, was captured in popular films, other critical media, and by various studies by NGOs but with little impact.[4] Squaring the circle — an analysis of which sectors benefited from the war economy and SAPs and which did not remains to be done.

On the other hand, the devastation of war in the north and east gave credence to LTTE claims that they had nothing more to loose, and hence must fighting an opponent intent on decimating them to the end. The war years made clear the domestic economic policy is increasingly a global affair. As the country became increasingly dependent on aid for fighing the war the international financial institutions and successive governments pursued a neo-liberal policy of economic restructuring. As privatization appeared to sustain the myth of growth with war, a number of other local and micro-conflicts were displaced upon the over determined war between the military and the LTTE. The myth of growth with war was rudely shattered by the LTTE attack on the airport and the manner in which the economic growth entered a negative for the first time in its post-colonial history.

Representing Development: Information Asymmetries and Power/Knowledge Hierarchies

International measures, indexes and observations of success or failure of nation-states, economies, or people, have their own logic. They establish authoritative descriptions, and construct truths about national progress or regress. Indeed a number of theorists of development and developmentalism (Escobar, 1995; Nandy, 1983; Gupta, 1998) have noted, that in the trajectory of world development, peoples, nations, regions, and the third world have come to see themselves as more or less developed underdeveloped, and more or less in need of development, or social capital, or institutions, or better governance, or globalization etc. They have also suggested that development processes might actually de-develop societies, and have traced how development indicators may conceal increasing economic inequalities and social and regional polarization.

In countries with skeptical publics, information from international development and financial institutions are sometimes given greater authority because of the presumption that they may be more independent and accurate than government s figures. In turn, these authoritative indexes, measures, and narratives of developmental progress or regress configure local perceptions of local conditions.

Sometimes, these constructions and their policy agendas elicit counter-reactions and ethno-nationalist back lashes.[5] In noting this dynamic of how a country may be measured, evaluated, and restructured for World Development, my purpose is not to suggest that poor people or armed conflicts do not exist. Rather it is to mark how poverty qua poverty, or conflict qua conflict, are constituted as objects of and for analysis and developmental-relief intervention (read power/knowledge), and how such interventions are legitimated.

In the late 1990s as the war escalated in Sri Lanka local and global political-economic processes and imperatives configured the dominant representation and interpretation of the conflict-development nexus in Sri Lanka, that growth with war was possible. The notion that war with growth was possible is a corollary of the economic reductionism that characterizes the argument that violence is economically rational and it is greed rather than grievance that fuels conflicts (Collier et al., 2001). 1997-98 were years when the Bank and IMF were increasingly critiqued on the crisis and escalating social violence in the Asian Tiger economies. Internally, in the World Bank, Stiglitz had criticized IMF policies and suggested that developmental macro-policy may fuel and deepen the crisis and ensuing violence in South East Asia (Stiglitz, 1997, 1998; Wade, 2000). In this context, success stories even in conflict torn societies were needed. In Missed Opportunities, the World Bank s Sri Lanka country report in 2000 suggested that Sri Lanka is a relative success in terms of economic liberalization and structural adjustments.

A story of operative fictions and mutual entrapment between international financial institutions and a government fighting a dirty war (given that national economic policy is increasingly globally configured), amidst an increasingly dysfunctional democracy emerges in the myth that growth with war was possible in Lanka. This entrapment in turn sustained the war dynamic which developed self-sustaining momentum (Rajasingham- Senakayake, 2001). The myth was shattered after the LTTE attack on Katunayake airport in July 2001 that impacted on sectors dependent on external markets, particularly trade, tourism and shipping, and the growth figures dipped from 5% into negative digits overnight. This entrapment may continue with the peace dynamic too with the government and World Bank promoting an unsustainable neo-liberal peace.

The myth that growth with war was possible was also enabled by the history of perception of the island as an outlier in the fifty-year-old world development discourse. Sri Lanka had always followed the path of the unexpected. At independence in 1948, armed conflict was not on the island s development agenda. The island s social indicators that were the best in the South Asian region despite very low per capita income, placed it in the category of outlier in the development discourse for decades. Moreover, a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-faith, and multi-cultural land, Ceylon as it was called then, had been considered a model

democracy until the mid-1980s. In the years of the conflict, growth in the south despite a debilitating armed conflict in the north and east further buttressed Sri Lanka s standing as an outlier in the world development discourse, and enabled the perception that it was a land of missed opportunities. The outlier perception of Sri Lanka masked the island s de-development and deep regional divisions that fuel the armed conflict in the island.

Indeed, it is arguable that the regional disparity between the conflict affected North-East and the rest of the island constituted one of the biggest challenges of peace building and development, even as the central barrier to human development in Sri Lanka may be the information divide and information lacuna. The engineering of information and the resulting ignorance generated at the highest levels of policy and opinion making on the national impacts of the war was one of the reasons that the war escalated to dire proportions, without giving rise to an anti-war peace movement in the late 1990s.

Conclusion: De-Development and the Poverty of Theory in Post-Conflict Policy

P ost-conflict reconstruction, a growth sector in the world development industry led by the Bretton Woods institutions is about information asymmetries, global-local hierarchies of knowledge and power and the marketing of myths and models of development. Recognition by the development policy community that Sri Lanka was a complex emergency and that violent conflicts could undo years of development achievements, has not entailed acknowledgement of the converse process: that the macro-policies and practices of (uneven) development may also structure and fuel domestic political-economic transformations and societal polarization leading to violent conflicts. Possible linkages between development processes that exacerbated social inequality and a number of social tensions (JVP and LTTE youth uprisings), contributed to overdetermine the north-south ethnic divide in the island, and hence the need for mainstreaming conflict analysis into development policy and planning are hardly acknowledged. There is a need to link macro-policies of development to the local war economy in the conflict zone, rather than treating them as separate.

It is arguable that trans-historical ethnic readings of the violence in Sri Lanka and neo-liberal myths that growth with war is possible in the dependent economies of the global south have obscured issues of economic and social inequality that structured the two decades-long armed conflict in the north and east of Sri Lanka. They also obscured how the war had transformed the island s society and political economy. But issues of political representation and economic justice are inextricably linked: self-determination will remain an unfulfilled promise without economic and social rights.

After the initial de-politicization that the peace process necessitated, it would be necessary to move on and deal seriously with political

economic issues by linking civil and political issues of demilitarization and de-escalation with social justice issues or economic and social rights. Post-conflict reconstruction must have a holistic approach and move beyond a formalist legal approach to devolution and power sharing among the armed actors and the State, and address issues such as poverty, inequality and their relationship to macro-policies of economic adjustment and conflict. Otherwise, the risk is that a peace agreement might once again become a blue print for more war, or be merely a trade off between armed groups and politicians who peddle ethnic conflict or ethnic peace to shore up their vote banks. Rather, the need is for substantive democratic reform and transformation of political culture and economic ideology and institutions (including the state s coercive apparatus) that have generated and fuelled multiple conflicts and much of the violence over twenty years.

The dominance of the World Bank in the post-conflict reconstruction industry and the manner in which a range of structural adjustments projects (including the recently stymied labour bill) are being pushed through parliament as the peace process takes centre stage in national politics may suggest otherwise. Structural adjustments usually mean that things must get worse before they get better if ever . Things getting worse usually mean another cycle of conflict that is very hard to stop once started, as Darby has noted. The timing of these interventions in the long-term may lead to increased levels of unemployment, spiralling cost of essential services and living and the unravelling of the peace process by spoilers who exploit popular disaffection. Argentina, where riots and social unrest has occurred in the wake of massive neo-liberal reform, sounds a warning to us all.

My purpose here is not to decry all reform. Certainly reform in the energy, education, public and social sectors and administrative and governance structures is necessary. The point, however, is that the neo-liberal agenda may not be the most appropriate type of reform. What seems to be forgotten in the post-conflict and developmental emphasis on good governance (based on the model and language of corporate governance despite Arthur Anderson, Enron and the expanding of corporate scandals) is that institutions are embedded in social, cultural and political process. The formalist focus institutions and constitutions often reduce democracy to actually existing free market democracy and may result in a new cycle of war as peace spoilers use the grievance of spiralling costs of living and real and perceived increases in economic inequalities to upset the peace.

Finally, the question remains: will humanitarian and post-conflict aid effectively subsidize SAPs and the country s adjustment to Global Capital(ism)? As the various MPs tour Switzerland, Canada etc., for constitutional models they may as well read Stiglitz and visit third world Latin American countries in conflict and post-conflict situations that have a far closer profile and learn from economic debate and debacles in that region, not to mention Africa. What informed critical debate in those countries may suggest is that after almost two decades of armed violence in Sri Lanka

building a sustainable peace would entail political and economic reform aimed at achieving substantive rather than ritual or procedural democracy and the need for re-distributive justice. By substantive democracy what is meant here is, economic and social as well as civil and political aspects of democratic practice.

A striking example of the failure to connect the issues of social justice with political reform is evident in how the property rights of displaced people are being addressed as if the pattern of violence and displacement in the agrarian peasant communities had no relationship to prior competition over land between peasants of the various ethnic communities, and issues of land settlement and redistribution. Redistribution has been a fundamental aspect of peace processes in Guatemala and El Salvador and other parts of the world. In Zimbabwe the failure to address the issue of land in the first instance arguable has fuelled the recent land disputes from which Mugabe has made political capital. The post-conflict settlement in Sri Lanka if it is to be sustainable in short must take into account issues of poverty and property rather than seeking to extend the interests of international corporations. In short, the peace process will have to balance the right of return of the (individual) property of the displaced with the new (collective) allotment of territory that the war has affected and notions of individual rights with notions of collective or social property.

Finally it seems a propos to quote Amatya Sen, another Nobel Prize winning economist s response to a question by a Pakistani Journalist at the Lahore based *Dawn*:

Journalist: Conditions imposed by international financial institutions sometimes prevent recipient countries, even democracies, from acting in the interests of their own people. How can this problem be solved?

Sen: I think that is a correct diagnosis, though things used to be even worse than they are today. In the past, conditions imposed by the IMF and the World Bank proved quite counterproductive instead of serving the interests of the poor. They often saw expenditure on such things as education and nutritional supplementation through cheapening of food as bureaucratic, governmental expenditure that hinders a country's efforts towards economic development. This is, of course, a mistake. But the understanding has improved in the case of the Bank under the leadership of James Wolfensohn. However, some of the Bank's practices may not be entirely in accordance with his guidelines and of course, there is need for the IMF to seize these issues more fully.

Sen sounds optimistic that the Bank can learn from the past. We will have to wait and see and monitor what s being said on the peace process in the streets of Colombo and in the post-conflict zones of the north and east. Already there are signs that some people are becoming nostalgic for the war economy, when the cost of living was less burdensome than it is today as the neoliberal peace looms on the horizon. In the meantime, it may be relevant to do a conflict analysis of the post-conflict reconstruction package by

analyzing links between the macro-policies of development including SAPs and cycles of violence. Sri Lanka simply cannot afford another cycle of conflict between its diverse ethnic and religious communities that co-existed in relative peace for centuries before the World Development industry led by the Bretton Woods institutions and the international military industrial complex came along.

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Notes

[1] The previous UNP government had managed to sustain growth and wage war, but by following a strategy of containing the conflict, and limited war.
[2] It was noted that the Government s estimate was an underestimate of total defense expenditure, after the various military service sectors were accounted.
[3] See Voices of the Poor, ADB Poverty Study, 2000.
[4] *Pura Handa Kaluwara* (Death on a full moon night) directed by Prasanna Vithanage, a film that commented critically on the futility of war and it social costs, was banned by the authorities and then unbanned following a prolonged legal battle and the Supreme Court ruling that the ban violated the freedom of artistic expression.
[5] Michel Foucault s work on the dynamics of discourse and power to construct and represent an authorized social reality, and Nandy s work on how global discourses come to structure local realities and subjectivities has given us the tools to unveil some of the mechanisms by which certain orders of knowledge are produced as permissible modes of being and thinking, while others are disqualified, also in the historically singular experience, if not teleology of world development. ∎

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PROPOSAL TO RESUME JUDICIAL HANGINGS

We view with deep dismay the proposal to reintroduce judicial executions after a lapse of over quarter of a century.

We are certainly concerned with crime control and law enforcement, and appreciate the serious law and order problem facing the authorities. But the death penalty is no answer.

Nowhere has the death penalty (as opposed to other punishments such as long-term imprisonment) been shown to have any special power to deter crime. On the contrary, it diverts attention from the real solution, which is prompt and efficient investigation of crime followed by effective prosecution and conviction. *The greatest deterrent to crime is the likelihood that offenders will be apprehended, convicted and punished. It is that which is lacking in our criminal justice system (South African judgment of 6 June 1995 in which all eleven members of the Constitutional Court, writing separate judgments, found the death penalty unconstitutional).*

The death penalty is irreversible, and is known to have resulted in the execution of innocent persons. In England alone there have been a number of proved instances of wrongful convictions being set aside many years later. Can we say that our own investigative, law enforcement and legal systems are such that there is no real possibility of innocent persons being convicted and scapegoats being hanged? It is precisely in cases that mostly shock public opinion that there is pressure on the police to somehow make arrests and ensure convictions. Miscarriages of justice, *of which the poor and the disadvantaged are the most likely victims,* can never be rectified. As Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan has said, *The forfeitur e of life is too absolute, too irreversible, for one person to inflict it on another even when backed by the legal process. Let states that still use the death penalty stay their hand lest in days to come they look back with remorse knowing it is too late to redeem their grievous mistake.*

It is the responsibility of an enlightened legislature to give the lead towards the adoption of rational and humane approaches to the ills of society. There is urgent need for careful and serious study of crime in Sri Lanka and the problems of investigation and law enforcement. We urge that executions not be resumed under any circumstances, and that instead real solutions to violent crime, both short and long term, be identified and pursued.

60 Signatories of academics, lawyers, doctors and activists

THE PEACE PROCESS: PROGRESS SO FAR AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

Statement issued by Lalith Abeysinghe, Paul Caspersz, Kumar David, Marshal Fernando, Vijaya Kumar, Menaka Philips, Rajan Philips, Mahinda Ratnayake, Suhadini Wickremasinghe and Ranjith Wijeysinghe.

Twenty three years ago, a few of us in this group of writers and many others, after the horrifying riots of 1977, came together to found the Movement for Inter-Racial Justice and Equality (MIRJE). One of the first decisions of MIRJE was to send a fact-finding delegation to Jaffna to determine the true state of affairs subsequent to the declaration of a State of Emergency by the government on 13/14 July 1979 and the abduction and killing of six Tamil youths on the same night. Three of us among those now issuing this Statement were in that delegation. The events of 13/14 July and the days following did not wipe out the menace of terrorism, as decreed by the then President, but they did let slip the dogs of war all over the land. Twenty three years and over sixty thousand lives later, this group of writers took advantage of the ceasefire conditions and made separate trips from Kandy to Batticaloa, the Vanni and Jaffna.

On the way to Jaffna, we had to pass through two check points, not more than a mile apart, in Omanthai, north of Vavuniya. The two check points, one under the Army and the other under LTTE control, and the respective bureaucracies sharply symbolized the reality of two polities, if not two states, north and south of Omanthai. Writing for the group after the Jaffna trip, Paul Caspersz posed the question: Is our task then not to prevent separation but to bring back into the former unity the two separated parts? It was a spontaneous question from the heart, at the end of a journey of commitment, and firmly founded on the premise of justice and equality for all Lankans. The question also provides a positive framework to critically assess the peace process: its progress so far and the challenges ahead. Contrast this to comments by the mostly unfriendly critics of the peace process, who, while being conveniently blind to the disintegration of the island s polity over the last 20 to 50 years, portray the current peace efforts not as a process of reintegration but as the path to separation from their illusions of unity.

When will the peace negotiations be held, and will they be successful? were questions we asked ourselves and that we were asked during the four days we spent in Jaffna from 16 to 20 July of 2002. The answers since then have been encouraging. Three rounds of peace negotiations were held between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the LTTE two in Thailand and one in Norway from September to December in 2002. The fourth round has just been concluded in Thailand. The negotiations have been successful in comparison to both the previous Sri Lankan peace efforts and contemporary experiences in other countries. After the second round, three Sub-Committees were established to address: (a) Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East; (b) De-escalation and Normalization; and (c) Political Matters including constitutional, legal, political and administrative issues. At the conclusion of the third round of talks in Oslo, came the momentous announcement that the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE agreed to explore a solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking peoples, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka, and that the solution has to be acceptable to all communities. The third round also agreed on the setting up of a Sub-Committee on Women to address gender issues in the peace process. The focus shifted, in the fourth round of talks, to the humanitarian aspects of the conflict, and the parties noted that political progress must be underpinned by tangible improvements in the daily lives of the people. The talks also survived the somewhat overblown controversy over rehabilitation and the High Security Zones (HSZ) in Jaffna.

In Support of the Peace Process

We do not agree with the inveterate sceptics that the peace talks are a smoke screen for the LTTE s preparations for the next offensive in its relentless march towards Eelam. On the contrary, the peace talks are subjecting the LTTE to national and international constraints and commitments as it has never experienced since its inception. The next Eelam War can only be prevented by strengthening and institutionalizing these constraints: prophesying the war, on the other hand, will directly contribute to its self-fulfilment.

One of the constructive criticisms of the peace process is that the process is monopolized by the UNP, the LTTE, and their immediate supporters. This has led to feelings of exclusion in the South and among the Muslims, and the fear of a totalitarian peace becoming the lot of the Tamils in the LTTE-dominated areas in the North and East. To learn from previous experience, an exclusive UNP-LTTE agreement, however grand and comprehensive, will not pass muster without a broader consensus involving other players and the people at large. But these concerns will have to be addressed by critically supporting, consolidating and expanding the current process to

make it inclusive and accountable, and not by vexatiously opposing and undermining it.

The People's Choice

C ontrary to the professions by post-1983 Sri Lankan governments, and the assertions of the LTTE and other Tamil militant groups, war was never the choice of the people, Sinhalese or Tamil. The biggest story of 2002 is that ordinary, subaltern Sri Lankans in their millions Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims have been able to emphatically demonstrate that peace is their only choice. It is the responsibility of all Sri Lankans to ensure that our political leaders do not betray this unambiguous choice of the people.

It is worth noting that unlike the conflicts in Israel-Palestine, Northern Ireland, Kashmir etc., where neighbours fight neighbours politically and socially, the social relationship between the Sinhalese, the Tamils and the Muslims, never deteriorated to the same extent as their political relationship. Indeed, the leader of the LTTE Jaffna Branch told our group that the social relationship between the communities remained positively cordial even during the war. In Jaffna, we saw Sri Lankan government soldiers going about in bicycles, very different from the days when tanks and armoured cars terrorized unarmed civilians. In Kayts, we were told that the LTTE cadres sometimes undertake the delivery of meal parcels to soldiers at isolated army checkpoints.

The people in the South have witnessed and experienced the effects of the war for years on end. The destruction of public property, the stealthy shadow of the suicide bomber, the arrival of body bags at Ratmalana, the village funerals of dead soldiers, and the social ubiquity of maimed war returnees these have been the stock experiences of the Sinhalese in the South. Who in their right minds, except those who demonically profited from the war and others who unconscionably invoke the doctrine of just war, would wish to return to those horrible days? The Sinhalese voters have endorsed the peace efforts in election after election every time the question was put to them beginning in 1994. They have also celebrated the current ceasefire by thronging the traditional Vesak and Perahara ceremonies, by congregating hugely in Madhu in LTTE-controlled Vanni, and by their incessant pilgrimages to the Naga Vihare and the Naga Dipa in Jaffna.

Our visits to Jaffna, the Vanni and Batticaloa have shown us the even more devastating war experiences of the Tamils and Muslims in those areas. Their fervent hope is not so much for peace in full regalia as it is for the current ceasefire to continue whether or not an agreement is reached. We saw not only how these areas have become separate from the rest of Sri Lanka, but also how they were separate from each other. The LTTE Police Stations and Courts in the Vanni area are not the cause of this separation but its symptoms. More damaging is the destruction of the infrastructure linkages roads, railways and electricity transmission between the Northern and Eastern provinces and the rest of the country.

The key sectors of Jaffna s economy farming, fishing and commerce are isolated and atrophied. Tens of thousands of farmers have been affected by the reckless landmining of their farmlands. About 6,000 of the 11,000 fisher households in the Peninsula, who once supplied 30% of the country s fish requirement, are now internal refugees and cut off from the sea. For over ten years, the Sri Lankan government has been banning ocean fishing by Lankan Tamil fishermen for security reasons, while doing nothing to stop Indian trawlers fishing in Sri Lankan waters. After several years electricity was restored in Jaffna in April 2002, while the first overland supply of kerosine and petrol in ten years arrived in Jaffna in July 2002. Nearly 400,000 of the (pre-1995) 900,000 people of the Jaffna Peninsula are displaced within Jaffna and on the tracts of the Vanni. The size and misery of the internally displaced has shocked even international visitors who are familiar with human tragedies elsewhere in the world.

Displaced and devastated the people of Jaffna made the most eloquent statement for peace by standing neutral when the LTTE took on the Sri Lankan army to recapture Jaffna in 2000. Even now they simply want to be left alone. What is more, no Tamil individual or group has condemned the LTTE for all but turning back on its declared goal. In earlier times, such an act would have been called a betrayal and the price of betrayal varied from the simple loss of a Parliamentary seat to the ultimate price of one s life. The LTTE itself was a past master in meting out capital punishment for perceived betrayals.

War and Politics

W ar is a continuation of politics, but politics is the conclusion of the war. While peace became the experiential choice of the people, economic realities, military experiences and international developments combined to force the GOSL and the LTTE to leave the battleground for the negotiating table. The economic consequences of the separation between LTTE territories and the rest of the country exposed the non-viability of a separate state and challenged the LTTE s commitment to it. This became evident from the time the LTTE began insisting on having points of free passage between its territory and the rest of the country. The war has also exacerbated the differences between Jaffna, the Vanni and the Eastern Province, and there is no uniform solution to the challenges and issues facing the peoples of these areas not only the Muslims and the Sinhalese in the Eastern Province but also the Tamils in the three areas.

Militarily, while battles were won and lost, the war was proving to be unwinnable for either side. The LTTE inflicted crushing defeats on the army in the year 2000, including the capture of the Elephant Pass, but the army was able to hold on to Jaffna despite the LTTE throwing everything it had into what it thought would be the final battle against the army. Baulked of a victory in Jaffna, the LTTE hit back by attacking the Katunayake International Airport in August 2001. The economic meltdown and the business panic that followed

were the last straw to force the new UNF government to abandon the military approach and pursue the negotiation option.

On the international front, the implications of September 11 for Sri Lanka and the LTTE have been mixed. If nothing else, it finally confirmed to the LTTE the virtual impossibility of securing international recognition for a separate state in Sri Lanka. However, while declaring war on international terrorism and outlawing LTTE operations in their own countries which restricted LTTE s financing operations in the West, the Western governments came to recognize the LTTE as a necessary party to any settlement in Sri Lanka. There are a number of reasons for this apparent double standard . Despite its far reaching tentacles among the Tamil diaspora, the LTTE s operations have never posed a threat to the West in the way international militant Islamic movements are perceived to threaten the West. Like in Northern Ireland, Islam is not a factor in the Sri Lankan conflict, and Sri Lanka is the one instance where religion is not an issue in the conflict. Lastly, although Sri Lanka is one of the world s long standing conflict areas, it has no potential for escalating into an international or even regional crisis, unlike the Middle East, or Kashmir.

Those who insist that the GOSL should have exploited the post-September situation to defeat the LTTE with external help, also refuse to realize that the so called war on terrorism has either been unsuccessful in resolving, or simply exacerbated, the conflicts in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Chechnya and Kashmir. New flashpoints are threatening in Indonesia, the Philippines, North Korea and even parts of Africa. Even in Northern Ireland, where September 11 contributed to the IRA s decision to decommission its arms three and a half years after the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, new political roadblocks are stalling the peace process.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe has been criticized for allegedly compromising national sovereignty by getting Norway and other governments involved in the peace process. The fact, however, is that it was President Kumaratunga who started the current foreign involvement albeit for proscribing and talking to the LTTE at the same time, and the same critics did not spare her at that time. The real question is that if it is alright for Sri Lankan sovereignty to get Western help to make war with the LTTE, why then it is not alright to get the West to mediate peace with the LTTE and insure that the LTTE will not revert to fighting again.

The Principal Players

O ne of the main arguments against the current peace process is that it has been used to politically rehabilitate the LTTE. Given its past record and continuing, although highly reduced, infractions, the LTTE is one of the easiest of targets for verbal castigation. But in the context of the vicious violence that Sri Lankan politics had become enmeshed in over the last 20 years, there are few around with clean hands, and that includes Sri Lanka s big neighbour, the post-Nehru India. As the Catholic Bishop of Jaffna said after the LTTE press conference in April, 2001: he

(Prabaharan) did not express remorse, but neither has the government. The state and the LTTE are both blameworthy, even if not equally in law, but if the current peace efforts are to lead anywhere they and others have to tap on their respective transformative potentials. In a world struggling to resolve its political conflicts, the growing ethos is not one of insisting on an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but a culture of amnesty based on acceptance of responsibility.

In many respects, the current UNF-LTTE peace process is a continuation of the initiatives of the PA government. In fact, it was the PA government that brought about a paradigm shift in Sinhalese political thinking in regard to the national question. Chandrika Kumaratunga deserves all the credit for being the first Sinhalese state leader, as President or Prime Minister, to admit that the Sri Lankan state had failed in the task of genuine national unification and to articulate constitutional changes to redress that failure. This will be her historical legacy even though her ill-advised military misadventures and her inability to reach consensus across party lines in Colombo ultimately thwarted her constitutional efforts and brought down her government in the 2001 Parliamentary election. The Norwegian route to the LTTE was also opened by her, despite her failed attempt to negotiate with the LTTE in 1994/95, and despite being the target of a failed LTTE assassination attempt in 1999. She also initiated the rehabilitation program in Jaffna with the EPDP as her Tamil political ally.

According to a number of sources, the EPDP s involvement in the rehabilitation work in Jaffna, with access to state resources, was an important consideration in the LTTE s decision to pursue a counter-partnership with the UNP. The LTTE found a willing partner in Ranil Wickremasinghe, who would seem to have chosen to bet his political career on a deal with the LTTE when he and the defeated UNP were opportunistically abandoned by all Tamil parliamentarians for the new PA government in 1994. The UNP and the LTTE got their chance to strike a peace deal when Ranil Wickremasinghe was elected Prime Minister in the 2001 December election. Whatever might have been his subjective intentions, the objective results of his peace initiative are proving to be beneficial to the country. The young members of his team have brought a new generational freshness and a conciliatory approach to an old and vexed problem which had often been complicated in the past by personal prejudices and egotistical intransigence. Their new approach appears to be resonating well with most of the people. Without the fear of war and insecurity the natural openness and conviviality of the Sri Lankan people are resurfacing.

On the negative side, President Kumaratunga has been taking a tantalizing approach to the peace process. Her formal statements support the peace process, but her habitual indiscretions and the actions of her main advisors and her brother, Anura Bandaranaike are clearly aimed at undermining the peace efforts. The LSSP and the CP have dissociated themselves from the statements and protestations of Sarath Amunugama and Lakshman Kadirgamar, and the SLFP leadership s growing closeness to the JVP despite its

overt opposition to the peace process. Although, the People s Alliance might have run its course, the UNF and the LTTE should reach out to those sections of the PA - sections of the SLFP, the Left Parties, the NGOs and a large number of dedicated individuals, who are supportive of the peace efforts even though they are not included in the process.

History will repeat itself more tragically if the UNF and the LTTE do not broaden the support for the process, and at least try hard to secure the support of President Kumaratunga and the Sinhala constituency she currently represents. A rather disappointing feature of the peace process so far has been the government s lack of effort to reach out to the Sinhala people and keep them constantly informed of the unfolding process. The government should realize that its ultimate constituents are the country s people and not the diplomats in Colombo.

In the North and East, the LTTE not only has to appear to be changing but also has to change for real. There have been justifiable concerns raised about the LTTE s continuing harassment of its political opponents, uneconomic taxation practices, and violations of human rights including the recruitment of children as soldiers. It is absurd to argue that these violations constitute a failure of the peace process. They represent only a failure of the LTTE to fulfill its new obligations. The merit of the peace process is that for the first time there is a forum for raising these issues and to put pressure on the LTTE to stop its violations of human rights.

The LTTE s newness to the political process and the national and international limelight it is now enjoying are certainly conducive, if not compulsive, to the LTTE saying the right words at the right time and in the right place. But its words have to be matched by deeds at places where they matter, in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, among the Tamil people, whom it claims to represent, and in a manner that does not harm the welfare of the Muslim and Sinhalese living in these areas. Circumstances and the force of arms have made the LTTE the sole representatives of the Tamil people at the talks. But to the extent internal self-determination in political theory means consolidation of democracy based on individual rights, the LTTE should realize that ultimately sole representation without free and fair elections would be inconsistent with even the elementary norms of democracy.

We would hope that the future talks will emphasize not only self-determination but also co-determination especially in regard to dealing with issues of the peoples of the Eastern Province. Muslim representation at the talks is currently provided by the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress as part of the government delegation, and there has been agreement between the LTTE and the SLMC to work together in the East in addressing the specific concerns of the local communities.

The Challenges Ahead

A common feature in all previous attempts at resolving the Tamil national question, from the celebrated Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact to the over-drafted Kumaratunga Constitution, has been the emphasis on reaching a grand conclusion in the form of legalistic agreements, legislative changes, or a comprehensive constitutional solution. Invariably, these end products became the targets of immediate political opposition and were either not fully implemented (e.g. the 13th Amendment) or abandoned. There was no emphasis on incremental steps, developing a normative consensus and inclusive participation, and a process that would continue notwithstanding government change. Until the 1970s, the fundamentals of the State were in place and the agreements, if successful, would have stemmed its slide into ethnic majoritarianism. At the present time, with the State disintegrated in some parts and dysfunctional for the most part, incremental reintegration and rebuilding, and inclusive participation are necessary conditions for success.

Although the four rounds of peace talks held so far have gone well, the talks appear to be taking on a globe-trotting momentum with the risk of being isolated from the issues on the ground. The people are not expecting a grand resolution of the so called core issues but tangible improvements in the economic conditions of all Sri Lankans in general, and the restoration of normalcy in the war affected areas. Without evidence of change cynicism and disenchantment will grow in the South, while frustration and despair will engulf the peoples of the North and East. A compelling experience of change can come through opportunities to participate in the rebuilding and restorative activities. While it is impossible to ensure participation by everyone and in large numbers, the opportunities for participation should not be restricted to UNF and LTTE supporters and cadres.

The participation at the talks has been limited to UNF and LTTE representatives, but the Sub-Committees could be opened up to other participants to include representatives of the different ethnic communities in different areas, local political organizations and NGOs. We welcome the announcement of the members of the Sub-Committee on Women, and urge that the same approach be extended to the other Sub-Committees as well. This will be the first step towards a plural democracy.

The functions of the Sub-Committees should be decentralized to deal with different issues in different areas, and provide the building blocks for a federal society. A federal state presupposes a federal society; there are plenty of federal models in the world to draw from, but it is necessary to prepare the Sri Lankan terrain to receive the preferred federal structure. The Provincial Council System and the Kumaratunga Constitution were attempts at top-down federalism. There is now an opportunity to reverse that process, without creating additional layers of bureaucracy and (unelected) political representation that duplicates efforts and wastes resources.

Already, the country is paying for multiple layers of governance with little consideration being given to streamlining and co-ordinating their functions.

The issues raised at the talks and assigned to the Sub-Committees are difficult issues that require complex trade-offs and a work in progress approach rather than an insistence on instant agreements. The insistence often comes from outside detractors who for whatever reason would like to demonstrate that the talks are foundering rather than suggesting constructive ways to get over manifestly difficult situations. A case in point is the issue regarding the resettlement of displaced people in the army s High Security Zones (HSZ) in Jaffna, and the decommissioning of arms by the LTTE.

Not so curiously, the first insistence was on the absolute decommissioning of arms by the LTTE, and that was how the critics greeted the Oslo announcement that the LTTE had agreed to work towards a federal solution. Then came the Sri Lankan Army s requirement that vacation of HSZ areas by the army for resettling displaced people should be linked to the LTTE s decommissioning of its heavy weapons around these areas. While there was understandable brinkmanship on the part of both the army and the LTTE, the critics resorted to self-serving interpretations and predictions that the peace process was unravelling. The Monitoring Mission clarified that it is vital to maintain the pre-ceasefire military balance till substantial progress is made and that there should be a trade-off between the withdrawal from the HSZs by the army and decommissioning by the LTTE. The fourth round of talks emphasized the humanitarian component of the crisis and the need to start resettlement outside the HSZ areas.

The LTTE s current refusal to work with the army in the Sub-Committee on De-escalation and Normalization is not a major crisis but a minor hiccup that is not unusual during a peace process. As we see it, the humanitarian aspects should take precedence while de-escalation by both parties proceed in an even manner as substantial progress is made on other issues. The LTTE s announcement that its weapons are its bargaining chips at the negotiating table is also its admission of their limitations on the battleground.

It is very unfortunate that wild and irresponsible comparisons are being made between the Sri Lankan situation and the 50 year old international problem of the Return of the Palestinian Refugees to Israel-Palestine. It is also disingenuous for the same people who criticise the LTTE for its harassment of Tamil civilians, to argue that the Sri Lankan Army should retain the High Security Zones in the Jaffna Peninsula regardless of the plight of the displaced Tamil people. There are people in refugee camps in Jaffna for more than ten years after being evacuated by the security forces. Our group

visited one such camp in Chunnakam, the occupants of which are fishermen and their families from the village of Myliddy. They have been in the camp for over ten years and cannot return to their village because it falls within the HSZ close to the Palaly military base.

It is not only the army, but the LTTE also has forced the evacuation of people of Jaffna. It forced the evacuation of the Jaffna Muslims in 1990, and, five years later, forced nearly 700,000 people to leave their homes on the eve of the military s take over of Jaffna. Not more than half of those people and a few Muslims would seem to have now returned, and the plight of the displaced in the Peninsula and the Vanni area continues. During our visit to Jaffna, there were petitions and protest marches about the resettlement of the displaced people of Chavakachcheri, the last group of people to be displaced during the 2000 battle of Jaffna. But the organizers of these protests clearly indicated that they were not demanding the total evacuation of the army from the HSZ areas, but an arrangement to reduce the area of army occupation and allow the resettlement of civilians. Curiously, the connection between the HSZ and rehabilitation was not clearly dealt with in the MoU. As a foreign diplomat in Colombo surmised to two members of our group, the LTTE appears to have paid less attention to civilian issues in the MoU, and it was the TULF Parliamentarians who kept raising the issue of the Army leaving the HSZ areas to enable the return of the displaced people to their homes. After one year of peace, the LTTE is also being forced to respond to civilian pressures in raising the issue of the displaced people.

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission has described 2002 as the year when the guns fell silent. By any measure, 2002 has been a remarkable year for Sri Lanka. It marked a full year of ceasefire for the first time in nearly 20 years. It is still too early for political celebrations and an economic turnaround, but the people are enjoying their new freedom from the restrictions and uncertainties of war and the fear of being raped or suicide-bombed. The people s choice is peace. The military experiences of the SL Army and the LTTE, as well as changing domestic and international circumstances have brought about a successful ceasefire. To the extent these objective conditions are likely to continue, it will be difficult for either party to return to the fighting mode. There will of course be violations and infractions but the real danger could be a state of general lawlessness and anarchy if the unwinding of the war machines on both sides is not incrementally and methodically undertaken. The other danger is in reaching agreements rather rapidly on paper at peace talks held at far flung locations around the world, without corresponding changes in the ground situation at home. The biggest challenge, however, is to open the peace process at different levels and locations to include all of the principal players and involve the people themselves.

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GOVERNMENT + L.T.T.E – MUSLIMS = *INTIFADAH*: THE CRUEL EQUATION IN SRI LANKAN PEACE PROCESS

Ameer Ali

T he fact that after nearly two decades of fighting, death and destruction the warring parties in Sri Lanka have decided to sit around the negotiating table to talk peace is indeed a welcoming relief to the suffering masses of Sri Lanka. The Norway peace brokers, the Sri Lankan government, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam should be congratulated individually and collectively for making this change possible. The world of 1983 when the LTTE commenced its armed struggle and the world of 2003 that is witnessing the peace-making process operating in Thailand are vastly different. With a single super power arrogantly dictating its wishes to the whole world international opinion makers are threatening to baptise the freedom fighters of previous decades as terrorists of the 21st century. This is bound to undermine any positive image and legitimacy of all organised political resistance. A peaceful resolution to the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka has therefore become more imperative now than ever before.

Ethnic Complexity

W hile welcoming the peace initiative the world must be made aware of the reality of the situation in the main theatre of action in Sri Lanka i.e., of the ethnic complexity and conflicting communal interests in the north and east of the country. The fact that there are three major variables in the ethnic equation is often concealed or conveniently forgotten when explaining the situation to the outside world. While the Tamils are the predominant majority in the northern sector of the island the Sinhalese and Muslims together form the majority in the east. In fact, there is a rough balance of population power amongst the Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim communities in the Eastern Province. Therefore to show the world that the north and east of Sri Lanka is the historical land of Tamil Eelam and belongs to the Tamils only is a distortion of reality. Even during the pre-colonial era when the island was politically divided into three kingdoms the Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai districts of today s Eastern Province were never a part of the Jaffna Kingdom under Tamil rulers. Thus, when speaking about the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka this difference between the north and east must be made crystal clear. Moreover, within the Tamil community also the social structure of the Eastern Province Tamils is distinctly different from their northern brethren. The cast structure of the Eastern Tamils, and their customary laws and traditions are not the same as in the north. The customary laws of *thesavalamai* in the north is radically different from the *mukkuvar* laws of the east.

More than the differences within the Tamil community it is the presence of a strong Muslim community in the Eastern Province that makes the ethnic equation more complex. For a long time there has been a deliberate attempt by politicians and political scientists of Sri Lanka to downplay the significance of the Muslim community in the ethnic problem. The entire issue was treated as one between the Tamils and Sinhalese only and the Muslim variable was totally ignored receiving public mention only when it suited the political agenda of rivalling political parties to gain Muslim votes during election times. The Tamil leaders themselves through dubious arguments in the past had tried without success to prove that the Muslims are also Tamils but belong to a different religion like the Christian Tamil community. From Ramanathan in the 19th century to Prabakaran in the 20th that situation has not changed. This is the outcome of a gross misunderstanding and confusion about the identity of Sri Lankan Muslims. I have dealt with this problem quite extensively in other places and there is no need to repeat here. What should be emphasised for the present purpose is that ethnicity is secondary to a Muslim whose identity is primarily religious. The moment one becomes a Muslim all other identities fade away. Even the *harijans* in India when they revert to Islam lose their previous social identity and become an equal component of the Muslim *ummah*. This unique characteristic of Islam is rarely understood by non-Muslims. When Ramanathan raised the issue of ethnic identity of the Muslims his true intention was political. If he could convince the British rulers of the time that Muslims in Sri Lanka were ethnically Tamils he could then argue that separate representation for Muslims in the then Legislative Council, which the colonial government was then contemplating, would be superfluous. This was why Muslim community leaders like I. L. M. Abdu Azeez at that time realised the political urgency to discover a separate ethnic identity for the Muslims and quickly picked the name Moor which was nothing but an accidental epithet bestowed by the Portuguese who themselves were confused in the 16th century about the collective identity of the Muslims they confronted. Today although the name Moor has been officially accepted as an ethnic appellation no Muslim in Sri Lanka identifies him/herself as a Moor, thanks to the religious awakening amongst the Muslims in recent decades. This is why the Muslims of the Eastern and Northern provinces are not prepared to accept the LTTE notion of Islamiyath Thamizhar.

The Eastern Province Muslims account for nearly one-third of the region s population strength. Another one-third comes from the Sinhalese who are concentrated in the electorates of Trincomalee, Kantalai, and Amparai. Only the last third are Tamils. The current

peace process appears to conveniently ignore this population complexity in its haste to appease the LTTE for a political solution. Herein lies the danger.

The Muslims of the Eastern Province have been living in amity and concord with the Tamils ever since the former settled in there. Even now they have no reservation in doing so. In fact, if there is any region in Sri Lanka where multiculturalism has been in practice until the LTTE came into the scene it is the Eastern Province. The LTTE s political objectives and philosophy is a serious threat to this multicultural cohesion. The LTTE top hierarchy in spite of its rhetoric as the sole representative of the entire Tamil community is in essence a northern club. Its area commanders in the east have only a marginal role in making policy decisions. Even before, when the Federal Party claimed sole representation of the Tamil community in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, no Tamil from the Eastern Province let alone a Muslim could capture that party s leadership. The political history of one of that party s firebrands from the east, C. Rajadurai, can speak volumes on Jaffna leadership. The fear of northern hegemony runs deep in the hearts and minds of many. To the Muslims in particular it is more than a fear. It is fatal.

Tyranny of the North

W hy is this? Let me answer the question briefly but solely from the Muslim point of view. It is in the field of education that the Muslims first experienced the tyranny of northern hegemony. This goes back to the pre and early decades of independence when the northern Tamils had a virtual monopoly over government jobs including teaching. The struggle for separate Muslim schools in the country since the sixties is a silent testimony to the bitterness and disappointment that teachers from the north had created amongst the Muslims. I have dealt with this issue in detail elsewhere. Of course one cannot generalise and there were numerous exceptions to the general pattern. However, the normal pattern was significantly different from individual exceptions. In the field of public administration also bosses from Jaffna rarely showed fairness to other communities when it comes to providing employment in government departments. In fact, the root cause of today s ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka could be traced back to this problem. The Sinhalese and Muslims suffered from this discrimination.

A simple comparison will highlight why the Muslims in the Eastern Province are afraid of Jaffna leadership. The Muslims of Mannar, Jaffna, Vavuniya, and Kilinochchi have been living with the Tamils in the north for centuries. Compare their progress in the field of education and economic advancement with the progress of their brethren in the Eastern Province. A socially more tolerant and politically more democratic environment in the east has helped the Muslims advance in several areas while a socially repressive and politically restrictive environment in the north has made the Muslims in the north to remain stagnant and subservient. The Muslims in the north were never a challenge to the educational and economic fortunes of the Tamils. In spite of this they were evicted from their villages within twenty-four hours by the LTTE. The LTTE High Command has also threatened with eviction notices to the Muslims in the Eastern Province.

The Tamils of the east are more tolerant and less power hungry than their brethren in the north. Agriculture and cultivation demands unite the Muslim and Tamil communities more than anything else. This economic nexus is the single primary factor that separates the north from the east. LTTE s violence during the last two decades has driven the Muslims from their paddy fields and has deprived them of their bread. The unprovoked and bloody massacre of more than 100 Muslims inside a mosque in Kattankudy and equally vicious and bloody slaughters in Eravur, Oddamavady and Miravodai in the Batticaloa electorate, the continuing abductions of Muslim civilians and extortions from Muslim businessmen, all by the LTTE foot soldiers, have deepened the fear and mistrust of Jaffna leadership. At the moment there is a vicious LTTE campaign in the east asking the Tamils not to do any business with Muslims and issuing threats to the Muslims to sell their lands back to the Tamils at a price current at least a century ago. How can the Muslims hope to live peacefully in a merged north-east province where their proportionate strength will be drastically reduced? No amount of constitutional safeguards and legal constraints will be enough to protect minority interests if the majority decides to ignore them. The Tamil struggle for autonomy and independence is a proof in itself for this naked truth.

Solution

W hat is the solution for the Muslims? At the moment there are two being contemplated and debated. One is to have a separate Muslim Administrative Unit for the south-eastern part of the Eastern Province which would include the electorates of Kalmunai, Nintavur and Sammanthurai, and Pottuvil and the other is to enshrine legal and constitutional safeguards for the interests of the Muslims in a federal constitution for a merged North-Eastern Province excluding the Amparai electorate. The so-called Muslim Administrative Unit will be a disaster to the Muslims of Kattankudy, Eravur, Valaichenai, Oddamavady, Miravodai, Kinniya, Mutur and other towns of Muslim concentration in the northern sector of Eastern Province. There is a historical parallel here in the struggle for Pakistan in the nineteen forties. There also Muslims who were predominantly strong in the north of India created the Muslim League and fought for Pakistan. With their population strength they were in a better position to provide security to Muslim interests against any threat from the Hindu fanatics. Had they remained with India there would have been a balance of power between the two communities and much of the present atrocities inflicted upon the Muslims by the Hindus today could have been avoided. But the northern Muslims were bent on separation and went away with Pakistan. The Muslims who were left behind in India are now experiencing the tragic consequences of that separation. Similarly

if the Muslims of the south east of Sri Lanka using the strength of their number get away with a separate administrative unit the other Muslims in the east will be left at the tender mercy of the LTTE. I shudder to imagine the consequence of this scenario. I beg the proponents of the administrative unit to rethink of their demand in the general interest of the Muslims and I appeal to them not be driven by factional advantages.

On the proposal of constitutional and legal safeguards in a merged northeast province it should be reiterated that these safeguards would not even worth the paper on which they would be written if the majority community decides to override them. If the constitutional guarantees are a safeguard then why are the Tamils fighting for a homeland and autonomy? Why cannot they live with such safeguards under a unitary constitution? There is another parallel from recent history to prove this point. In the case of former Pakistan it had all the safeguards in the constitution to protect the interests of the Bengalis living in its eastern wing. What happened? The western wing Urdu speakers dictatorially imposed their wishes on the Bengalis and decided to walk over all constitutional constraints. The result was Bangladesh. At least for the Bengalis the territorial hiatus between the east and west facilitated the creation of Bangladesh. In Sri Lanka the Muslims do not have that

luxury in case of a prolonged conflict with the Tamils. Therefore, one should not be deluded by the promise of constitutional safeguards in a federation where the independence of the judiciary itself would come under pressure from the majority.

The most sensible proposal is to leave the north and east as they are. Let the federal solution consist of two councils one for the north and another for the east. There will be Muslims in the northern sector as there had been before. Let the experts provide all the safeguards necessary to protect the interests of those Muslims and let us witness how the LTTE would respect those provisions. If the LTTE administration in the north proves to be accommodative, peaceful, and democratic then there may be a change of heart amongst Muslims of the east at a later stage to merge with north. For the moment the wounds inflicted by the LTTE are raw and there is deep mistrust. Even the Tamils of the Eastern Province would agree with me in silence. The LTTE is already working to erode the strength of the Muslim community in the east through economic asphyxiation and physical expulsion. The failure to stop this trend by the current peace negotiators in their eagerness to appease the LTTE will only Palestinianize the Eastern Province and the logical outcome of that will be an *intifidah* in Sri Lanka. The Government + LTTE — Muslims =*Intifadah* is a cruel equation.

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IMPRESSIONS OF JAFFNA

Rebecca Walker

In June 2002 I had the opportunity to visit Jaffna, as part of a cultural exchange program organised by the SSA. This experience opened my eyes to a world previously unknown to me: a world of destruction, poverty and pain, but most of all desperation for peace. The following is a summary of my lasting impressions of Jaffna, which amount to the importance of a kind of peace that listens to the muted voices of those who continue to suffer.

First Impressions

On my return to Colombo from Jaffna, many people asked me whether I had enjoyed my trip. I was never sure how to reply. If I reflected solely upon the warm and generous welcome I received, the wonderful smell of steaming piles of freshly cooked dosai emanating from the stone hearth and the unrelenting kindness provided by my host Tamil family then yes I did enjoy myself. If I dwelled upon the luridly beautiful temples decorated in copious lashings of red and gold and the trips I made around the city perched on the handlebars of a friend s bicycle, then again yes, I did enjoy myself. But unfortunately these are not the only thoughts and pictures that construct my memories of Jaffna. Despite the pleasure of these individual moments, they are over-ridden by other, more prominent and often disruptive memories. The following are some of the images which stick in my mind and which I believe most accurately convey my impressions of Jaffna.

When I picture Jaffna I am confronted with vivid and haunting images of row upon row of bleak and devastated houses. The remaining shells of some still hint at the splendid homes they once were, although most have become indistinguishable from the next by their bullet hole graffiti and the leaves and foliage that have twisted up around them, burying all evidence of former life. These buildings have long been abandoned, emptied of everything, yet their silence still speaks volumes of the terror and suffering that drove their inhabitants away in a hasty retreat. They stand in rubble amidst the vast areas of deserted, barren scrubland, brown and

miserable, marked by the skull and crossbones danger sign of landmines.

Envisage the beautiful and innocent faces of small, malnourished children, squatting in a haphazard queue behind Vermbadi Road as they wait in turn to collect water from the public tap. Each time I cycled past them I received chorus cries of White girl, hello or hello hello, I love you followed by dissolution into fits of giggles. Although the memory of this sight brings a smile to my face, it also reveals the reality of the everyday struggle faced by adults and children alike. No homes, no jobs, no food and no hope — the existence that this bloody conflict has enforced upon so many.

Another image that sticks in my mind is a camp for the displaced. Here a large number of families were cramped into small huts patched together from plastic sheeting and palm leaves. Hardly any had an income and relied upon dry rations provided by international relief agencies. Whilst some women moved around busily collecting water and washing their children, others sat silently with the men, balanced on their haunches and staring blankly ahead. They appeared hardened to their fate, consumed by an undemanding stoicism; they had nothing and asked for nothing. I particularly remember a small girl stood in the entrance to her hut. Her father and mother were both in hospital, leaving her in charge of her two small brothers who were playing cricket in the centre of the camp. Although I couldn t speak her language, her huge sad eyes and thin malnourished body said it all the everyday struggle for survival, the suffering and fear, but worst of all the lack of change despite this time of so-called peace. War has been her life and continues to be so. Talk of peace seems to have changed nothing.

I compare this to my meeting with an officer, head of the army in Jaffna. Cushioned in his black leather chair, in what used to be the best hotel in Jaffna he informs me of the wonders of the mighty Sri Lankan army. The army he says has built Jaffna up to what it is now a city with running water and food in the shops. For the Brigadier the war is cut and dried, started by the LTTE and finished by his army. "The LTTE destroyed Jaffna" he tells me: we [the army] rebuilt it". I cannot help but wonder how an attitude can help to build a peaceful solution. All that he says and represents suggest that his interests do not lie with the community of Jaffna. The Jaffna he knows is made up only of his boundaries and borders, enemy grounds and army camps. It is apparent that he is unaware that for many in and around Jaffna, food and running water is no compensation for the lives that have been destroyed, and even these two simple things are not available for all to enjoy. That young girl in the refugee camp certainly cannot.

All around Sri Lanka there is talk of peace. Peace is a word that seems to slip easily off the tongue and consequently the meaning (or meanings) of peace has been compromised. I am hesitant to use this word, to join the ranks of those who throw it around as the quick-fix answer to stick Sri Lanka back together. Peace may be the buzzword in Sri Lanka at this present time but it is a word often used without qualification and without consideration of its many meanings. In Jaffna, just a mention of the Tamil word for peace, Samardhanam , conjured up grins that lit the whole face. But once you scratch beneath the surface of such immediate and innocent delight, you lay bare the fear of what is to come. Push aside the initial hope and belief and you find that there is also a sense that the chance for change is slipping away. The bazaars may be buzzing with activity and filled with the local produce of palmyrah baskets, jaggery, mangoes and prawns, but there is still fear that the reality of a peaceful solution will drift off, plunging the country once again into a raucous of violence, deprivation and despair. ∎

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BUDGET 2003: AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Chandana Aluthge

Since late 1977, economic management of Sri Lanka has been generally based on monetarist-type policies, though the emphasis given to monetarism has been slightly changing over the past years. The monetarist logic is centered on the rate of inflation. In the monetarist world, inflation becomes number one enemy and not unemployment. It is said that inflation is caused by an excessive increase in the supply of money. To reduce inflation to healthy levels, money supply has to be reduced. Only when the prices of domestically produced goods are competitive both at home and foreign markets will unemployment be checked from rising. To reduce the quantity of money, monetarists argue, first, that interest rates must be raised. At higher rates, it is believed that productive firms will use credit efficiently. Secondly, government spending must be cut down or in other words budget deficit should be reduced.

Banking on this ideology, since late 1977, subsequent governments have presented their annual budget proposals to achieve the dual economic objectives: low inflation and higher economic growth and employment. Fiscal discipline, government expenditure cuts, money supply growth targeting, market oriented interest rates and prices etc., have been the mantra of the last two decades and market mechanism, competition, privatisation, liberalisation of the balance of payment and other economic activities, etc., were assumed to do the trick in bringing economic prosperity to the country. The government s role in economic activities was gradually phasing out giving way to the private sector. However, the reality is that the economy has not been able to deliver even the basic necessities of life to a large portion of its population.

The objective of this discussion is to provide an alternative view to the Budget 2003, focusing on the political economy aspect of certain budgetary proposals of Budget 2003. When reading the Budget 2003 carefully, one would realise that it entails a few contradictions. On one hand the budget banks more on market mechanism, privatisation, competition or basically the monetarist prescription discussed above. On the other hand it has recognised the fact that the monetarist logic has failed in the past. By looking at the following statements the said inconsistency is easily understood.

> A start has already been made in reducing high interest rates, which tend to promote inflation. Strong economies have low interest rates as their base (Budget Speech, 2003).

> All these measures depleted revenue, but were nevertheless implemented to reduce prices. We are unhappy to see that resulting benefits have not been passed down by the trading sector to the consumer (Budget Speech, 2003).

> Importation of petroleum products will be opened up to international suppliers on franchises. By doing this, competition will increase and prices will be reduced (Budget Speech, 2003).

According to the first quotation above, government has finally accepted the fact that it is the high rate of interest that has caused inflation and not the increase in supply of money as given in monetarist reasoning. While the second quotation highlights the failure of market mechanism and competition, the third indicates the government s commitment on market mechanism and competition as the optimum condition.

During the past, interest rate has been allowed to move upwards or towards its so-called market determined rates. The objectives of high interest rate policy were to 1) promote efficient use of financial resources by the productive sectors 2) efficient mobilisation of financial resources by financial intermediaries and 3) low inflation through money market equilibrium. Monetary authorities have constantly checked money supply growth. However, the result has been low economic growth with high inflation due to high financial cost. Therefore, shifting towards a low interest rate environment probably is the first truthful step on the correct direction mentioned in Budget 2003. However, that alone may not be sufficient.

Figure 1

Growth of GDP and the Manufacturing Sector, 1980-2001
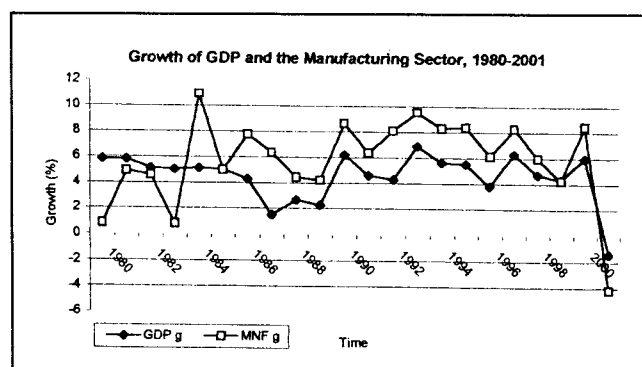
Notes: GDP g-GDP growth; MNF g- Manufacturing Sector Growth
Source: CBSL Annual Reports

This argument can be well supported by looking at some real world information of the Sri Lankan economy. Figure one indicates the growth rates of GDP and the manufacturing sector over the past two decades. Both rates have moved in the same direction, indicating a strong correlation between them. That means, given the present economic scenario, to achieve a higher economic growth, a steady growth in the manufacturing sector is a must. When interest rate is market driven with constraints on money supply growth by the authorities, interest rates becoming excessively high would be the most likely economic consequence due to shortage of liquidity. High financial cost tends to erode profitability of productive enterprises or/and competitiveness of their products in the market, discouraging expansion and new investment in the sector. On the other hand firms generally tend to pass additional costs to consumers through higher prices fuelling inflation.

We can further elaborate on this by looking at Tables 1 and 2. Table1 indicates the direction of commercial banking loans. The striking feature in the table is the steady decline in relative significance of banking credit for industrial purposes in particular from 1980 compared to the other two major categories. It is discussed that industrial sector and GDP growth are closely correlated. But at the time when interest rate is high and market determined, banking loans going into the industrial sector have declined. Then the expansion in this sector becomes weak and as a result GDP growth too becomes low. This may have been the main cause for slow economic growth of the Sri Lankan economy in the past two decades.

Banking institutions are profit-seeking enterprises and channel financial resources basically to areas from which they can maximise their profits with the least amount of risk. From their point of view, whether a particular sector is growth promoting is totally irrelevant. Then will a low interest rate environment promote manufacturing sector growth and then economic growth? Certainly, the cost of finance for productive firms will be lower under a low interest rate policy. But there is no guarantee that the market channels financial resources to growth promoting sectors such as the manufacturing sector, in sufficient amounts irrespective of whether the rate of interest is high or low. Channeling of financial resources is purely based on the profit motive of individual financial institutions. The question is, then, what are we going to get as a whole from competition, liberalisation, market determined interest rates, etc., without an efficient system to oversee that the correct dose of financial resources are constantly released to the sectors to which the economic growth is closely linked.

Table 1
Banking Credit by Purpose
(as % of total credit supplied)

| Period | Commercial Banks | | |
	Com	Ind	Con
1970	41.7	26.9	6.4
1975	47.1	22.4	4.2
1980	51.2	22.4	2.1
1985	49.6	23.7	1.7
1990	49.4	21.1	2.5
1995	41.7	13.3	7.3
1996	45.2	14.1	7.7
1997	45.1	12.3	8.8
1998	42.7	11.4	9.7
1999	39.9	12.1	10.5
2000	48.5	12.7	11.7

Notes: Com-Credit for Commercial Purposes, Ind-Credit for Industrial Purposes, Con-Credit for Consumption Purposes.
Source: Annual Reports, CBSL.

The manufacturing sector forms the production base of a country. Table 2 indicates the size of the manufacturing sector of Sri Lanka from 1970. Information shows that the manufacturing sector has failed to expand under pro-market conditions at least to its 1977 position. When the production base does not take off, goods and services have to be imported to bridge the gap between aggregate demand and domestic supply. Consequently the demand for credit to import sector increases. Consumers too need money in advance to buy imports because the economy does not generate sufficient income. And that is exactly what has happened over the past two decades in Sri Lanka. Banking credit to very short-term activities such as buying and selling and consumption has improved in a big way whereas credit to manufacturing upon which the economic growth is heavily dependant has declined. In such a situation, increased poverty and inequality in the society is unavoidable. Low GDP growth means less income to people and thus poverty prevails in society. On the other hand, only a small segment of people can afford consumption credit. They will buy the lion s share of the GNP, increasing inequality. Inequality promotes social unrest and violence-prone society will be the final consequence.

Table 2
Manufacturing Sector as % of GDP

Period	Manufacturing as % of GDP
1970	16.7
1977	23.1
1980	17.7
1985	14.7
1990	14.9
1995	15.7
1998	16.8
1999	16.9
2000	17.3

Source: CBSL Annual Reports

Monetarism firmly believes that government expenditure is a chief source of inflation via money supply growth. It vehemently advocates government expenditure cuts popularly known as fiscal prudence or discipline in a big way to control inflation, assuming that everything will be fine with a low rate of inflation. However, monetarism does not specify what type of government expenditure should be reduced to reach the ultimate objective: a smaller fiscal deficit. To monetarists, it matters not how it is being done. This is where the economic trouble starts especially in the case of economies like Sri Lanka. For a developing nation like Sri Lanka, the government has to play a key role, in particular through its capital expenditure, to fast-forward the economy even though monetarists do not agree on this. Government capital expenditure can be considered as one of the best means of income redistribution through various types of mega projects such as power generation, rail roads, mass transportation, highways, irrigation, etc., rather than spending millions of rupees on vote-catching handouts to people. It is a fact that Sri Lanka possesses a highly politicised economy. As a result, governments are reluctant and/or find it difficult to cut down on government recurrent expenditures. Instead to narrow fiscal deficit governments cut capital expenditure. This is easily done because the ultimatum is a smaller fiscal deficit. It also goes hand-in-hand with monetarist ideology: a small government and a growing private sector in the economy. Government capital expenditure is slashed and on the other side, utterly dissatisfactory growth in the manufacturing sector largely due to high financial cost would have been a double blow to the economy. Consequences are crystal clear: slow economic growth, high inflation and unemployment, increased inequality, and finally social unrest.

This argument is supported by the exiting empirical information. Figure 2 provides the behavioural pattern of capital expenditure and overall budget deficit as a percentage of GDP over the past two decades. Based on the trend of both series given in Figure 2, it is evident that deficit cut has been possible at the cost of government capital expenditure. The fluctuations in budget deficit, even when capital expenditure was declining in general, indicates that there has not been a serious attempt to slash recurrent expenditures.

Figure 2
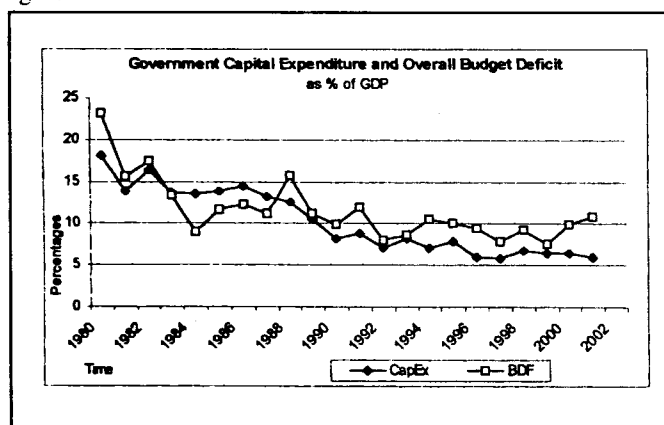
Note: Cap Ex-Government Capital Expenditure, BDF-Overall Budget Deficit. Source: CBSL Annual Reports

Budget 2003 more or less has taken the same capital expenditure stance — less and less capital expenditure. However, the difference is, it proposes to establish a number of funds with a view to finance specific types of capital expenditure. They are the Human Resource Endowment Fund, Road Fund, a Fund for Tourism Development, Infrastructure and Corporate Restructuring Fund, the Rural Economy Restructuring Fund, etc. It is proposed that money for these funds will be generated through indirect-type taxation, which will be imposed on top of the existing tax bases. Generally, indirect taxes are passed onto the society (in most cases the full extent of the tax) through increased prices of goods and services. For example, those who operate motor vehicles on roads are required to pay the proposed road tax. In Sri Lanka, a smaller number of individuals and other commercial establishments own the bulk of motor vehicles, which are run on roads. But given the nature of indirect taxes, it will be passed onto the general public who has neither private motor vehicles nor proper service of public transportation. That means, those who are stranded on a daily basis due to lack of public transport facilities and/or due to the fact that they do not own private vehicles, are ultimately forced to pay for the road maintenance fund. Those who own vehicles will be richer and hopefully will have a better road network for their vehicles to run on while those who do not have vehicles will be poorer because they shoulder the road tax. Finally, income disparity widens. In the same line of reasoning, generating money for the other funds will have roughly the same economic consequences.

The proposal of Youth Corps entails a question mark. It is proposed in the budget to establish 160 vocational training centers in eight regions in the country to provide market oriented vocational training for unemployed youth. The question is what is the use of existing technical colleges of which the prime objective more or less is the same. If so, why does the budget propose to allocate an enormous amount of money to establish these new centers to provide vocational training under the Youth Corp programme whereas the same aspirations may be achieved through the existing network of technical colleges. Perhaps new funds may be required for expansion work to these technical colleges in order to provide learning facilities for an increased number of unemployed youth. The problem associated with youth-corps-type programmes is, that it is highly unlikely that the programme will be carried forward in the event of a governmental change (e.g. Gam Udawa, Janasaviya, Samurdhi, etc., have disappeared with the governmental change). The money invested in these centers will then be utterly ineffective and frustration among youth will increase. In contrast, to provide financial resources to develop the existing technical colleges to provide unemployed youth with a market oriented vocational training will be more rewarding because it is almost certain that the technical colleges will continue to be in existence regardless of the governmental change unless some extraordinary policy shift may take place in the future to close down all technical colleges in the country.

Policy makers often articulate on sustainable growth. It is evident that without sustainable policies, growth simply may not be sustainable. Ideally, for countries like Sri Lanka, government budget should have been the prime mover that pushes the economy towards a sustainable growth path with equity and justice for the society. However, it seems that the budget has become a rescue-mission-type operation by the governments in power in post-independent Sri Lanka. The government in office may not have time or simply does not want to go beyond these rescue-mission-type policies. The problem with such policies is that they promote a lop-sided economy. Then slow economic growth, widening income disparity, frustration among youth, violence-prone society are the unavoidable consequences. ■

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Social Science Research Council

South Asia Regional Fellowship Program

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York, is pleased to announce the second round of their annual postdoctoral fellowship competition.

The theme for 2003-4 is Migration.

The primary intent of the fellowships is to enable successful applicants to take leave from teaching and other responsibilities to write up completed research. Applications proposing new research or seeking support for ongoing field research will not be rejected but have much lower priority. Funding is offered for short-term fellowships (3-4 months) on topics related to this theme from scholars in any discipline of the social sciences, humanities, and other related disciplines.

The South Asia Regional Fellowship Program seeks to strengthen the link between teaching and research, hence, the competition is open only to full time faculty members holding earned Ph.D s and presently teaching in an accredited college or university in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal or Sri Lanka. Junior fellows will receive up to $2,200, senior fellows up to $3,000 as fellowship awards. As many as twenty fellowships may be awarded each year.

Deadline for receiving applications is 15ᵗʰ May 2003. This program is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

Please email queries to sur@ssrc.org. Application forms may be downloaded from http://www.ssrc.org/ fellowships/southasia/ and can be obtained from:

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HYBRIDITY: DAUGHTER OF ETHNICITY

Pradeep Jeganathan

The Hybrid Island: Culture Crossings and the Invention of Identity in Sri Lanka, 2002 Neluka Silva (ed.)Colombo/ London: SSA & Zed, pp 187, Price Rs. 650/-.

I am very happy to be here today, to participate somewhat formally in what has become now, a regular affair in our intellectual milieu in Sri Lanka, a book launch. It is a sign, no doubt, that despite the limitations of resources both material and human, the work of thought still goes on, and the life of letters still persists.

Such life work in recent times, has been beleaguered and arduous, for those of us who have argued for social justice and democracy, on the one hand, and pluralism, toleration, and anti-racism on the other. The direction of our polity has often moved far from these values — there can be no better reminder of this, than to recall that violent clashes have taken place in Colombo, just over the past few days.

The Social Scientists Association (SSA), formed in the late 1970s, before the great punctuation point in our modern history, 1983, anticipated the politics of that moment, and the years to come. If the late 1960s and 1970s had been, in our intellectual tradition, a time when nationalism become the focus of inquiry, because, perhaps, of a dawning sense that 1948, 1956, and 1958 had been only moments of becoming of a new nation, then by the end of the 1970s, it was surely clear that this new nation, constituted and re-constituted as it was, at this time by three successive constitutional documents, was unravelling. That unravelling. or unmaking if you like, of that nation has gathered momentum over the decades after; it now remains to be seen if some, if not all, the prime-minister s men, can put it together again.

The work of SSA, in its founding moment, is gathered together in *Ethnicity and Social Change* (1984) a classic in content and direction. It elaborates the first sustained and serious analytical use of the concept ethnic , which also organized the second major volume SSA published a few years later, *Facets of Ethnicity* (1987). The term is a foundational one, of course, in this Institution. ICES, as well — its efficacy lies, it seems to me,

in the work it did in elaborating the problem of Nationalism for us. To my mind, the problem of nationalism for us, is devastatingly simple: we have competing, unequal nationalisms in one country. Ethnicity marks the most crucial aspect of this multiplicity of nationalisms; their unequal character. Or in other words, it marks the contestory relationship a subordinate nationalism has to a dominant one.

While *Unmaking the Nation* (1995) a sort of Son of Ethnicity volume, if I might call it that, and the book before us today, the *Hybrid Island* (2002) which then would be a sort of Daughter of Ethnicity volume, so that gender is balanced and so on, seem to have moved away from The Ethnic as their organizing conceptual categories, they do share in the worldview of their parent volumes. That worldview is a critical one, which takes as its founding charge an argument about, with, and against nationalism, and the nation form. This critique is levelled from within, it is important to remember, from a location that is similar to those it takes on. It is important to underline this idea of location, I would argue, not in the manner of the xenophobe who would view outsiders or outside ideas with hostility, but in the manner of the critic who knows that criticism levelled from outside a political field, will always end up in a moral dilemma of the liberal kind.

Let me clarify and amplify this point and simultaneously attempting to draw together the several threads that run through the remarks, by tracing out a brief genealogy of the concept of Hybridity. It is well known, as Neluka Silva points out in her introduction, that term gains currency with the rise of Homi Bhabha s work to importance in US cultural studies, which is then strengthened in turn by Robert Young s critical reflections on Bhabha s work. That debate which turns on the biological antecedents of Hybridity , and the question, Does a claim of Hybridity, imply somewhere along the line a claim of purity? is certainly addressed in the introduction and volume. Not set to rest perhaps, but certainly addressed. What is perhaps less well known, is that the work of Bhabha s middle years, which generates this argument about Hybridity in the service of multi-culturalism , draws deeply on the work of Franz Fanon. Not on *Wretched of the Earth,* but on his other classic, *Black*

Skin, White Masks which is perhaps not as well known here. It is not, today, all that well known in the US academy as well, and hence, I think the great success of Bhabha s deft appropriation of it. Fanon s argument, in *Black Skin*, those of you who know it will recall — draws explicitly on Lacans frame of the mirror stage, to mark the un-acknowledged imaging of black in white, and white in black. This argument while drawing upon a post-enlightenment psycho-analytic tradition is really driven and energized by an anti-colonial politics, is embedded in turn Caribbean, and African national awakenings. It is an argument from within. But it argues simultaneously against the inequalities of colour hierarchies of those nations and communities, while making its most valuable point: The Negro is not. Any more than the White Man.

If some of this is lost on Bhabha, it does not have to be on us. For this volume s appropriation of Hybridity in turn, which is not of course Fanonian in the straightforward sense, does by extension create a creative critical space that can describe and argue with both nationalism and colonialism just as ethnicity did a decade ago. As such, it is a new direction, pointing to fresh fields, furrowed with plough marks, but still in the process of cultivation, that we see. That is refreshing.

I have, however, my own words of caution, regarding these picturesque vistas. It is too easy, often, when we come to intellectual categories that have arisen in an oppositional context, to imbue the categories with salience and life beyond the constitution of the debate. The idea of invented identities is one such; first brought to prominence by Hobsbawn and Ranger in the *Invention of Tradition*, it finds its way to the subtitle of this volume as well. Hybridity , itself, from the title, is of course, another. The temptation is to make larger, social scientific claims about these categories to prise the claims from the argumentative context they ve been forged in, and make them, larger than political life, if you like. Now given any target of criticism, any focus of categorical argument, the good critic will build a persuasive case, so much so that the target will seem to dissolve. So, targeting xenophobic, quasi-fascist nationalisms we don t like, with the guns of invention and Hybridity does make them seem to dissolve, to get hazy and fuzzy around the edges. But what we might forget is that any critical project has its own consolidations and coagulations, its own categorical densities. So then, the point is this — better and bettermore and more, critical writings on the putative Hybridity of still more putatively pure and exclusive identity isn t a really going to dissolve the latter. For a critical stance forged in opposition, will congeal into an unavoidable density, even as the critique takes shape.

It is given these thoughts, that I point to Nira Wickramasinghe s essay in this volume, as being implicitly cognizant of these analytical issues. In her essay, which has no unsightly bits of undigested theory, she makes an elegant point. Hybridity in British colonial discourse, was used to mark the mixing of west and east leaving the mixing of what might be east and east unmarked. The coming together of eastern things with other eastern things just made such things, all the more Oriental. Stuf f for thought. Hybridity in her work is used at a remove, not as a descriptive category of an empirical field. but rather as an analytical lense that delineates a discursive field. And we see then, that in that argumentative context, in my terms. even as Hybridity takes apart some identities, it also congeals others.

Which brings me, in another critical register, to Arjun Gunaratne s essay in this volume, which read to me as the opposite of Wickremasinghe s effort. At the end a laboured account of the overarching similarities of Sinhala and Tamil kinship, which is designed to dissolve them into hybrid fuzziness, we find that another identity, emerges un-fuzzy and sharp, doing a great deal of logical closure: Sri Lankan. Is there such a thing? If all is hybrid shouldn t it be too? Well, for Gunaratne, Sri Lankan is quite a secure and unhybrid identity. Silva, furthermore, finds that Sri Lanka sits in the very title of her volume — Hybrid Island — making it then as unique from other places, which are perhaps different. Again, Sri Lanka itself is not subject to hybridizing interrogation.

I am not here, trying to argue for or against, the importance of Sri Lanka or Sri Lankan as an identity. It has been, and continues to be a sustaining dream for many of us — including myself. On the other hand, I am the same fellow who, as it is well known, once claimed over an after dinner drink that I support my cricket team, not Sri Lanka, when I watch a match. I don t know, I continue to be productively confused over that.

But my point is not about the solidity of Sri Lankan per se. Rather, or otherwise, it is this: the magic of Hybridity won t dissolve all it touches — the volume before us it doesnt dissolve Sri Lanka. For good reason — it is written from within an intellectual life-world, against the grain of its violence and terror, populism and fascism. And it is in that particular argumentative context that these categories make sense.

That to me is really a comfort, and I can do no better but thank Neluka, on behalf of us all, for this sustaining and provocative addition to our bookshelves. ■

Pradeep Jeganathan is a Senior Fellow at ICES, Colombo & McKnight Professor, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

AN URGENT APPEAL FOR THE GENUINE PEACE IN SRI LANKA

Japanese Citizens' Committee for Peace in Sri Lanka

The ceasefire agreement between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in December, 2002 relieved not only the people of Sri Lanka, but also us, the residents of Japan. Peace negotiations have taken place five times in the past. The sixth negotiation is being held in Japan this month. The role of Japan is expected to help the country recover from the exhaustion of nineteen years of civil war. The aid conference is scheduled in June while due attention is being paid to financial aid by the interested parties. The progress of peace in Sri Lanka is expected to contribute to the dawn of world peace at a time when the world is in danger of war and terrorism. However, there have been reports of armed clashes between the government forces and the LTTE rebels since last February. At the same time, the criticism and complaints about the on-going peace negotiation and assistance of the Government of Japan has made the situation unpredictable.

There are many sympathizers and supporters interested in knowing the actual situation of Sri Lanka. Both print and electronic media in Japan have very little interest in news broadcasts about smaller countries like Sri Lanka. Therefore, we organized a gathering of Citizens Committee for Peace in Sri Lanka on the 15th of March to exchange information and opinions among the people who are interested in the peace and reconstruction of Sri Lanka.

Prolonged civil war has caused unrest and distress to the people in Sri Lanka during the past two decades. Clearance of land mines, reconstruction of roads, railroads, bridges, schools, hospitals, rehabilitation of returning refugees in the North and the East are urgent concerns. The most serious is the task of re-educating juveniles, who grew up in war and know nothing but war. And eradicating distrust and creating of trust between the Sinhalese and Tamils, who have fought for two decades may not be a simple task. But it is a serious concern that needs attention. Economic development of entire Sri Lanka is essential for the coexistence of two communities in a single nation. We sincerely hope that the people of Sri Lanka will take the fullest advantage of the ceasefire and the very opportunity of peace gained at the expense of nineteen years of civil war for a lasting peace.

Japan and Sri Lanka have developed a friendly relationship for a long time. Japan is the biggest donor of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Sri Lanka. However, we find that the Japanese ODA has not contributed that much to peace in Sri Lanka. We understand that the government of Japan has announced a full review of ODA and its policies for grants and applications to ODA is consolidating peace in the troubled areas. We are very much hopeful that the ODA would also be used for this worthy task of consolidating peace in Sri Lanka.

We make the following appeal to achieve a genuine and an everlasting peace in Sri Lanka:

1. We request the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam to adhere to the bilateral agreement for ceasefire and to progress to permanent peace in Sri Lanka. We quote the words of the late President J.R. Jayawardene, in his speech at the Peace Conference in San Franciscoes to both parties: Hatred does not cease through hatred. It s through love alone that it ceases .

2. We request the Government of Japan to suspend ODA immediately if and when conflict recurrs. Grant of ODA to a state in conflict will only contradict the basic theory of ODA.

3. We request that long term and careful consideration be given to the impoverished people when rehabilitation assistance is granted. For example: settlement and reintegration of refugees, rehabilitation and support for self-reliance of child soldiers and deserters.

4. We request the promotion of democracy and education that will value individual freedom and human rights.

5. We request the Government of Japan to be duty bound to inform its citizens the content of peace negotiations held in Japan, and the content of development assistance granted to developing nations as well.

15th March 2003

Committee for Appeal:
Sri Lanka Student Forum;
Japan-Sri Lanka Cultural Exchange Association;
Sri Lanka-Japan Martial Arts Club

Contact Address:

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We urgently appeal for Genuine Peace in Sri Lanka.

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OKAMOTO Youko	Photographer
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