Identity Conflict in Sri Lanka: A Case of Tamil Tigers

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Abstract

Identity has been basic source of resentment during various ethnic conflicts. Political and economic discrimination based on Identity is a key factor underlying these conflicts. Sri Lanka being religiously and ethnically heterogeneous country faced an identity conflict after it became independent in 1948. Tamils were largely discriminated against by Sinhalese majority in terms of political and economic resources. This discrimination forced Tamils to arm themselves in the form of extremist group LTTE (Liberation of Tigers Tamil Elam) and demand secession. However, this thirty year conflict ended with LTTE defeat in 2009. Although the conflict is over but its roots still persists in Sri Lanka. This paper will deal with certain research questions, i.e. what factors contributed to the emergence of conflict? What were LTTE's strategies and the Sri Lankan's government's response? Finally, why the LTTE was defeated and what are the future prospects of the conflict?

Key words: Identity, Globalization, discrimination, LTTE, Secession, Terrorism

Introduction

Identity is one of several fundamental human needs that underlie many intractable conflicts. Identity is the primary issue in most racial and ethnic conflicts. Theorists argue that "conflicts over needs are fundamentally different from conflicts over interests, because interests are negotiable, whereas needs are not"("Denial of Identity," n.d,. para.1).The identity based conflicts sharply increased in 19th century. Rising awareness of human rights and globalization fostered these conflicts. But most importantly, conflicts were raised in a post-colonial world when there were no powerful colonial masters to ensure peace and order. When colonial societies got independence, there were tussles between different factions of societies about who should rule the state. Most of these conflicts were based on ethnicity and religion rather than class (K M de Silva). These conflicts mostly arose with demands for power sharing and resulted in demands for secession. These conflicts mostly emerged in divided societies like Sri Lanka, Bosnia, and Rwanda.

But no other country faced such a bloody and long identity conflict as religiously and ethnically divided Sri Lanka did. Sri Lanka had been a British Colony and got independence from the United Kingdom in 1948. About 74 percent of Sri Lanka's population is Sinhalese who are mostly Buddhists. Tamil make 18 percent of Sri Lanka's population and are mostly Hindus. Since the independence Sri Lanka had faced the devastating inter-ethnic conflict between majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils(Zwier, 1998 :13-14).In post-independence period, Sri Lankan Tamils were largely marginalized by Sinhalese. The ethnocentric policies of the Sinhalese government led Tamils to secede. The conflict resulted in rise of the extremist Tamil group called LTTE (Liberation of Tigers Tamil Elam) in 1972.

The LTTE became one of the strongest militant groups and made the conflict worse. This bloody ethnic and political conflict killed tens of thousands of Sri Lankans, forced more than half of a million from their homes, ruined businesses, destroyed property on a massive scale, and consumed huge amount of money (Zwier, 1998: 10).The thirty year long war ended after the LTTE was defeated in 2009 as a result of President Rajapakse's led military operation. But the future of Sri Lanka as a peaceful country is still undecided.

Causes of Conflict in Sri Lanka

Every conflict is a result of some underlying factors. There are a number of factors which play important roles in triggering identity conflicts.

There are three types of factors which are usually responsible for creating identity conflict. These factors are called internal, external and catalysts.

Internal Factors

Internal factors operate within states. The internal factors that provided the grounds for conflict in Sri Lanka were:

1. Religious and Ethnic Divisions

The first and foremost factor which causes conflict is an ethnic and religious division within society, as was the case with Sri Lanka. The majority Sinhalese is not only ethnically different but also differ linguistically and religiously from the minority Tamils. Sinhalese are mostly Buddhists but some are Christians. Their native language is Sinhala. They identify themselves with northern Indian people who came to the island almost 2,500 years ago. They see Sri Lanka as a special place for Buddhism and believe that Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, who was an Indian philosopher, came to the island in fifth century B.C. The Sinhalese see Sri Lanka as a haven for their religion and pressured the government of Sri Lanka that Buddhism should be protected and promoted.

On the other hand, Tamils are people who speak Tamil and are mostly Hindus. They are believed to have been brought by British colonists in 1830s to work on plantations. Both Hinduism and Buddhism originated in India and existed side by side in Sri Lanka and have greatly influenced each other. But it was post-independence period when the struggle for power began and the religious and ethnic factors came into play and resulted in bloody ethnic conflict (Zwier,1998:13-15). So, these religious, ethnic and linguistic divisions played a significant role in conflict.

2. British Colonial Policy and Ancient Hatred

Sri Lanka had been ruled by Portuguese, Dutch and British colonists. But British colonists left a deeper impact on Sri Lanka than the Dutch. British devised such policies that promoted ethnic divisions within Sri Lankan society. The British resorted to divide and rule policies that favored Tamils.

When Sri Lanka was ruled by the Portuguese and the Dutch, the languages of colonial masters were only used for some government tasks and the administrative functions were usually done in the island's own languages. In contrast, the British governed Sri Lanka in the English language. In 1833, when the British established centralized form of government, the local demand for English increased sharply because people realized that they had to learn English for employment. The English-education was wholeheartedly accepted by Tamils, but the Sinhalese remained suspicious about Christian missionaries and English education. This created a class hierarchy(Kearny, 1967:56-57). People who had proficiency in English were able to gain well-paid government jobs and had greater benefits. Many Sinhalese were cultivators, laborers, and village traders.

Tensions between Tamils and Sinhalese grew swiftly as the Sinhalese realized that Tamils had gained socio-economic benefits. In the post-independence period this ancient hatred led to a grave conflict. Another problem created under British rule was the Indian Tamil workers brought by the British from southern India. The Sinhalese considered them foreigners. The Sinhalese feared that Indian-Tamils and Muslims would, together, take the control of the island(Taras&Ganguly, 2010:179-180). So, under British rule, hatred started among the Sinhalese and Tamils and resulted in suppression of the Tamils minority by the Sinhalese majority in the post-independence period.

3. Post Independence Internal Colonialism and Cultural Discrimination

After independence, the internal colonialism was established by the Sinhalese majority. They were not ready to share power with minorities. Minorities were badly discriminated against in post- independence Sri Lanka. Regarding minorities' treatment, Wickramasinghe stated, "Whatever the flaws of multiculturalism, they are still lesser evils than those faced by Sri Lanka's minorities"(Wickramasinghe, 2010:159). Sinhalese believed that Tamils had greater benefits under British rule. So this ancient hatred resulted in discrimination of minorities. Indian-Tamils were largely disenfranchised in post-colonial period. In 1948 and 1949 legislature was passed declaring Tamils non citizens. They were required documents approving their ancestry. Only 25 percent Tamils fulfilled the requirement of citizenship, which meant that a majority Tamils lost the right to vote(Zwier, 1998:50). The People's Own Language Movement started by the Sinhalese and supported by Sinhalese political parties demanded that Sinhala should be made official language.

This resulted in 1956's "Sinhala Only Act" which was passed in the parliament. This act made Sinhala the only official language. This was considered by Tamils as an attempt of Sinhalese domination and resulted in bitter tensions among both groups. Later on, the government realized the intensity of the issue and the 1978 constitution incorporated both Tamil and Sinhalese as official languages(Zwier, 1998:180).

Tamils were also discriminated in terms of economic opportunities. The positions Tamils enjoyed in state services during British rule were no longer given to them and the Sinhalese consider those as their legitimate share. Because of the "Sinhala Only Act" Tamils were required to leave most of the official jobs because of lack of efficiency in the Sinhala language. The education opportunities were rapidly expanded in Sinhalese areas. This greatly reduced Tamils traditional government positions. In 1970, the United Front Coalition led by Sirimavo introduced new admission policies which required Tamils to obtain higher aggregate marks than the Sinhalese to enter in the university in medical, science, and engineering faculties. In the 1980s the newly-elected UNP government changed this policy. However, memories of this discriminatory policy remained fresh in the Tamil's minds(K M de Silva).

In 1972, Sri Lankan government introduced an ethnocentric constitution which religiously discriminated against minorities. They neglected minority clauses of the Solbury Constitution which was designed by the British before granting independence. "This 1972 Constitution, engineered without any input from Tamils, gave foremost status to Buddhism--- thereby defenestrating secularism by downgrading Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity"(Devotta, 2009:1026). So this internal colonialism widely discriminated against minorities and provided basis for conflict.

External Factors

External factors were also very important in triggering conflict in Sri Lanka.

1. Geographical Location

The geographical location of a country can also be a major factor in triggering conflict. "States located in the region of artificial weak and failing states, in the areas of high concentration of the nationalist movements with unfulfilled statehood aspirations, may be exposed to significant cross-border contagion and spillover effects"(Dondelinger, 2010:85). This seems true in the case of Sri Lanka as it is located in South Asia where most of the countries were under British colonialism and got independence in the mid 20th century. Nationalist and ethnic movements were started in newly independent India and Pakistan. The separation of East Pakistan in 1971(Bangladesh) had a demonstration effect on Tamils. Consequently, LTTE emerged as a violent militant group in 1972 and demanded secession.

2. External Support

India

India played a special role during the conflict. Most of the Tamils were Indian citizens and had their ethnic group in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu that pressured Indian government to get involved in the conflict. India accepted the Tamil immigrants and also provided assistance to them. India played a special role in peace negotiations and also sent their troops to Sri Lanka(Zwier, 1998:63-65).

Tamil Diaspora

The Tamil Diaspora played a significant role in the conflict as an external factor. After 1987 anti-Tamil riots, tens of thousands of Tamils migrated to the Indian state Tamil Nadu and many Western countries that welcomed them as political refugees. The Tamil Diaspora constitutes 450,000 to 500,000 refugees that spread over 50 countries(Voorde, 2005:191). The Tamil Diaspora had a major role in fund-raising for the Tamil Tigers, which was the strongest Tamil militant group in Sri Lanka. They helped to arm Tamil Tigers and organize propaganda campaigns. They promoted the Tamil Elam cause worldwide. The help of Diaspora made LTTE a powerful militant group. "The Diaspora ran propaganda campaigns and supplied news agencies barred from war zone with images of carnage. Jane's intelligence Review estimated that LTTE charities plus the smuggling of weapons, drugs and people contributed $300 million a year"(Montlake, 2009:12). So, the support from the Diaspora motivated the LTTE and their demand of a separate Tamil Elam state.

3. Globalization and the Right of Self-Determination

Globalization also played significant role. In the globalized world, it became easier for LTTE to organize. For example, they created a website Tamilnet.com. The means of communication like internet and phone linked them to their Diaspora worldwide. On the other hand the right of self-determination under international law also motivated their cause. "The legal legitimacy of the Sri Lankan Tamil's demand for an independent state was based upon the assumption that in positive international law, 'all peoples' have the right to self determination"(Whall, 1995:123). Their claim of self-determination led to the demand for autonomy and then secession in the Northern and Eastern provinces which were popularly considered as traditional homelands of the Tamil-speaking people(Whall, 1995:133).

Catalysts

The factors which trigger the conflict and make it unavoidable are called catalysts. Although external and internal factors play a major role, triggers are needed to activate the conflicts. There were tensions among Tamils and Sinhalese even under British colonialism but, they became more pronounced in the post-independence period when ethnocentric policies of the government served as triggers for conflicts. For example the Sinhala Only Act of 1956 and the 1972 ethnocentric Constitution resulted in anti-Tamil riots. Sinhalese activists attacked Tamil buses and burnt and destroyed their property. After these riots the division in society deepened and agitated the situation. Tamils decided to demand independence instead of autonomy(Zwier, 1998:53,61).So, these factors increased tensions on both sides and finally led to severe conflict.

Rise of LTTE and its Strategies

As discussed above, after independence, the government adopted ethnocentric policies. To counter this growing discrimination Tamils first sought a political solution. The Tamil Congress demanded balanced representation 50% seats for the Sinhalese and 50% for the all other ethnic groups but they did not succeed. A federal party emerged after growing discrimination and asked for a federal structure that would give Tamil autonomy in the areas populated by them(Jayawardhana, 1987).The ethnocentric policies of the government and Sinhalese activists' anti-Tamil riots triggered the Tamils to response. Sinhalese activists under JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna), a Sinhalese nationalist party, carried out violence. They destroyed properties and killed many Tamils. Though the government outlawed this party and said action would be taken against those who were responsible--it never happened. The government kept favoring the Sinhalese(Zwier, 1998:61).This led to the demand for secession by Tamil political leaders. In 1972, Villupillai Prabhakaran led anti-government uprisings joined by Tamil educated but unemployed youth. Tamil New Tigers (TNT) was formed by Tamil militants two years later. However in 1976, Prabhakaran and members of TNT officially founded the 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam'.(Voorde,2005:185-186).The LTTE turned into a very ruthless and effective organization which insisted on strict discipline and trained a suicide cadre(Montlake, 2009:13).

Strategies

LTTE used varying tactics to make the organization more powerful and functional.

1. Suicide Terrorism

Suicide terrorism was used by LTTE as the foremost method of operation since the 1987's first suicide attack. LTTE trained suicide commandos called Black Tigers. Suicide terrorism was used to cripple the economic conditions of the region and to exert massive political impact(Voorde, 2005:187). "These commando units operated a battlefield strategy known as 'Unceasing Wave'...The terrorist arsenal and methods were substantial and led to horrendous damage and causalities"(Whittaker, 2001:84). The targets of attacks were military, government and cultural infrastructures. Since 1987, LTTE carried out more than 200 suicide attacks. The most spectacular terrorist attack perpetrated by LTTE was the October 1997 truck bombing of the freshly inaugurated World Trade Center in Colombo which injured 100 and killed 18 people(Simonsen&Spindlove, 2000).

2. Recruitment of Women and Children

LTTE largely recruited women and children in the organization. LTTE used tactical ploy to recruit women by saying that women are equal to men and can play a special role. Women were strongly encouraged either to volunteer for suicide terrorism or other dangerous missions and devastating attacks.

Women participated in about 30% to 40% of the group's overall suicide activities.

LTTE trained and recruited children for their notorious suicide missions as well. Children occupied any position in the group except leadership. Mostly Tamil recruited and trained by LTTE between 1995 and 1996 were 12 to 16 years old. "According to a Sri Lankan Military intelligence report , 60% of all LTTE fighters in 1998 were 18 years or younger and almost 60% of LTTE member killed in combat since 1995 were children"(Voorde, 2005:186).

3. Use of Technology

LTTE used the technology to connect to their Diaspora and spread their message worldwide. For example, they created the website 'Tamilnet.com' and used television and radio widely for their cause. Tamil nationalists used the internet as a transnational power to counter the local media monopoly manipulated by the Sri Lankan government. " Tamilnet.com was set up to use the identity-resistance popular accessibility of the internet, and market-popular language and design of the World Wide Web, to express identity-resistance popular Tamil concerns...it was created to use different form of popularity to subvert and support each other"(Whitaker ,2004).

LTTE became an extremist militant group and followed certain fundamentalist traits. Their quest for purity resulted in discouragement of the use of *grantha (*letters from Sanskrit and other languages) letters which got added in the Tamil language to accommodate sounds from other languages. They encouraged terms from earlier Tamil literature. The Tamil Radio and Tamil Vision International were used to convey these linguistic preferences. This trend was more pronounced among the over 250,000 Tamils domiciled in Canada and encouraged viewers to avoid naming children using *grantha* letters(Devotta, 2009:1026).

Government Response

After LTTE became a powerful terrorist group, the situation worsened. Sri Lankan government tried to counter the threat. They adopted certain strategies ranging from peace negotiations to conducting a civil war.

1. The1980s Peace Negotiations and the Role of India

Many foreign organizations and regional countries encouraged peace talks between Tamil separatists and the Sri Lankan government. India initiated a peace process because they had 80 million Tamils in the Tamil Nadu who pressured Indian government to protect the Tamil community in Sri Lanka. In 1983 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi initiated a peace process which was later continued by her son Rajiv Gandhi after her assassination(Taras&Ganguly, 2010:183-185). In 1987, a peace accord was reached between Indian and Sri Lankan government. The Indo-Sri Lankan Peace Accord outlined that the Tamils should be given autonomy in Northern and Eastern provinces. India also sent the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to replace Sri Lankan troops to ensure peace in Jaffna. Indian military involvement was severely criticized by the Sinhalese nationalist party JVP. IPKF failed to disarm LTTE and prevent violent clashes and withdrew from Sri Lanka in April 1990(Voorde, 2005:190).

2. The Ethnic Civil War in the 1990s

After IPKF withdrew from Sri Lanka, LTTE quickly strengthened its grounds in the Northeastern provinces. The Sri Lankan government responded by rejecting the merger of these provinces. In 1995, the newly elected Bandaranaike Kumaratunga of the People's Alliance promised to come up with proposals for the devolution of power. But after waiting for three months the LTTE annulled the peace agreement and fighting began between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan military. The Sri Lankan government launched a full military operation to regain control over Jaffna, the main LTTE stronghold(Mehrotra, 1998:1519). By Mid-1996 the Sri Lankan government took control of most of the Jaffna. However, by the late 1990s LTTE regained much of the lost area, though, it failed to recapture Jaffna city. "Because of the heavy destruction and suffering that this conflict caused, there was wide spread international support for Norway's initiative in early 2000 to facilitate peace negotiations between the Sri Lankan government and LTTE"(Taras&Ganguly, 2010:189-191). Ceasefire agreement was reached between LTTE and Sri Lankan government in 2002, after months of separate peace talks with Norwegian facilitators. Between 2002 and 2003, both sides held several rounds of Norway facilitated peace talks to resolve decades-old ethnic conflict. During the process of peace talks, the LTTE kept rebuilding itself militarily and, in April 2003, it abruptly suspended talks and demanded the army's relocation from Jaffna. The LTTE claimed that without this, the rebuilding process would be impossible.

A number of other factors affected the peace talks. The UNF (United National Front) government was dismissed and replaced by UPFA's (United People's Freedom Alliance. UPFA position regarding peace talks was significantly different from the UNP, and UPFA criticized the Norway-facilitated peace process.

Another reason was the division within LTTE. The LTTE fragmented into Northern and Eastern units, led by Parabhakaran and Colonal Karuna respectively. Tensions started within LTTE. Prabhakaran dismissed Karuna from the organization and ordered large number of his forces to secretly move into the Eastern region from their position in the North(Taras&Ganguly, 2010:193-198).

In December 2004, the tsunami disaster that hit the northern and eastern part of Sri Lanka again intensified tensions. The tension arose between the government and the LTTE over distribution of aid. The LTTE believed that government's response was not fair. This really hampered the peace process and 2002 cease-fire agreement started breaking down(Fang, 2005:24-26).

3. Back to War and LTTE's Destruction

 "The dispersion of the Tamil community around the world, the internationalization of the LTTE, and the intrinsic inadequacies of Sri Lanka's counter-insurgency strategy has seriously impeded official efforts to reduce and ultimately eradicate the threat posed by Tamil Tigers"(Voorde, 2009:191). The dynamics of conflict were largely changed after Mahinda Rajapakse became president in 2005. He took a strict stance against the LTTE; he vowed to maintain unitary state structure and annulled the devolution and federalism discourse that his predecessor devised(Devotta, 2009:1037). In late 2005, the LTTE carried out a powerful attack in Jaffna Peninsula which killed 11 soldiers. The government also responded militarily and civil war broke out. The government response was harsh and aggressive. In 2006, the major fighting between Sea Tigers and Sri Lanka's navy became a daily occurrence. In 2007 and 2008, a series of intense battle took place which undermined the LTTE's capability and they suffered serious losses. The LTTE was defeated after a fierce, final battle took place in 2009 in which the Sri Lankan military killed the LTTE's top leaders, including Prabhakaran. This civil war ultimately ended the world's longest and bloodiest ethnic conflict(Taras&Ganguly, 2010:199-202). According to the United Nation's estimate, the conflict claimed up to 100,000 lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of people(Natrajan, 2010).

The Reasons of the LTTE's Failure

The defeat of the LTTE was surprising since it was the strongest militant group in the world. There were various reasons which led to LTTE's defeat.

First, the split within the LTTE seriously undermined the claim of the LTTE being the sole representative of Tamils. Colonel Karuna claimed that the LTTE represented only North Elam while he and his forces represented South Elam(Taras&Ganguly, 2010:198). So this division also divided the support of Tamils who were formerly supporting only the LTTE.

Second, the LTTE's aggressive militant strategies tarnished its image worldwide. Parabhakaran committed some tactical mistakes, for example, attacking Indian peacekeeping forces, assassinating Rajiv Gandhi and other Tamil politicians, recruiting women and children, and using suicide bombing as foremost strategy. It lost support of the Indian government and many other foreign countries which were initially sympathetic towards it(Taras&Ganguly, 2010).

Third after defeating the IPKF, it became more aggressive."In the real sense the more the LTTE tasted military success, the more fascistic it became. This in turn, blinded the organization to its growing unpopularity among Tamils"(Devotta, 2009:1040).The group's popularity as a terrorist group largely reduced funds and weapons for LTTE in a post 9/11 period, which adversely affected its fighting capability. On the other hand Sri Lankan government modernized its armed forces with the support from China, India, the US, the UK, Israel, and EU(Taras&Ganguly, 2010:202).LTTE's illegal activities in foreign countries, such as human trafficking, money laundering and arms smuggling led to its ban in the Western countries. This hampered the LTTE's transnational support.

Finally, the LTTE indirectly supported Rajapakse's election and overestimated its capabilities. But it largely underestimated how far President Rajapakse would go to pursue a purely military solution to the conflict.

Conclusion and Future Prospect of the Conflict

The political and economic discrimination based on identity led Tamils to form an extreme group and take harsh steps against government and Sinhala majority by involving in terrorist activities. Although the civil war is over, the future of Sri Lanka as a peaceful country is still undecided. While discussing the future of Sri Lanka's conflict, one should not forget the fact that the reasons why the LTTE emerged were the government's discriminatory policies. So, in this sense, the revival of the LTTE largely depends on what role government will play in future.

The real question, however, is what the government has done in a post war period to resolve the ethnic conflict. The answer is simply not much practically. Although they have taken steps to rebuild war torn Jaffna and the government has allocated about $460 million for healthcare and rehabilitation, no real changes have been made to resolve the issues which caused this disaster(Jayashan, 2009). In the 2010 election, there was no talk of reconciliation which reflected the sad fact that most Sinhalese do not consider it necessary. What President Rajapakse is going to do to solve the country's biggest problem, i.e. the division between the Sinhalese and Tamils, is still uncertain. Rajapakse's government has reversed the Tamil demand of merging north and east provinces but promised to devolve power to regional bodies.

But there are reasons to doubt Rajapakse's willingness. Answering the question about whether he would consider devolution important for adjusting Sri Lanka's division, he said, " Sri Lankans are not worried about these things, they are only for outsiders and NGOs with nothing better to think about. Sri Lankans want economic development...but a political solution is coming"(The Economist, 2010). The situation suggests otherwise.

Although theTamils dropped the demand of independent statehood, "the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), which is the biggest political grouping representing the ethnic minority, said it instead wanted a 'federal' solution. The party wants the two Tamil-majority provinces to be merged back into one, and significant devolution of powers"(Haviland, 2010). Many experts believe that if government fails in promoting Tamil rights and devolution of power, the Tamil militancy will continue. The Rajapakse government is again taking steps which ensure Sinhalese Buddhist domination. They are driving people out from northeast sections and using the Tamil property to create economic zones for Sinhalese settlers and military personnel who could govern the region.

Almost the 300,000 Tamils, who escaped the final battle and are living in refugee camps, are restricted from returning to their homes in the North. The policy "ensures the forced dispersal of Tamils across the island so they can no longer cluster"(Devotta, 2009:1050).

Even after one year, Tamil refugees are still living in refugee camps with unsanitary conditions. The government claimed that they need to screen the refugee before they can resettle them. But the real reason was to strengthen the Sinhalese presence in certain areas and ensure that refugees' votes are controlled during the elections. The military has also increased and continued using the repressive checkpoint system to confine Tamils. Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist have used many tactics to populate the Northeast. They are using archaeological sites to prevent Tamil and Muslims access to areas and are erecting Buddha statutes in Tamil and Muslim locations, thus, symbolizing the territory for Sinhalese Buddhists(Devotta, 2009:1049).

In his speech to the parliament after the conclusion of war, president Rajapakse said that there is no division in the country between the majority and the minority, and the division actually exists between people who love the country and those who do not(Liyanage,2010:37). "Rajapakse's patriotism merges nation and state and promotes a love of country based on a particular reading of the Sinhalese people's foundation myth, a reading in which all other groups---those formally known as minorities are present as shadows."

The Sri Lankan government is not sincere in implementing the power devolution packages. For example, before post-war elections there were talks about implementing a 13th amendment which would give effect to the devolution provisions. But after the election, there have not been any genuine efforts in implementing the13th amendment and there has been Sinhala national opposition within and outside the government to any kind of power-sharing arrangement.

In Post war period president Rajapakse established "Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission" (LLRC) to investigate the process of civil war and to make recommendations to ensure peace and heal the Tamil grievances.

LLRC made certain recommendations impelling president Rajapakse "to ensure greater media freedom, improve governance and withdraw the military from civilian duties in the former war zones where minority (Tamils) is concentrated"(Jayasinghe, 2012). However, the recommendations have not received any attention on the part of the government until now. Senior cabinet minister Vasudeva Nanayakkara while addressing the seminar to implement LLRC recommendations said that war was fought to preserve Sri Lanka as one country but post war Sri Lanka has divided into two countries. There is no democracy in North and democratic institutions have become ineffectual(BBC Sinhala, Feb 14, 2012).According to Human Rights Watch (Annual World Report 2012), the condition in Sri Lanka has not approved. Brad Adam, Human Rights Watch, Asia Director, claimed that "in 2011, accountability remained a dead issue, the media faced increasing censorship, and the long-standing grievances which led to the conflict were not seriously addressed. Sri Lankans face a lack of justice, weak rule of law, land grabbing, and a censored media from a government that is increasingly authoritarian"(World Report 2012). Although, government has claimed that it has taken steps to improve the Tamil conditions but there is little practical evidence.

Lack of justice, media censorship and heavy military presence in North and has made Tamil population skeptical of government and there is growing distrust. The land issue that was bone of contention in thirty years long conflict remained unsolved. Government has not made any serious effort to resolve the Tamil's issues. Instead of engaging the Tamil politicians in negotiations they were 'threatened' and 'harassed'(BBC Sinhala, Feb 14, 2012).This post war progress has led many to believe that Rajapakse will not take any step against the will of Sinhala majority for the fear to lose their support. Therefore, under Rajapakse or any Sinahala majority government there will be no solution for Tamils. It seems that government will not grant equal rights to Tamils and they will continue to be considered as foreigners by Sinhalese majority(Isaac, 2011).

"If the government continues these policies and gives Sinhala exclusive forces and becomes totally unconcerned about the Tamil national issues, the re-emergence of exclusive Tamil nationalist politics will may be unavoidable. Although it may not happen in immediate future due to the magnitude of defeat suffered by LTTE, the presence of trained combatants and stockpile of arms hidden in various places may facilitate emergence of militant group like in the late 1970s"(Liyanage, 2010:38).

So, the most essential measures to be taken are reconciliation, rehabilitation, and restoration of democracy with a devolutionary setup, otherwise the military defeat will not result in long-lasting peace. There should not be rigidity in implementing these measures as the government has taken harsh steps even after the war. For example, there has been an expansion of military in northeastern areas (Swaminathan, 2009) so that Tamils should not be able to revive themselves but the best solution can be power sharing and dialogue. Octavio Paz has rightly stated in his book *In Light of India:*

> *"Of* course, it is impossible to foresee the future turns of events. In politics and history, perhaps in everything, that unknown power the ancients called fate is always at work. Without forgetting this, I must add that, in politics as well as private life, the surest method for resolving conflicts, however slowly, is dialogue"(Paz, 1997:133).

So, the government should take necessary steps, for example, devolution of power and rehabilitation of refugees, to prevent any future disaster instead of continuing the past policies. Tamils are now more prone to accept the power-sharing solution. But if this process is delayed and no serious attention is paid, then the conflict may arise again and force Tamils to revise their secessionist demands.

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