

Peace Studies
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Even in peacetime the world has an awful lot of problems.
Only in peacetime can we get on with solving them.
Thinking about peace is the first step towards achieving it.

Bill Oddie

1. What is Peace?

Peace is normally defined and studied in relation to war and violence. There is merit in that, because peace is an urgent and pressing need when there is war or violence. But there are other long-term needs associated with peace. Development is one. Justice is another. Harmony with the environment is yet another. Therefore, people today tend to study peace in its broadest and long-term meaning. This holistic approach to peace is often called an ecopolitical approach. Ecopolitics is a term to describe a cluster of economic, political, ecological and ethical issues.

A more traditional view argued that "peace is the absence of war." But this is not completely correct. War may be absent. But violence may continue. There is a difference between war and violence. War is a large-scale conflict. Violence may be a state of small-scale conflict, yet inimical to peace. Electoral violence, for example, is not war. But it is a major threat to peace. War may end with a peace agreement. But peace thus achieved can be temporary. The reasons for war might remain and continue. War might erupt again or transform into small-scale series of violence. Therefore, a broader definition is necessary to understand peace.

The traditional argument can be enlarged to define "peace as the absence of war and violence." It makes better sense, but does not fully cover our complete concern for peace. The definition still transpires a negative meaning, the absence of war and violence. This is like what is called "negative healthiness," the mere absence of sickness. But healthiness should be a positive one. Not only the absence of sickness, but also the physical fitness and good muscle tone. Peace should be like that, a positive one.

Peace should end not only war, the symptom, but also injustice, the underlying causes. This does not mean that wars are waged against injustice. On the contrary, wars are usually waged to perpetuate injustice or for injustice. Hitler waged war against other nations to dominate them on the basis of race. The elimination of racism is therefore necessary to avoid wars of the type of Hitler. Peace should not only end war through agreement, but also bring harmony between warring nations. Otherwise, peace will not be a lasting one.

Johan Galtung made the important distinction between what we normally call violence, physical violence, and structural violence. Structural violence might not harm the victims directly. But the people are harmed, victimized and violated through institutional means and structures. Poverty, malnutrition and hunger are some results of structural violence. If peace is the absence of violence, it should mean the absence of violence including structural violence as well. Peace means not only the absence of war and violence but also the absence of causes of war and violence. The study of peace not only encompasses the issue of justice but also the issue of

ecology. We may understand this connection between peace and ecology better by discussing different approaches to peace or peace studies.

2. Approaches to Peace

There are six main approaches to peace or peace studies. These approaches are, more or less, similar to prevailing approaches in other subjects. They are: (i) Conservative, (ii) Pragmatic, (iii) Social Justice, (iv) Personal Transformation, (v) World Order, and (vi) Ecological.

Conservative Approach. This is mainly an *authoritarian approach* to peace, most often advocated by the established states and super powers. *This is an approach of building peace through strength and authority.* This approach believes in crisis management. It is skeptical about total peace. A limited peace is its ideal. It is a kind of a “police” approach to peace. According to this approach, peace is equated with order; and a little bit of violence may be necessary to maintain order. In respect of international order, proponents of this approach do not advocate complete disarmament. They say we must learn to live with nuclear weapons. Both the United States and the Soviet Union, during the Cold War period, based their policies on peace on this approach. *The advocates of this approach hardly believe that ordinary people could make a difference in building peace.* This is a big brother approach to world peace.

Pragmatic Approach. This approach assumes neutrality in ideology and attempts *to build peace through pragmatic and practical means.* It does not care much about philosophy, values or political ideals. The best possible degree of peace is its ideal. The termination of war is one of its main objectives. In this approach, there is no much concern about structural violence in society. *The approach is based on international diplomacy.* It strongly assumes that *peace ultimately derives from effective negotiation and bargaining.* These negotiations should be based on international law and treaties. In achieving peace, the mediation by neutral parties could play a major role. Under this approach, there is an attempt to strengthen international standards and mechanisms for peace. Nuclear disarmament is a major objective of peace. The United Nations usually bases its policies on pragmatism. There are merits and weaknesses in this approach.

Social Justice Approach. This is an advocacy for positive peace. This approach analyzes long-term reasons for the breach of peace in society. The main advocates of this approach are the followers of Johan Galtung. A Norwegian by nationality, Galtung was the founding father of the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (PRIO). *The main focus of this approach is on structural violence and its elimination. Social injustices such as poverty, hunger, racism, chauvinism and economic exploitation are the results of structural violence.* To build peace in the long run these issues should be addressed positively. This approach is for a new social order that could foster equality, justice and social harmony. The latter are attributes of what they mean by positive peace.

Personal Transformation Approach. Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution states; “Since wars begin in the minds, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” The personal transformation approach has much to do with this proposition. The roots of it, however, can be traced to many religious philosophies. This approach is concerned with the *ultimate goal of resolving contradictions within and between individuals.* There is a psychological aspect to this approach. Advocacy of non-violence is a major method of this approach as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. This approach finds something wrong with the contemporary socialisation processes. There is much emphasis on peace education as a means to peace. Educationists and social psychologists are the main advocates of this approach.

World Order Approach. This is popular among academics, particularly in the international relations field. Nevertheless, it is an interdisciplinary approach of the global system and its problems of peace in a holistic fashion. *It approaches the problems of peace not in isolation but in*

relation to development, justice and human rights. The approach is systematic in character. It is normative in the sense that it values peace as a higher goal and attempts to achieve it through advocating necessary policies. *It is value-oriented, non-elitist and rejects neutrality.* It is by far the most comprehensive and coherent approach to peace. Extensive research and investigation support this approach.

Ecological Approach. This is an approach developed particularly by Professor Fred Knelman. A natural scientist (Physicist) by training, he was the founding Director of the Vancouver Peace Council in Canada. He has tried to synthesize positive aspects of all earlier approaches, mainly the last three and develop a new approach. It is very close to the last approach, the world order model. The approach seeks to establish linkages between three sets of problems. They are: (i) Peace/War (ii) Development/Environment (iii) Human Rights/Justice. The approach argues that all these sets of issues are related and interlinked. The objective of the approach is *towards creating a sustainable future in which peace will also be sustainable.* A considerable attention in this approach is paid for problem solving. It also emphasises the importance of peace movements. Peace studies and peace education are also considered to be of paramount importance in the peace movements.

Similarities and Differences. There are several similarities and differences between the above six approaches. The first two approaches, the conservative and the pragmatic, are very close in nature. Both are elitist. They consider war and violence to be outcomes of power struggles. Therefore, the attempt is either to crush the new power seekers or to bring agreement between them. While the conservative approach pursues the first, the pragmatic approach pursues the second. American policy towards Iraq is a good example for the conservative approach. Neutral countries and the UN, in contrast, pursue a more pragmatic approach to bring peace to various issues. Pragmatic approach has various merits in the short term in bringing peace to various issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

There are general similarities between the other four approaches. They are non-elitist in nature. They all consider people's participation as important in building peace in the world. For all of them, peace is a valued normative goal. But they differ largely in emphasizing different approaches in achieving peace. The social justice and the personal transformation are two complimentary approaches. Both are particularly related to eliminating civil war or political violence due to ethnic and social disharmony. They have equal application in resolving domestic violence as well. The main vision of the social justice approach is equity or distributive justice. The personal transformation approach tries to capture the hearts and minds of human beings in building peace.

There are major similarities between the world order and the ecological approaches. Both are applicable to civil wars, as well as regional/international wars. Particularly, the latter has a specific application in analyzing and resolving political violence in country contexts as well. These are well-developed academic models in studying and analyzing issues of war, violence and peace. Both are holistic in nature and take into account almost all the relevant variables for analysis. The ecological approach is more advanced. According to Knelman:

Peace is not simply the absence of war or the mediation of conflict but rather a dynamic balance between mutually reinforcing elements of emotional, economic, political, cultural, natural, ethical and technological variables.

Here, peace is equated to harmony. This is philosophical. Emotional disharmony in a person creates tension. So does injustice. It is the mother of personal frustration, depression, anger or aggression. Harmony means free-from-harm and free-from-injustice. Social or political disharmony and injustice create violence and war. This has been the situation throughout history.

3. The War Problem

There are two types of war: (i). internal or civil war, which occurs within countries and, (ii). international war, which occurs between countries. Elimination or termination of war is a major challenge to the peace problem. Before analyzing this problem we need to understand it. To understand it properly, we need a proper definition about war. We don't call feuds, riots or small-scale violence war although they are related to the peace problem. War is a major and a specific peace problem. Ronald J. Glossop in his *Confronting War* (1987), has offered a good definition about war, which says; "War is large scale violent conflict between organized groups that are or that aim to establish governments."

War is large-scale violent conflict. The parties to the conflict are either governments (e.g. in World War II) or organized groups that aim to establish government (e.g. civil war in Rwanda). Or one party can be a government while the other party aims to establish a government. The latter is the case in Israel-PLO conflict or Sri Lanka-LTTE conflict.

Types of War. There are various types of war. There can be war between nations with equal power or unequal power. A powerful nation might wage war to conquer a poor or a weak nation. This is called imperialist or colonial war. The reason for the war is obviously unjustified. There is no dispute here where both parties are equally responsible. Therefore, there is no question of mitigation. Peace in this case should be based on a complete withdrawal of armies and perhaps with compensation and war reparation.

On the other hand, when a colonized nation is trying to liberate itself from an imperialist master it is called a war of national liberation. This is popularly considered a just war, a justified one. There have been a series of national liberation wars in Asia and Africa after the end of the World War II. However, Mahatma Gandhi insisted that "war" of national liberation should be non-violent.

There are other types. A secessionist war is one in which some regions try to secede from the nation (e.g. Bangladesh against Pakistan or Eritrea against Ethiopia). Territorial civil war is another in which each of the opposing groups is seeking control of the whole nation (e.g. Rwanda or Angola). A revolutionary war is yet another, in which an organized group (e.g. JVP) seeks to overthrow the existing government and establish itself as the decision-maker for the whole nation. It should be noted, however, that a particular war might exemplify more than one type that we have identified. For example, there can be a war between an established government and a secessionist group within a country where the secessionist group receives assistance from another country. In this case, the war is both a civil as well as an international one. This was the situation in Bangladesh in 1971.

Effects of War. *War is a major problem for peace. Even a limited or negative peace is better than war.* In a negative peace situation (in the absence of war) there may or may not be injustice. But in a war situation there is definitely injustice. In a war, people are killed and maimed. Their property is destroyed. This is simply because they are on the other side or sometimes simply because they just appear to be there.

Bombs, missiles and machine guns do not always hit the targets. They most often hit other things. Even soldiers have little or no choice about participating in the war. They are conscripted or forced into war by power seekers. Most of them are innocent victims.

War always motivates people to be suspicious and spiteful of people on the other side. Only peace makes it possible for people to be more humane and sympathetic towards people in the other groups. This is common to civil wars as well as to international ones.

4. A Peace Problem?

It is also possible for negative peace to be a bad thing. A society can be a peaceful one, at least superficially, in which a ruthless dictator rules with an iron fist. Freedom or rights will not prevail under the circumstances. The decisions of the dictator will be arbitrary, ruthless and oppressive. There can be resentment and opposition underneath. But no one would dare even to raise a voice against the dictator because of the fear of reprisal. Therefore, it is quite possible to think of a so-called peace situation where there is so much injustice. Even war would be better, if it means a chance of getting rid of the dictator.

Even the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (of the United Nations) argued in its Preamble that “if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human right should be protected by the rule of law.”

Here, rebellion was considered a recourse against tyranny and oppression although as a last resort.

Just War. The above is a basis for a “just war theory.” This theory argues that under certain circumstances injustice is intolerably gross that even violence and war seem to be justified. It is on a similar basis that Marxists advocated revolutionary violence to overthrow what they called capitalist dictatorship. But the benefits of peace and horrors of war are such that it does not make sense to start a war over every injustice.

As Glossop explained:

An important part of the ‘just war’ theory is the notion that the means must be proportional to the ends which can be expected. If a little violence, not too destructive, can get rid of a great deal of injustice, then such violence may be justified. But if, like modern war, it is likely to create more evil than it will remove, then violence is not justified. In view of the destructiveness of modern war, “just war” theorists are tending towards the idea that the large-scale violence of war is virtually never justified.

5. Is Violence Inherent?

Is violence inherent in human beings? Is it part of our natural biology? Some people say yes, not so openly but by implication and discretely. There are always lingering doubts about peace. One objective of peace studies is to dispel them. This is the question that we are trying to investigate in this section. *Our answer is an emphatic no.* But we need to substantiate it scientifically.

In 1989, under the auspices of UNESCO, a group of well renowned scientists from different parts of the world met in Seville, a village in Spain. They thoroughly investigated the question and came up with a statement called *The Seville Statement on Violence*. The statement was subtitled by the phrase “Preparing the Ground for the Construction of Peace”. These scientists, in their Introduction to the statement, declared:

Some people say that violence and war cannot be ended because they are part of our natural biology. We say that is not true. People used to say that slavery and domination by race and sex were part of our biology. Some people even claimed they could prove these things scientifically. We now know they were wrong. Slavery has been ended and now the world is working to end domination by race and sex.

That was a powerful declaration for peace, against violence and war. The statement contained five propositions. These propositions are worth summarizing for careful study.

First Proposition. It is not scientific to say that war cannot be ended because animals make war and people are like animals. First, it is not true that animals make war. Although fighting occurs widely among some animal species, only a few cases of destructive fighting between organized

groups have ever been reported. The inter-colony conflicts of ants, wolves or monkeys do not involve the use of destructive tools and institutionalization of conflict, which are common to human warfare. Second, it is not true that people are just like animals. (It might be an insult to animals!) *Unlike animals, people have human culture.*

Second Proposition. It is not scientific to say that war cannot be ended because it is part of our nature and genetic formation. Arguments about human nature cannot prove anything definitive. Because our human culture gives us the ability to change and shape our nature from one generation to another. It is not only the nature which determines human personality but its interaction with nature. The conditions of nature involve both ecological and social environments. Darwin's theory is not about the survival of the strongest but the survival of the fittest. People that make war in certain circumstances may live in peace with neighbours under other circumstances. The Vikings (in Denmark) were warriors at one time. Their descendants are the most peaceful people at present.

Third Proposition. It is not scientific to say that aggression and violence are necessary for the humans to survive better. Violence is not in our evolutionary legacy. This view underestimates the importance of cooperation in human survival. Cooperation shown by human societies in food gathering, hunting and food production are most remarkable behavioral qualities of human beings. The traditional *aththam* (giving hand to others) system in Sri Lankan village life is one good example. Community practices in village life are almost universal in every society at the grass-roots level. Cooperation has been especially important to the survival of human species.

Fourth Proposition. It is not scientific to say that humans have a "violent brain." While we do have neural apparatus to act violently, it is not automatic. How we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialized. It has been proved by scientific investigation that human phenomena such as crime and war are not an inevitable result of any "neural cruelty." The scientists that gathered in Seville concluded that there is nothing in our neurophysiology that compels us to react violently.

Fifth Proposition. It is not scientific to say that war is caused by "instinct" or any single motivation. The behavior of soldiers in modern warfare has little to do with their perceived aggressiveness. Modern warfare uses a number of personal characteristics for training of soldiers. It exaggerates characteristics associated with violence, both in the training of soldiers and generating support for war among the general population. This is despicable. These systematically generated violent characteristics are not the causes but the consequences of war.

The statement also had a conclusion. It stated that biology does not condemn humanity to war. Just as "war begins in the minds of men," peace also begins in our minds. *The same species that invented war is capable of inventing peace.* The responsibility lies with each of us.

6. A Historical Outlook

A historical outlook might be necessary to understand how war and peace developed in human society. These developments are linked to the origins of the state and its evolution as a national state in modern times. It is also within the conflicts between national states and its international system that many of the devices and mechanisms for peace have been invented.

Origins of War and Peace. The origins of war and peace are related to the origins of the state. It is difficult to know with precision when the state originated. Nomadic groups of people must have had some informal structures to make decisions for their respective societies. But the state in the sense of a permanent structure to control large communities by a small group of rulers, probably arose with permanent settlements, agrarian and urban. This must have happened over six thousand years ago. The known states were in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley.

The original states made war against each other for wealth and power like in the present day warfare. They also made peace, although not permanent. The first known peace treaty was inscribed in clay around 300 B.C. War between small states became terminated when a powerful sovereign created an empire encompassing all small states. What they followed was, in a sense, the conservative approach for peace (See our discussion on different approaches). Peace was established under firm and ruthless authority. However, when the leader who created that empire died, a new cycle of warfare again erupted. Or there was warfare between empires.

Three of the powerful empires in the Middle East were Hittite, Egyptian and Assyrian. Around 1400 B.C., these three empires entered into a non-aggression pact. About a century later, the Hittites and Egyptians formed an alliance against the expanding Assyrian Empire. What is important in this ancient history is that it is very much similar to war and peace in the present day world.

A parallel violent development to war was class struggle. This was clearly visible during the Roman Empire. Since the third century B.C., the Roman Empire spread into vast areas, internally suppressing class struggle and externally conquering other countries. It was the period of *Pax Romana*. Slaves and slave trade were extensively used in building this empire.

Similar developments occurred in Asia. China and India were two major centres for state and empire building in Asia. Burma, Thailand and Cambodia were three other minor centres. The formation and development of Asian states and empires also involved war and internal violence, though with intermittent peace.

National State. The development of a national state system from the beginning of the modern era (16th century A.D.) is generally considered to be favorable to peace in the world. This consideration might not be completely correct. However, it is assumed that a national state system, compared to previous empires could contain internal violence and external aggression. It is true that after the Peace Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 this objective was fairly achieved in Western Europe. After that period, national boundaries were established for Spain, France, England, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Austria, Hungary and Russia. The areas presently make up Germany and Italy consisted of many smaller states.

Before that, extreme violence and war marked the period between 1350 and 1650. Peasants and townspeople fought feudal nobles, kings fought Emperor and the Pope, Protestants fought Catholics and one nationality fought another. The fighting came to a climax in the Thirty Years War (1618-48).

National state is a stable state with a defined territory, a stable population and a sovereign government. It is not like the unstable ancient state systems of empires and precarious kingdoms. This is why an international system with well-defined national states is considered to be more conducive to peace and stability.

Colonialism. But the above assumption was not completely correct. After the emergence of national states, war between Western countries became escalated in conquering and demarcating the territories of Americas, Asia and Africa. The main victims were the people of these colonized continents. Now the game was “war and peace.” After each war, there was a peace treaty. It was as if they were following the pragmatic approach to peace (See our previous discussion on different approaches). The purpose of these treaties was not to bring peace to the inhabitants, but to demarcate and redemarcate the colonial territories between them. For example, after the Seven Years War (1757-63) between France and Britain, the Treaty of Paris was signed. It gave British control over North America and the East Coast of India.

War in Europe also did not end just because of the Treaty of Westphalia. There was continuous war after the French Revolution. But the West invented another mechanism, “international conferencing,” to resolve conflict. In a limited sense, “international conferencing” can be

considered as a way to peace. The Congress of Vienna (1814-15) was such a conference. It redrew the map of Europe. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Western powers were competing for territory. Marxists analyzed war as a natural outcome of what they called imperialism. The big powers negotiated their conflicts with each other while using military force to subdue small powers and non-industrialized societies.

World War I. Power competition escalated in the early twentieth century as the race for colonies and military superiority became more intense. Italy and Germany were very aggressive as late comers to the competition. The competing European nations formed different alliances. Competition for influence was intense in the Balkan region (This is the area where ethnic conflicts and civil war are intense even today). The assassination of an Austrian prince by a Serbian insurgent sparked the world war. Even before the incident, the belligerent nations had their war plans already made. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) provided a settlement after the war. Germany was punished. It lost all overseas possessions and had to pay reparations to the victors. It has been argued whether the punitive settlement was conducive to peace in the long run. New states were created (Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia). Some nations became independent.

The League of Nations. The Treaty of Versailles also provided for the formation of the League of Nations. It was a new invention. An invention of a permanent international organization to promote and protect peace. The US President Woodrow Wilson was the main architect of the League. But he failed to persuade the US Senate to ratify the treaty. As a consequence, the US could not become a member of the League.

One argument of the world order approach (that we have outlined earlier) has been to emphasize the importance of a permanent international organization to preserve peace. The League achieved the said objective. But the international organization should be strong, and strong enough to prevent new military build up. But the League could not achieve the second objective. The League was weak. It was not effective in preventing military build up of many countries, particularly Germany, Japan and Italy. Therefore, it could not preserve peace in the long run. In 1931, Japan captured Manchuria from China. In 1935-36, Italy conquered Ethiopia. However, the League was helpless.

World War II. The German invasion of Poland in September 1939 was considered to be the beginning of World War II. However, Japan had invaded China in 1937. The rise of Fascism in Germany, Japan, Italy and Spain was the background to the war. Fascism was a particular authoritarian ideology based on the superiority of particular races. This kind of ideology was proved to be extremely inimical to peace everywhere. It created both internal and external aggression. In Germany, the minority community of Jews was almost exterminated. Germany took over Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands and France, and attacked Britain and Russia.

The rise of Fascism occurred within a background of world economic crisis and depression. The situation vindicated the argument (of the social justice approach) that war and peace are related to deep-rooted social, economic, political and ecological conditions. However, after the war had erupted into such worldwide proportions, only force could stop its further escalation. This is a tragedy in war and peace. After a strong assault by combined forces, Germany surrendered in May 1945. But Japan surrendered in August of the same year after the Americans had dropped newly developed atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is arguable whether the atomic bomb was necessary or not. The consequences of the bomb was devastating for the ordinary Japanese people for decades to come.

Cold War. The Allied nations formed the United Nations to preserve the peace achieved at the end of World War II. However, within three years after the end of the war, the Cold War broke out between the Soviet Union and the Western powers. Quarrels developed over the terms of peace. Berlin was a major flashpoint. The Western powers formed a new military alliance, the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Communist countries formed the Warsaw Pact in retaliation. There were revolutions, war and violence in China, Korea and Vietnam. Korea became divided. Eventually, Vietnam also became divided. The country could unite itself only after 1975.

Another feature of the post-war period was the gaining of independence by many former colonies. Most of them achieved independence only after military struggles. Algeria and Indonesia were two major examples. America gave independence to the Philippines in 1946 and Britain to India, Pakistan, Burma and Sri Lanka in 1947-48. There were widespread violence between Hindus and Muslims before and after independence of India and Pakistan.

The decolonization process was generally considered to be favorable to world peace. Otherwise, more struggles and war would have been the result. The decolonization of most of the African countries came late - in the 1960s. The process of decolonization strengthened the UN membership, allowing a more equitable world order. The newly-independent countries, forming themselves under the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), also played a balancing role in world affairs.

The Cold War was a discrete war. Most of the pawns were the former colonies. For the Arab-Israeli conflict, there were reasons (the Palestinian question) other than the super-power rivalries. But the super-power rivalries reinforced them. There were wars in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982. This situation also created continuous conflicts in Lebanon among various religious factions. There were internal conflicts in many African countries (Rwanda, Zaire, Zambia, Algeria, Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Chad, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Morocco), directly and indirectly fueled by external powers. Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) was another stage for the Cold War drama. Struggles were not restricted to the newly independent countries. Especially after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the super power rivalries became intensified through various factions and regimes in Latin America.

As we could see from our historical overview, war between city-states has evolved through national states to super power rivalries. Growing military power has been the key ingredient in this development. Although the Cold War is now over, the growing military power of different nations still constitutes the major element in peace problem.

7. Need for Disarmament

The need for disarmament is a need for peace. This has been proved through history. War is old as civilization. But wars fought today are completely different to wars fought four or five thousand years ago. The most obvious is the difference in the weapons used. Until the fourteenth century, there were only minor changes in the manner in which the wars were fought. The chief weapons were bows and arrows, swords, shields, catapults and spears. Major changes occurred when gunpowder was introduced. As a result, cannons replaced catapults, while guns and bullets replaced bows and arrows.

New Changes. After the Industrial Revolution, new and more destructive weapons became invented by new technology. The development of weaponry first included the invention of landmines, torpedoes, grenades, machine guns, and tanks, submarines and bombs that can be dropped from airplanes. Then came the mass destructive weaponry such as nuclear and thermonuclear (hydrogen) bombs. They were accompanied by the invention of chemical and biological weaponry. War and war preparations have come to involve more and more people in many ways.

War has become an industry. There was a distinction between military personnel and civilians earlier. But this distinction has increasingly disappeared. All are at stake and involved in a modern day war. During a war, the countries involved commit a great deal of human and financial

resources to the fight. Even during peacetime, the top priority of many nations is on national security.

Consequences of War. The consequences of war, as a result of advanced weaponry, are a major challenge to peace. Quincy Wright who studied data from 1480 to 1940 in his *A Study of War* says:

It is clear that during the modern period there has been a trend toward an increase in the absolute and relative size of armies whether one considers the peace time army, the number mobilized for war, the number of combatants engaged in battle, or the number of military and civil populations devoting themselves to war work.

The proportion of the population engaged in the armies has tended to become larger, and the number of the battles has tended increase. As a result, the proportion of the population dying as a direct consequence of battle has tended to increase.

It is estimated that the number of battle deaths of military personnel alone was 9,000,000 in World War I and 15,000,000 in World War II. Total deaths from warfare have been two to three times greater in the 20th century than during the 19th century. During the Six-Day War between Israel and Arab countries in 1967 there were about 19,600 battle-related deaths, which was about 3,266 per day.

Costs of War. The worldwide expenditure for military purposes is now about three billion a day. Although the Cold War is over, the arms race is still on. As one superpower is gone, the other tries to maintain a world hegemony; and new ones are emerging to replace the gone one. Nuclear race is extremely intense between the middle powers (e.g. India-Pakistan) than between the big ones. Arms expenditure is escalating in countries engulfed with civil wars. Guerrilla armies are amassing arms and war technology in so far unknown proportions.

The governments facing such threats are diverting money to the military from civilian purposes. The welfare and development of the people suffer. It is not correct to say that the danger of a Third World War is over. If something goes wrong, the human costs will be devastating. There are over 50,000 nuclear warheads in the world today. Each is bigger than the bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Not only the blast and heat of each bomb, but the radiation, which the bombs unleash, can be devastating to the whole of humanity. Not only the countries at war, but also the whole world will suffer.

The argument that the countries will not use nuclear weapons even if there is another world war is not correct. It is not consistent with the logic of war. The aim of war is to win. In a war, if either side is facing defeat, it will use nuclear weapons. If the winning side anticipates the losing side to use nuclear weapons, they would want to use them before. If the losing side anticipates that the winning side would feel it that way, then they would prefer to use them before the winning side. The end of the logic would be that both sides will be forced to use nuclear weapons as soon as the war begins.

If there was any rationality on the part of belligerents not to use nuclear weapons in a war, it would not allow a war to develop in the first place. The only way to prevent a nuclear holocaust is to prevent any war between any nuclear power, small or big. But we cannot ignore the possibility that a nuclear war might trigger by accident. Charles Osgood reported the incident in October 1960 that the US was about to attack the Soviet Union, mistaking early warning signals about a Soviet attack on the US!

The debacle was prevented because the officer in charge knew that the Soviet Prime Minister Khrushchev was in New York at that time and it was unlikely that the Soviets were to launch an attack at such a time. After the above incident, a (Teletype) hotline was established between Moscow and Washington to prevent that kind of an accident. However, now the Soviet Union is

dissolved into various republics, there are more nuclear powers in the region than before. There are also other nuclear powers, which have emerged during the last decade or so. The latest additions to this list are India and Pakistan.

Progress in Disarmament. The picture is not completely gloomy. There has been some progress in the world's disarmament efforts. However, the efforts started only after all major powers, the big five (US, Soviet Union, Britain, France and China), joined the nuclear club. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed in 1968 and came into operation in 1970. A major objective of this treaty was to prevent other countries becoming nuclear powers. This has not been to the satisfaction of emerging powers although a large majority of countries have signed this treaty now.

The treaty also did not do anything to prevent the stockpiling of strategic weapons, including nuclear arms by the big powers. It was to address this issue that Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) were initiated. After series of talks, the SALT I treaty was concluded between the two super powers in 1972. This was the first successful effort to constrain the nuclear arms race. However, this was an interim agreement for five years. After some dragging of feet, the SALT II was concluded in 1979. However, its implementation was impaired because of superpower controversy. Apart from the new right wing administration in the US under Ronald Reagan, the atmosphere for arms control was also spoiled by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The situation eased only after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985. There has been much progress in the area of strategic arms control since then. The two super powers signed an agreement on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) in 1987. It managed to remove about one-fifth of the existing nuclear weapons in the world and paved the way for more and more arms control and removal. The new way of looking at the problem was the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START). There have been several rounds of talk and the achievements are considerable. The latest addition to the disarmament effort is the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Although this has made some progress, some countries, including India and Pakistan, have refused to sign this treaty.

8. Role of the UN

The role of the UN in ensuring world peace is a decisive one. Peace was the main objective of forming the UN in 1945. However, the powers and mechanisms it has under its disposal to ensure world peace are limited. Compounding this limitation, the organization is also engulfed with serious power rivalries. During the Cold War (1948-90) these rivalries were paramount. Although the atmosphere has now changed due to the supposed end of the Cold War, power rivalries still continue and obstruct peace. It might be necessary to outline the basic structure and development of this organization before evaluating its role in ensuring world peace. This will be done, however, with a view on peace.

Membership. The UN started in 1945 with a membership of 48 countries. The limited membership was mainly a reflection of colonialism. Many countries of the world, especially in the continents of Africa and Asia, were under colonial masters. The United Nations rightly considered this situation to be a threat to world peace. Therefore, decolonisation was one of its principal policies to promote world peace. Gradually, over a hundred countries have become independent under the promotion of the UN. These countries eventually acquired membership of this august body. By 1990, there were 165 member countries in the UN.

Another threat for peace was considered to be the Russian (or communist) hegemony in Eastern Europe and Soviet Asia. This was a major reason for the Cold War. This situation became diffused after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. As a result, over 15 new nations have emerged. At present, the UN membership amounts to 190. It is believed that when the world community consists of its organic components (i.e. independent nations), there is a better balance in world

politics. This is one argument of the world order approach. However, the short-term result of these developments has been continuous unrest, violence and civil war in Eastern Europe.

Structure. The UN is not a world government. It is an international association of nation states for the protection and promotion of peace, among other things. It has six main bodies: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Secretariat. All these are not dealing with peace.

The main body of the UN is its General Assembly. All member countries sit in this assembly. One country has one vote. However, it is not the most powerful body in the organization. It has an important role to play in the promotion of peace in the long run. This role has so far been performed in developing policies and recommending guidelines for the member countries. It has also initiated many actions under the Secretariat towards the promotion of disarmament and arms control.

The use of child soldiers in armed conflict, the menace of landmines and the prevention of international terrorism are three major areas that the General Assembly has undertaken for its policy development in recent times. Various committees and commissions of the General Assembly also have played a major role in developing international treaties with a view to prevent war and to promote peace. One of its important functions is to approve the budget of the organization for various activities, including peace and disarmament.

A major weakness of the General Assembly is that its decisions have no binding power over the member countries. It conducts its affairs through statements and resolutions. The statements are largely rhetoric. The resolutions are only recommendations. It is also helpless in preventing war or aggression in the short run. The General Assembly meets only once a year. It has no executive arm of its own other than the Secretariat. The Security Council mainly controls the Secretariat. The member countries or the General Assembly has only an indirect influence.

Security Council. The Security Council consists of 15 member nations. Five major countries (Russia, UK, France, China and US) are Permanent Members. Ten other nations are elected every two years by the General Assembly. The Security Council is a permanent body ready to be convened at any hour of the day or night to handle threats to international peace and security. Its resolutions are binding on all member nations although there are instances that these decisions are not respected.

The Security Council is a controversial body. It is not a democratic body elected by the General Assembly. The permanent members have veto power quite contrary to accepted democratic principles. The Council is politically polarized. This polarization was a major reason for the Cold War before 1990. It is argued that because of political self-interests of major/super powers in the Security Council, the world peace is hampered than preserved by its decisions. Some members sometimes prevent the Security Council from taking important decisions on peace because of the use of veto power. Whatever the weaknesses, however, the Security Council has been the only effective mechanism in preventing a Third World War so far.

Dispute Settlement? The role of the Security Council so far has been not in line with the principles of dispute settlement or conflict resolution. There have been two major instances where the Security Council took firm action regarding war.

First was in 1950, during the Korean civil war. America took this initiative during a boycott of the Council by the Soviet Union. Therefore, the decision was not vetoed. However, the decision was partisan and led to the division of Korea into two, North and South. Without settling the dispute, the division of the country exacerbated the conflict with a massive human cost and security risks for the decades to come.

The second was in 1990, against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Thanks to the end of the Cold War, there was a general agreement between major powers on the issue. However, the decision was not only to impose sanctions against Iraq but also to force its withdrawal from Kuwait by military means. This was a decision initiated by the US with complete support of Britain. The decision was implemented even going well beyond the terms of the Security Council decisions.

There is no question that Iraq went against the accepted international norms of national sovereignty by invading Kuwait. By its military action, Iraq further threatened the regional peace in no uncertain terms. There was the possibility of war spreading into neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia. However, it is a controversial question whether the actions so far taken against Iraq by the Security Council were proportionate and in line with the norms of international peace. Sanctions have hit hard on the ordinary people of Iraq. The whole process of weapons inspection has been engulfed with dispute and controversy. The US has taken unilateral decisions to wage military action quite contrary to the expected results of peace.

The Iraqi issue has raised questions about the reliability of the Security Council mechanism to ensure peace and prevent war. During the period between 1950 and 1990, the Council has not been able to take any worthwhile decision on international disputes because of the Cold War controversies. Now the Cold War is over, it is not clear whether the Council is going in the right direction. It has been argued, therefore, that the UN and especially the Security Council has to be reformed if it is to meet the challenges of war and peace in the 21st century.

ICJ. The International Court of Justice is an important body constituted under the Charter of the UN. It is a specialized body of legal luminaries to decide upon international disputes. It has a major potential for preventing disputes escalating into conflicts and war if the services of this body are utilized and the decisions adhered to. However, very few nations take their international disputes before this court. Some others refuse to appear before it even if their cases are being referred to this court. Also, there is no "world police" to enforce the decisions of this court of justice.

Peace Keeping. This has been a very useful function of the UN. It is the deployment of a peacekeeping force (soldiers) with the assistance of police and civilian personnel in order to prevent conflicts or to bring them under a reasonable control. These peacekeeping soldiers are popularly called "Blue Helmets." Since 1945, the UN has been involved in over thirty-five peace keeping operations until now. A total of over 600,000 military, police and civilian personnel have been deployed in these operations. Nearly 1,000 of them, unfortunately, have died in the service of their cause. Peacekeeping forces are normally deployed with the consent of the respective governments.

The nature of peacekeeping operations has evolved considerably over years. For example, the mandate of the peacekeeping operation in Cambodia in early 1990s vastly differed from the mandate of the peacekeeping operation deployed when India and Pakistan fought over the issue of Kashmir in early 1950s. The recent peace keeping operations have been more forceful and forthright with a strong backing of the Security Council. Moreover, in the case of Cambodia, for example, the UN peacekeepers were deployed after a peace agreement between the respective parties. Therefore, the mandate was stronger and involved the decommissioning of the existing armies of various factions to the conflict as well. Cambodia was one of the most successful peace keeping operations of the UN.

A major weakness of UN peacekeeping operations is that the deployments completely depend on the soldiers supplied by various member governments of the UN. The UN has no standing army of its own. The units supplied by different countries differ largely in training, experience and cultural background. They do not have any training in peace keeping as such. Therefore, the behavior of these soldiers is very much similar to ordinary soldiers in a conflict situation. As a result, they invariably tend to fuel the conflicts than appeasing them. This has been a major criticism about the UN peacekeeping operations.

Although there are general commanders to various peacekeeping operations, the army units from different countries generally operate under their own commands. Therefore, most of the operations do not have proper coordination required for the respective tasks. This has been a major reason to propose that the UN should have its own peacekeeping army with proper training and coordination.

Another weakness has been financial. The costs of peacekeeping operations have tremendously increased with the expansion of deployments. One year's bill is something like \$ 1 billion. However, the contributions for these operations do not match the actual costs. There has always been a considerable debt owed by the UN to the troop-contributing countries. However, the UN's peacekeeping operations have been commendable. In 1988, the UN peacekeeping forces won the Nobel Peace Prize for "demanding and hazardous services in the cause of peace."

Other Activities. Another important area that the UN has been involved in is peace making. Peace making means initiatives to bring hostile or conflicting parties to agreement and peace settlements. This is also what we mean by conflict resolution. Since the Manila Declaration on Peaceful Settlement in 1982, the UN, and more particularly the Secretary General and his Office, have been involved in direct peace making activities. As a third party in conflict resolution, UN has demonstrated more credibility than any other source.

The UN in 1988/89 successfully negotiated the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan. It took a major role in the formulation and the execution of the Paris Agreements on Cambodia. The UN facilitated the independence in Namibia and the transfer of power in South Africa. The UN has been successful in negotiating settlements in Guatemala, El Salvador and several other conflict-torn Latin American countries.

The UN has been making arrangements to get involved in a big way in what it has called Preventive Diplomacy as well. It means the action to prevent disputes from arising between parties and to prevent existing disputes from escalating into major conflicts. The measures for fact finding have taken a major role in this endeavor since preventive steps must be based on timely and accurate facts. Recently, the UN also has been developing valuable networks of early warning systems concerning risks of nuclear accidents, natural disasters, environmental threats and mass movements of populations. These incidents without control can impinge on peace directly in many areas.

Another area that the UN has been assisting its member countries is peace building. Measures for peace building involves assistance to refugees, displaced persons, the construction and reconstruction of infrastructure facilities and peace education in conflict zones both before and after peace settlements. The idea of post-conflict peace building is to prevent conflicts recurring due to lack of confidence or for material difficulties.

Difficulties/Weaknesses. There are enormous difficulties in the path of peace by the UN. Some are financial. The entire UN system has an annual budget only of about \$ 7 billion. This is less than a week's expenditure worldwide on the arms race. It is also less than the budget of New York City Council. Yet it is only a small fraction of that total UN budget which is spent on disarmament and peace activities.

The UN system has a comparatively small staff. To address the issues of nearly 6 billion people in the world, the whole UN system with its specialized agencies has only about 50,000 staff members. This is not even one staff member for every 100,000 human beings. It is often said that the UN spends a lot of money on paper work. This is highly exaggerated. Its use of paper for one year is less than what is used for one Sunday edition of *The New York Times*.

A major weakness of the UN in terms of peace building seems to be its lack of mandate and incapacity to involve itself in peace settlements in internal conflicts. This incapacity emerges out of the Charter itself because it prohibits, in Article 2 (7), the UN to get involved in disputes without

agreement of the disputant governments or the parties to a conflict. Only exception is when the Security Council considers that such a conflict would pose a serious threat to world peace and security. This is entirely a political judgement and not a humanitarian one. What it means is that the UN can ignore some conflicts and intervene in some others.

Most of the political conflicts since World War II have been internal than international. These conflicts have been mostly due to ethnic, religious or similar social rivalries. Others are of rebellious or revolutionary nature based on ideology or political perspective. The Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University in Sweden annually reports on these conflicts. It has been continuously reported that internal armed conflicts are on the increase after the end of the Cold War and they are being dragged on with considerable human costs. There are about 150 conflicts of this nature in the world at present. These conflicts involve more than one third of the member countries of the UN, yet the organization has not been in a position to resolve or at least intervene in them due to internal weaknesses or restrictions.

In our discussions on peace studies in this chapter we have not touched upon internal conflicts and conflict resolution due to the fact that these themes are being discussed in other chapters. Students of peace studies, however, need to keep in mind that these subjects are closely interconnected and the chapters on peace studies and conflict resolution are complimentary to each other.

9. Conclusion

What is the best way to conclude our discussion on peace studies? Perhaps by invoking some new thinking on the subject as a summary. The best person to draw some inspiration from, perhaps, is Edward De Bono. He is the author of *Lateral Thinking* and *Conflicts: A Better Way to Resolve Them*. He invented the term 'lateral thinking' to explain a new type of creative thinking. Now he has applied this thinking to better understand and resolve conflicts. This is not to say that all what he says is valid and true. But there is a lot to learn from his thinking.

Traditionally, people consider the “absence of war” as their approach to peace. But according to De Bono, the “absence of peace” is our problem. We need to discuss the problem of peace from the point of view of peace and not from the point of view of war. There is something wrong in our traditional way of thinking! What is wrong is that we think in arguments. Peace is not an argument. Peace cannot be achieved through argument. Peace is a social design, a creative one at that.

Argument is the most venerated in the Western thinking tradition. We tend to approach peace and conflict resolution through this tradition. When we have disputes we either try to fight/litigate or negotiate/bargain. This has been the history of war and peace. This is what we have found through our historical exploration in this chapter as well as in our discussions on the UN activities. But disputes are due to different interests or opinions. We never try to harmonize these interests and opinions. We may succeed in avoiding conflict or war in the short run through “argument thinking” i.e. negotiation and bargain. But we never achieve peace in the long run.

De Bono tried to draw some clues from the Asian tradition. Referring to Japan he said: “It would be extremely bad manners to tell a person that he was wrong or his idea incorrect. It might even have been criminal to suggest that something ought to be changed. [Instead, they say] that is wonderful and perfect and cannot be improved, now let’s explore.” This is the secret to design a way out for peace. Peace is an exploration for social harmony. The approach of De Bono, while unique in its own way, strengthens the positive elements of social justice and ecological approaches that we have discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Summary

In this chapter, you have learned the following:

On Peace

- Peace is not just the absence of war. Peace also means the absence of causes and conditions for war and violence.
- If peace is absence of violence it should also mean the absence of hidden, structural violence.

On Approaches to Peace

- There are six approaches to peace and peace studies:
 1. **Conservative Approach:** An authoritarian approach, often advocated by the states and super powers.
 2. **Pragmatic Approach:** This looks at peace from a practical point of view, focusing more on negotiations, diplomacy and practical objectives than on ideals or philosophies.
 3. **Social Justice Approach:** The main focus is on structural violence and its elimination.
 4. **Personal Transformation Approach:** This approach believes in the ultimate goal of resolving contradictions within and between individuals.
 5. **World Order Approach:** This approach peace in relation to development, justice and human rights.
 - 6.. **Ecological Approach:** The focus is on building a sustainable future for peace also to be sustainable.

On War

- There are two types of war: internal or civil wars and international wars.
- War is a large-scale violent conflict.
- War is a problem for peace. A limited peace is better than war.

On Violence

- It is wrong to assume that violence is inherent in human beings.
- There is nothing natural in violence.

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**Understanding the Ethnic Conflict and Peace
Efforts in Sri Lanka:
A Conflict Resolution Perspective
S. I. Keethaponcalan**

Introduction

The conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka has not only caused immense destruction to the social, economic and political institutions, but it has also claimed approximately 60,000 lives. In that sense the conflict has become the major influencing factor of the modern history of the island nation. Although some analysts trace the historical origins of the conflict to the pre-colonial period, the mid-20th century witnessed the beginnings of a direct confrontation between these two communities. Then in the 1980s, the conflict that had remained a peaceful, political one, transformed itself into a violent conflict and war. As the destructive nature of the conflict gradually escalated, a number of efforts were made to resolve the conflict by peaceful means. However, the peace-making efforts failed to produce any fruitful and lasting outcomes. In this chapter, we will attempt to understand some dimensions of the conflict, the peace efforts and main reasons for the failure of those peace processes.

Nature of the Conflict

Sri Lanka's present conflict is generally described as an *ethnic conflict*. What it means is that (i) there are demands or political goals of ethnic communities at the core of the conflict, and (ii) ethnic communities are involved in the conflict. The word 'ethnic' is the most contemporary expression to refer to communities who have distinct cultural, linguistic or religious identities. Therefore, an ethnic conflict can also be described as an *identity conflict*, arising from group identity-based grievances, demands and aspirations.

Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict has entered the phase of an armed conflict between the state and militant political representatives of the Tamil community. In this sense, the conflict is also an *internal armed conflict*. This internal armed conflict has now reached its eighteenth year, a fairly long conflict in terms of its life span. In that sense, it can also be called a *protracted conflict*.

Parties to the Conflict

In understanding a conflict, it is important to identify the parties involved in the conflict. Identifying parties involved also helps us to get a better understanding of the nature of the conflict. In intra-state conflicts that involve ethnic identity groups, the state and political movements, identifying parties is not an easy task. The main reason is that although there are *direct and indirect parties*

to a conflict, sometimes this distinction gets blurred. This is particularly so in Sri Lanka's conflict. What we can do is to try to identify parties to the conflict at different levels.

If we define Sri Lanka's conflict as an ethnic conflict, then we can see the majority Sinhalese and minority Tamils as main ethnic communities in the conflict. According to the 1981 Census, the majority Sinhalese community in the country comprise 74% of the total population. The Sri Lankan Tamils, the largest minority community of Sri Lanka concentrate mostly in the Northern and Eastern provinces and comprise nearly 13% of the total population. In a simple sense, these two communities are the main parties to the conflict. However, a complication begins when we realize that all members of these ethnic communities are not probably parties to the conflict. Many of the Sinhalese and Tamil people may not have wanted the conflict at all. Therefore, when we say that Sinhalese and Tamil communities are parties to the present ethnic conflict, we do so in a general, descriptive sense.

Then there is another ethnic community in Sri Lanka that can also be considered a party to the present ethnic conflict. They are Sri Lankan Muslims who comprise about 7% of the country's population. They are a party to the conflict in a different sense. Muslim community, particularly those living in the Northern and Eastern provinces, have been severely affected by the armed conflict. Many Muslim families have been displaced from the conflict region. In working out a solution to Sri Lanka's ethnic problem, their interests and demands, particularly on the question of power-sharing in the Eastern province, cannot be ignored. Indeed, they will have to be a party to the solution.

In the on-going war, *there are two main parties directly involved*. The first is the Sri Lankan state and the other is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. They are the most direct parties in the conflict in the sense that they are the regular participants in the war. With regard to the role of the state, we can even say that the state has been a party to the conflict even before it took the character of an armed conflict. In the pre-war period of the conflict, the parties were the state and the political representatives of the Tamil community.

Difficulties in exactly identifying the parties to the conflict would not end there. Each ethnic community may have different political actors with different degrees of involvement with the conflict and with different perceptions and solutions. For example, in Sinhalese society, its two main political parties, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party - People's Alliance and the United National Party have, because of their being ruling parties, direct roles in the conflict. There are other political parties in Sinhalese society who have not held governmental power, but been indirect parties by their advocacy of specific positions about ethnic relations and the conflict itself. For example, a group that advocates the military option in resolving the conflict and is opposed to a negotiated settlement becomes a party to the conflict, although not in a direct sense.

In Tamil society too, a similar picture prevails. Presently, the LTTE is the most prominent and active Tamil party to the conflict and it wants to be the sole representative of the Tamil people. Although various Tamil political groups have disputed this claim, the movement is undoubtedly the strongest among all Tamil political actors. The LTTE is waging a war against the Sri Lankan military forces in the Northern and Eastern part of the island and has the capacity to determine the political trend of the country and disrupt any peace initiative. Therefore, it could be regarded as a major player of the conflict. Then there are other Tamil political parties who have been directly involved in the conflict in the past, but now play a role secondary to the LTTE. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), the traditional parliamentary party of the Tamil community, represents an approach quite different from the LTTE. While the LTTE implements a military strategy, the TULF prefers a negotiated political settlement. Then, there are former Tamil militant organizations like Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), and People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) that have been parties to the armed conflict in the past and have now adopted political strategies.

In sum, we can say that *there is a multiplicity of parties to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. Some are direct while some others are indirect.*

Goals

The modern conflict between the Sinhala and the Tamil communities began with the Tamils' demand for regional autonomy to the Northern and Eastern provinces. The Tamils, under the leadership of S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, transformed this vague idea of regional autonomy into a demand for a federal state, immediately after the independence in 1948. The early 1980s show the escalation of violence and the emergence of the Tamil militant movements including the LTTE, and the cry became separate state very soon. The LTTE is still fighting for the separate state of Tamil Eelam. Therefore, in a sense, the attainment of a separate state could be described as the major goal of the Tamils in this conflict. In reality, however, not all of the Tamil factions, especially those who joined the mainstream politics subscribe to the idea of separate state. They are prepared to settle for something less than a separate state; for example, a federal state or a separate regional council for the Tamils in the Northern and Eastern provinces. In other words, there are factions within the Tamil community that are willing to compromise for a constitutional arrangement that guarantees regional autonomy to the Tamils.

The Sinhalese nationalist forces perceive this Tamil goal, be it a separate state or regional autonomy, as a direct threat to their aspirations and goal, which is the territorial integrity of the country. With the exception of a small minority, the Sinhalese community sees the territorial integrity and the unitary status of the country as interdependent. The Sri Lankan military forces have been fighting a bitter war with the LTTE to preserve the territorial integrity and the unitary nature of the island nation.

Sources of Conflict

Any meaningful effort at resolution of protracted conflicts, like in Sri Lanka's present conflict, should aim at creating "sustainable peace" as its fundamental objective. Sometimes, people tend to think that "quick fixes" can bring conflicts to end, but rarely have they brought lasting peace. A sustainable peace endeavor must be able, among other things, to understand and address the causes of the conflict, which are usually deep rooted and may have remained ignored for quite a long time.

For the purpose of easy understanding, the causes of conflict between the Tamil and Sinhalese communities in Sri Lanka could be categorized under two headings: (i) root causes, and (ii) immediate causes.

Root Causes:

Three factors appear to be prominent in Sri Lanka's conflict. They are: (a) historical, (b) psychological, and (c) economic factors. The political and military conflict are manifestations of these root causes.

With regard to historical roots, there are contending claims made by the Sinhalese and Tamils on the question of the land and the territory. Both communities claim that their ancestors arrived in the Island first, from the Indian subcontinent some thousands of years ago and therefore they have exclusive right to the land. In this, Sinhalese and Tamil claims differ with regard to the area of territory for which their exclusive historical right of habitation is supposed to exist. While the Sinhalese subscribe to the notions of *Sinhaladeepa* ('Land of the Sinhalese') and *dammadeepa* ('Land of the Buddhist Doctrine'), the Tamils claim that the Northern and Eastern provinces of the island are their *thayagam* (traditional homeland). This competing claim for land is reinforced with some powerful historical memories, associated with the past of the two communities. The Sinhalese historical memories of military invasions by the Southern Indian kings, especially after the emergence of Tamil Kingdoms in India during 5th century A.D, have been quite powerful in

sustaining the perception that the Tamils have been a constant source of threat to the political independence of the Sinhalese nation and the existence of Buddhism in the island. It has created a sense of insecurity in the Sinhalese psyche which is sometimes described as minority complex of an ethnic majority. Although Sinhalese are the majority within Sri Lanka, regionally they are a minority compared with the Tamils, whose population is nearly 55 million in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Meanwhile, Sri Lankan Tamils make the claim that they were the first historical settlers in the island and they have had an independent state in northern Sri Lanka, throughout history. They also believe that Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern provinces are their 'traditional homeland' and on that belief they claim territorial autonomy within these two provinces.

In addition to these historical and psychological reasons, there were economic factors that intensified the confrontation and tension between the two communities. The Sinhalese perception that the Tamils have been a privileged minority, and even the Tamil perception of discrimination was largely due to economic factors. During the British colonial rule, due to American missionary activities in the heartland of Jaffna, English school education expanded. As a result, there emerged a new English-educated class among the Tamils of Jaffna particularly in clerical, legal, accounting, medical and technological professions. This group of professionals dominated the limited opportunities for public sector employment even in the south, to such an extent that the average Sinhalese educated felt left out in the competition for employment. The Sinhalese, indeed, felt that the colonial rule discriminated against them, while granting economic privileges to the Tamil minority. When the political power was transferred from the British Empire to the local political leaders in 1948, the Sinhalese political leaders were naturally in a position to compensate themselves for the past (perceived or real) grievances. Public policy in post-independence in Sri Lanka, under Sinhalese dominated governments, were fashioned to redress these grievances of economic victimization under colonialism. Paradoxically, this in turn led to new grievances of discrimination among the Tamils. They perceive the post-independence political order as one which not only imposed disabilities on their economic advancement – Official Language law is one such policy measure – but also neglected Northern and Eastern provinces from the mainstream of economic development.

Immediate Causes:

The immediate causes of Tamil ethnic resurgence are found in the politics of Sinhala-Tamil ethnic relations in the post-independence period. They have been progressively developing until a sentiment for a separate and independent Tamil state took roots in Tamil politics in the late seventies and early eighties. Many commentators on Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict have said that the ethnic violence of July-August 1983 was the most crucial turning point in turning Tamil nationalist politics into the irreversible path of separatism.

Political causes of Tamil separatism have a history of their own throughout Sri Lanka's post-independence years. The Tamils point out that the governmental policy and actions immediately after independence were aimed at reducing the Tamil community into a position of second class citizens. They became critical of such legislation as the Citizenship Act of 1948, the franchise law of 1949, the Sinhala Only Act of 1956 and the policy of standardization in higher education in the 1970s. Meanwhile, the Tamils became particularly suspicious of the state-sponsored peasant colonization programs in the Eastern province and alleged that the Sinhalese governments were attempting to extend Sinhala domination into Tamil-majority provinces by settling Sinhalese in those areas. Similarly, the Tamils resisted the policy of standardization of university entrance, introduced in the 1970s, claiming that this policy was designed to prevent large sections of the Tamil youth from receiving higher education and obtaining government employment. Although these claims have been disputed by some Sinhalese scholars, the net effect of the above-mentioned state policies was the development of a psychology of victimization among the Sri Lankan Tamils and their loss of faith in the Sinhalese-led governments.

Against this sense of victimization was the Tamil political sentiment that some measure of political self-rule would enable the Tamils to safeguard their rights and interests. From the early 1950s, the Tamil political leadership began to demand a federal system for Sri Lanka, on the argument that the Tamils constituted a distinct nation, similar to the Sinhalese. It is on the basis of this federalist demand that the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact of 1957 and Senanayake-Chelvanayakam

Agreement of 1965 were signed. Both agreements envisaged administrative autonomy to Tamil-majority provinces, but they were not implemented due to the opposition from Sinhalese political parties and the Buddhist leaders. Then, in 1972, when Sri Lanka was being made a Republic and a new constitution was drafted, the main Tamil political party, the Federal Party, proposed a federal constitution for Sri Lanka. But, the government totally rejected the Tamil proposal and enacted a unitary constitution with centralization of political and administrative structures. In the 1972 constitutional reforms, the Senate was abolished while the special constitutional safeguards for minority protection were removed. Thus the Tamil fear of their community being further reduced to a politically powerless minority in a majority dominated polity. It is in this context that the Tamil demand for self-determination and a separate state evolved.

The question of political insecurity in a majority-dominated unitary state is another immediate cause which Tamils point out as an immediate reason for the present conflict. The formation of this collective feeling of insecurity goes back to 1958 riots. These riots occurred against the backdrop of Sinhalese-Tamil tension following the official language legislation of 1956. Then, inter-communal tension developed again in 1977, 1978 and 1979, particularly in Sinhalese majority areas where Tamils also have been living. In these instances of tension, life and property of the Tamils were threatened, yet the state did not take actions to prevent the escalation of tension. The culmination of this process occurred in July 1983 when, following the killing of 13 soldiers by Tamil militants in Jaffna, large scale ethnic riots broke out. The 1983 riots proved to be a turning point in Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic problem. It gave legitimacy to the argument being made by small Tamil militant groups that a war of national liberation was the only option available for Sri Lankan Tamils to secure their national rights.

Strategies/Tactics

In understanding an ethnic conflict, it is useful to examine how strategies of the ethnic minority have evolved over the years of conflict formation. Politics of ethnic conflicts is usually formed over a comparatively long period of time. The evolution of minority strategies is also linked to the politics of ethnic relations. In the history of Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic conflict, strategies adopted by Tamil political leadership have gone through a number of stages. These stages, through which the minority political goals evolved, are briefly described below.

- i. **United Action for Sinhalese-Tamil Rights:** This was the strategy advocated by Tamil leaders in the early part of this century, when Sri Lanka's national movement under colonialism was beginning to take shape. When the Ceylon National Congress was formed in 1919, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam advocated that all communities should unite to struggle for the rights of all Sri Lankans. However, this idea did not survive long when the Congress split in 1921 along communal lines.
- ii. **Weighted and Balanced Representation for Minorities:** From the late 1920s onwards, Tamil political leaders agitated for balanced representation in the colonial legislature between the majority Sinhalese and all minority communities. The famous fifty-fifty demand of G. G. Ponnambalam was made in this context. The argument behind the idea of balanced representation was that the legislature would not be dominated by the majority community.

- iii. **Regional Autonomy within a Federalist Constitution:** The formulation of this strategic goal was made after independence, in early 1950s. The formation of the Federal Party in 1951 was meant to carry this demand in the political sphere.
- iv. **Cooperation with Sinhalese Majority Governments and Negotiations:** From independence to the 1970s, the main strategic course of action adopted by the Tamil political leadership was to work within the parliamentary system of government. Cooperation with governments was a result of this strategy. When the first independence government was formed in 1947, the Tamil Congress was a part of the ruling UNP coalition and in fact the cabinet of ministers had two Tamil representatives. But after the franchise legislation was passed in 1949 they left the Government. Then, when the 1956 *Mahajana Eksath Peramuna* (MEP) government under Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike came into power, the Federal Party negotiated with the Prime Minister to grant regional administrative autonomy to Northern and Eastern provinces. Known as Bandaranaike- Chelvanayakam Pact, this agreement was not however implemented due to Sinhalese nationalist opposition. Then, in 1965, the Federal Party joined the United National Party Government coalition, led by Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake. The Federal Party leadership once again succeeded in negotiating an agreement with the government to set up a system of Regional Councils in the Tamil-majority provinces. The Minister of local government in the 1945 coalition was in fact a Federal Party representative. But this time around too, the strategy of cooperation failed to achieve Tamil political demands and the Federal Party quite the government in 1969.
- v. **Mass Agitation:** Another strategy adopted by the Tamil political parties was mass agitation. The first time they launched a mass agitation was in 1957 and 1958, in the context of the implementation of the official language legislation. The Tamil leaders described their action as Gandhian *sathyagraha*. Again in 1960 they launched a series of *sathyagraha* protests in Colombo and Jaffna demanding language rights of the Tamils.

The mass action strategy came to a high point in the 1970s. When the United Front Government of 1970 refused to consider the federalist constitutional proposal, the Tamil political leadership organized a series of mass protests in the Northern and Eastern provinces. These protests began in July 1972 when the new constitution came into effect. When the government reacted angrily to these protests, Tamil nationalist sentiments also gathered greater momentum. It is in that context that a new united front for Tamil political independence, Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), was formed in 1976. The TULF shifted the strategy of Tamil political struggle from cooperation-negotiation to mass mobilization for national self-determination. They contested the 1977 parliamentary elections, seeking a mandate from the Tamil people in North-East provinces to form a separate and independent Tamil state. When the TULF won the majority of parliamentary seats in these two provinces, that election result was then interpreted as a mandate for working towards an Eelam, an independent Tamil state.

- vi. **Armed Struggle:** The Tamil nationalist strategy of armed struggle originated in the late seventies with the radicalization of youth politics in Jaffna. Radical youth politics assumed greater intensity when the TULF leaders, after the 1977 election, could not transform their concept of 'national self-determination' into a concrete political outcome. A number of small guerilla organizations emerged, with armed struggle as their strategic course of action. Then, after 1983 riots and with the expulsion of the TULF from parliament, for not taking the oath of allegiance to the unitary state, the militant groups took control of Tamil politics. Since 1983 onwards, the ethnic conflict has been characterized by the armed struggle which has now developed into a full scale internal war between the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE.

- vii. **Negotiations:** While the ethnic war has been going on, there have also been attempts to end the conflict through negotiations. Attempts at negotiations go as far back as 1984, but no successful results have yet been achieved. In the next section of this chapter, we will briefly discuss the history of negotiations.

Negotiations with the Help of Third Party

Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict provides an extremely useful case study in conflict negotiations. The fact that negotiations have not resulted in the termination of the conflict does not mean at all that the student of conflict resolution should disregard Sri Lanka's experience in negotiations.

The initial impulses for a negotiated settlement in Sri Lanka's conflict came from India. India, Sri Lanka's immediate neighbor, became extremely interested in the conflict in Sri Lanka for its own reasons. After several rounds of negotiations between the Sri Lankan government representatives and the Tamil political parties and militant movements under the auspices of the Indian government, an agreement called the Indo-Lanka Accord was signed in 1987. India had to employ her military forces in the island in order to guarantee the implementation of the agreement. However with the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF), the agreement became a "dead letter" and the provincial councils, created by the Indo-Lanka Accord, were disfunctional.

The Indian role in Sri Lanka as a third party failed to produce a resolution owing to several factors. First of all, according to experts in the regional politics, India's decision to intervene was influenced by its need for (1) regional dominance, (2) national security, and (3) the Indian central government's dependency on the government of Tamil Nadu for political support. Therefore, it was evident that the decision for intervention did not arise from the needs of the parties, as it should be in the case of an ideal and successful intervention. Meanwhile, India was known for its support of the Tamil militancy called the "Tamil Terrorism" by the Sri Lankan government. Therefore, India was seen essentially as a Tamil ally by the Sinhalese and not as a neutral third party. Many conflict resolution scholars do not agree that the third-party neutrality is a crucial factor in intervention. In fact, scholars like John Paul Lederach advocate an "inside partial" model of intervention in the conflicts in traditional societies. Whatever the debate, in order to be successful, especially when the third party is from outside, the particular intervenor should possess some elements of neutrality. India totally lacked this aspect as it took different sides during the course of its activities in Sri Lanka.

When the Sri Lankan government was forced to negotiate, it did not have a choice but to go ahead with the Indian plans, because of fear of punishment by the big neighbor. In other words, in order to be effective the potential third party must have the consensus and invitation if not from all, at least from the major parties to the conflict. In that sense the Indian intervention had seeds of failure from its inception.

Negotiations without Third Party

First, in 1990 the so-called "Hilton Talks" were held in Colombo between President Premadasa's government and the LTTE. Then in 1994, immediately after the electoral victory of the newly formed People's Alliance coalition, headed by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the government engaged in rounds of negotiations with the LTTE in Jaffna. One notable aspect of both these processes was the absence of a third-party involvement. It could be argued that the parties involved in a highly violent conflict, unless the condition is a "hurting stalemate," could not easily get to the negotiation table without the help of a third-party. However, both in 1990 and 1994 the parties agreed to negotiate for various other reasons. This strategy of negotiating for "side effect" was one fundamental reason for the failure of those peace processes. Once the purpose was achieved the parties duly withdrew from the peace proceedings. For example, in 1990 the primary

objective of the consensus between the parties was to get the Indian Army out of the island. Achieving peace through negotiation was not the driving force behind the process. The negotiations broke down immediately after the withdrawal of the IPKF.

In early 2000, there were initiatives to involve the Norwegian government as a mediator in Sri Lanka's conflict. The government of Sri Lanka, however, did not like the term 'mediation' to describe the Norway involvement. The government preferred the role of a facilitator. While the government was careful about the role of Norway, the LTTE wanted third-party mediation. This debate in a way indicated two different approaches to the role of a third party.

Present Trend

Since the unilateral withdrawal of the LTTE from the negotiations in 1994, the war continues on a high pace, claiming hundreds of lives from both sides, combatants as well as civilians. Disappointed by the attitude of the LTTE, the Sri Lankan government has been waging a "war for peace." We may note here that the notion of war for peace is only a myth, as war can hardly bring sustainable peace anywhere in the world. Sri Lanka is no exception. When a conflict is terminated by military means, one party loses and the other wins. We can call this outcome as a zero-sum situation. However, conflict resolution scholars agree that *real peace could be achieved only through a win-win agreement between the parties*. And it should also be noted that the experience of the long war in Sri Lanka suggests that both major actors lack the power to impose a total defeat on the other. In other words, a military stalemate can continue for quite some time. At the same time it also looks like both parties are "entrapped" in their war cries. Therefore, they are unable to initiate any peace endeavors or at least to send signals in that direction.

Alternatives

The political history of Sri Lanka proves that the leadership in both sides of the ethnic spectrum has failed to handle the issue with a vision and proper understanding of the long-term consequences of the conflict. One particular reason for this state of affairs is the tolerance shown by the general public of this country towards the war and its outcomes. Research that was carried out in Sri Lanka to determine the perceptions of the Sri Lankan people pertaining to the war and peace, proves that the majority of them want peace. It is also worth mentioning here that in 1994, the People's Alliance Coalition won a landslide electoral victory on the peace platform. However, when the parties returned to warpath for one reason or the other, the people have remained silent and passive. One of the striking features of the conflict in Sri Lanka is the absence of pressure on the leadership to take action to negotiate and seek peaceful solution through compromise, although the people themselves hope for peace. Some of us may argue that this behavior of "silent majority" has been determined by their nationalistic mentality or the unwillingness to compromise their fundamental positions.

However, if the people believe in peace and are ready to compromise their positions, this is the time to *think about alternatives*. *After all, peace can only be achieved by a win-win solution and a win-win solution is possible only when the parties compromise their positions*. It is possible for the conflicting parties to attain their interests even after compromising their positions. It is, for example, possible for the Tamils to safeguard and protect their long-term survival, culture and territorial needs and for the Sinhalese to preserve the territorial integrity of the land and protection of Sinhala-Buddhist race even after they agree, say, to a federal form of government. The fundamental obstacle to finding a compromised solution is mutual mistrust and fear. In eliminating mistrust and fear a civil society can do much more than the state which, more often than not, fails to take into consideration the human relationship aspect of the conflict.

In building peace or taking other necessary steps towards peace, leadership does not necessarily have to emerge from political institutions of the country. Civil society can also provide a

formidable contribution to peace initiatives. John Paul Lederach (1997) identifies three major categories of leadership base in a conflict setting. They are: top level, middle range and the grass roots. Top level refers to the political leadership, which includes key political and military leaders. The middle-range leadership involves people like ethnic and religious leaders, academics, intellectuals and humanitarian leaders like NGO figures. Grass roots represent the masses and grassroots leadership including local leaders, leaders of indigenous NGOs, community developers, local health officials and refugee camp leaders. Louise Diamond and John McDonald (1996) identify nine peace tracks. They are; (1) Government (peace making through diplomacy), (2) Non-governmental and professional (peace making through professional conflict resolution), (3) Business (peace making through commerce) (4) Private citizen (peace making through personal involvement), (5) Research, training and education (peace making through learning), (6) Activism (peace making through advocacy), (7) Religion (peace making through faith and action), (8) Funding (peace making through providing resources), and (9) Communication and media (peace making through information). The point here is that *there are several tracks and levels in a civil society that can be made use of in order to encourage peace*. In Sri Lanka, although there are peace activities undertaken by different sectors of society, they are not forceful enough to pressure the parties to try and achieve a negotiated settlement. Therefore, in an effort to make peace in Sri Lanka *it is essential to strengthen the civil society and exploit the resources available in different levels and tracks in the society*.

Summary

In this chapter, you have learned the following lessons;

- There are many ways to describe Sri Lanka's present conflict. Some useful concepts are: ethnic conflict, identity conflict, internal armed conflict and protracted conflict.
- Parties to a conflict can be both direct and indirect.
- Parties to Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict are many, and multiple.
- Any meaningful attempt at resolving conflicts should create 'sustainable peace.' "Quick Fixes" cannot bring about lasting peace.
- In conflicts, there are "root causes" and "immediate causes."
- "Root causes" have historical, psychological and economic dimensions.
- "Immediate causes" are found in the politics of ethnic relations.
- Peace can only be achieved through a win-win solution.
- A win-win solution is possible only when parties compromise and seek joint solutions.
- Conflict resolution involves many tracks.
- Marshalling of civil society resources is crucial for conflict resolution and peace building.

**Negotiations for Conflict Resolution:
Lessons from Sri Lanka's Past Experiences**
Jayadeva Uyangoda

Introduction

From the early days of Sri Lanka's ethnic armed conflict, there have been attempts at ending the conflict through negotiations. But, all these negotiation efforts have failed to terminate the conflict, or at least deescalate the war. Nonetheless, they provide a wealth of insights on which a future process of successful negotiations could be built. It is wrong to assume that an internal armed conflict can be brought to an end through one or few negotiation attempts. Once a conflict has started, its termination may become exceedingly difficult due to a variety of factors. Conflict resolution can be as complex a phenomenon as the conflict itself. Similarly, when negotiations fail once, twice or perhaps many times, it does not mean that the negotiation option is totally invalidated, although some may argue to that effect. From a common sense perspective, it is through failures that success ultimately materializes itself. What is important in this regard is to examine failures as objectively as possible and draw necessary lessons.

In this chapter, we will make an attempt to look back at Sri Lanka's past experiences of negotiations in order to draw some useful lessons. Our discussion will examine four negotiation attempts (i) the Thimpu Talks of 1985, (ii) Indo-Lanka Agreement of 1986, (iii) Government of Sri Lanka and LTTE talks of 1989/1990, and (iv) Government-LTTE talks of 1994/1995.

Thimpu Talks

The first attempt at bringing together representatives of the Sri Lankan government and Tamil militant groups was mediated by the Indian government in July 1985. By this time, the ethnic war was two years old. Tamil militant groups were relatively small guerilla organizations operating mainly in the Northern province. The talks were held in Thimpu, the capital of Bhutan. Thimpu was selected because of the perception that the two sides should meet at a neutral venue. Indian government acted as the broker of the Thimpu meeting. The Indian government also facilitated a cease-fire agreement between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil militant groups as a prelude to negotiations. In order to present a common Tamil voice at negotiations, the Tamil militant groups formed a common front called Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF). Although the TULF, the main Tamil parliamentary party, also represented the Tamil side, the militant groups had an upper hand in the talks. Dr. H. W. Jayewardene, President J. R. Jayewardene's brother, led the Sri Lankan delegation.

During the talks that went on through two rounds, the Tamil side had insisted that the Sri Lankan government should put forward its own proposals for a settlement so that they could consider whether these proposals were acceptable. The government delegation presented a set of political proposals and draft legislation for their implementation. These were basically the proposals that the government had already presented before the All-Party Conference (APC) held in Colombo the previous year. Incidentally, they were the same proposals which the Tamil parties had rejected at the APC. The essence of these proposals was to set up a system of District Development Councils (DDCs) in each district of Sri Lanka, with the provision of two or more DDCs to amalgamate. The Tamil delegation at Thimpu talks rejected these proposals as inadequate and presented their own framework for a settlement of the ethnic problem.

Now known as 'Thimpu principles' these counter-proposals of Tamil parties contained the following four elements:

- (i) Recognition of Tamils in Sri Lanka as a distinct nationality
- (ii) Recognition of a Tamil homeland and its territorial sovereignty
- (iii) Right of self-determination of Tamil people
- (iv) Right of citizenship and other democratic rights of Tamil people

The government delegation rejected the first three demands of the Tamil side as totally unacceptable. Their position was that the government could consider only the citizenship demand. The government side also reiterated that any agreement reached at Thimpu talks could be implemented only if the militant groups surrendered all their arms and dismantled their training camps located in Sri Lanka and abroad. When the round two of Thimpu talks began a few days later, the negotiations had reached a point of collapse. Both sides accused each other of intentional violation of the cease-fire agreement and the Tamil delegation walked out from the negotiation table.

However, the failed Thimpu talks provide some important lessons concerning ethnic conflict resolution and negotiations. The first lesson, which we may draw from retrospective insights, is that the situation prevailing at that time was too early for a negotiated settlement. In other words, *there were no favorable prerequisites for a negotiated settlement of the conflict*. It is true that both sides publicly claimed that they were for a negotiated settlement. But, that was only a rhetorical commitment. Behind the rhetoric of negotiations and the reality of failure was indeed one

important dynamic in conflict formation and conflict resolution: *the Sri Lankan armed conflict had not reached a stage of settlement that can be worked out through negotiations at all.* In other words, both sides had maintained their faith in the efficacy of the military strategy. It was too early for the Sri Lankan government to come to a compromise with Tamil militants, because the government still believed that the guerilla war could be defeated by military means. It was too early for the Tamil militant groups, too, to abandon the armed struggle in favor of a negotiated settlement, because they had just begun what they perceived as a 'liberation war.' Indeed, the Thimpu talks began within just two years of a 'liberation struggle' for a separate ethnic state and the romanticism of a long-drawn, heroic war was still afresh in the thinking of Tamil militants. In the initial phase of a 'war of liberation,' militant guerilla groups usually have little or no inclination to make a compromise with the 'enemy.' Their idealism was such that any settlement with the state had to be on their own victorious terms. *The point then is that the conflict had not reached a stage where the parties would pursue negotiations with seriousness of intent of its outcome.*

The second important lesson emanates from the fact that the negotiation positions adopted by the two sides were far too apart from one another. *A negotiated settlement means, in simple terms, the emergence of a compromise of contending positions, jointly pursued by the parties to the conflict. It is a middle ground.* But for a middle ground to emerge, the competing positions of negotiating parties should be such that the meeting point should not be one that demands the parties to make fundamental revisions of their original positions. But, *at Thimpu talks, there was no such possibility of flexibility of negotiation positions. On the contrary, they were hard and rigid bargaining positions, in the sense that they represented a spirit of 'take it or leave it.'* Conflict resolution is hardly materialized when competing negotiation positions are designed to be rigid and inflexible.

The third lesson is linked to the second. That concerns the intent of parties to come to the negotiation table. In conflict negotiation, it is not always the case that parties agree to negotiations to seek a settlement. They may have other intentions or agendas. Indeed, the government of Sri Lanka and the Tamil militant groups came to Thimpu, largely because of the pressure brought upon them by the Indian government. It is clear that neither party had any appreciable measure of faith in a positive outcome of the negotiation exercise. Evidence points to an observation which is important for students of conflict resolution. *The overriding objective of the two sides at Thimpu talks was not conflict settlement, but canvassing for their respective positions that left little or no room for a compromise.*

There is a fourth lesson to be drawn from Thimpu talks. It centers on the question of terms of a settlement. The experience of Thimpu tells us that the two sides attempted to impose a settlement on one another on terms preferred and defined by either side. What it meant in practical terms is that, while the Sri Lankan government delegation presented its settlement formula in terms of district-based decentralization of power, the Tamil side argued for the right of self-determination of the 'nationality' of Sri Lankan Tamils in a territorial homeland. *These were not negotiable terms, but mutually exclusive positions which each side attempted to impose on the other.*

Indo-Lanka Accord

On 27 July, 1987, Sri Lanka's President J. R. Jayewardene and India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed an inter-state agreement to end Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict and bring about a political settlement. The agreement envisaged all parties to the conflict, Sinhalese and Tamil, to accept the framework of settlement as proposed in the Accord. The main points of the Accord were for the Sri Lankan government to create a system of devolution of power through a constitutional amendment. Once the provincial councils were created, elections were to be held to elect representatives for these new bodies of devolution. Devolution was meant to grant a measure of political and administrative autonomy to the periphery with the province as the unit of devolution. This was a significant improvement from the position earlier held by the Sri Lankan

government in its proposal for a district-based system of administrative decentralization. There was also a provision for an eventual merger of Northern and Eastern provinces through a referendum. The Accord also expected all Tamil parties to the conflict to accept the settlement, since the new system of province-based devolution was viewed as a suitable mechanism to meet the Tamil demand for autonomy. The Accord particularly envisaged that the militant Tamil groups, who were waging a guerilla war for an independent state, would accept the settlement, surrender their arms and join the mainstream of politics. On India's part, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi committed the Indian state to be the guarantor of the implementation of the Accord.

However, the events that followed the signing of the Indo-Lanka Accord belied the optimistic expectations of the Sri Lankan and Indian leaders and the well-wishers of the Accord. When the Accord was being signed in Colombo, there was violent resistance mounted by Sinhalese nationalist forces against what was termed as "Indian intervention in Sri Lanka." The resistance, led by the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP) subsequently developed itself into an armed rebellion against the state, which went on for almost three years, bringing the government under a serious political crisis. The constitutional amendment to create provincial councils was passed in October 1987. Yet, when the elections for new councils were held, there was unprecedented violence against holding elections.

More importantly, in the immediate aftermath of the Indo-Lanka joint initiative, the conflict in the North-East entered a new phase of complexity, which went totally against the expectations of the Accord. The new complexity centered on the non-cooperation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the main Tamil guerilla organization, to accept and join in the process of implementing the Accord. While the other guerilla organizations directly or tacitly accepted the accord and decided to join the mainstream of politics, the LTTE did not. Except a symbolic surrender of few weapons, it did not disarm itself. When the LTTE refused to cooperate with the implementation of the Accord, President Jayewardene, in accordance with the provisions of the Accord, asked the Indian government to take steps to disarm the LTTE. Then, in October 1987, the Indian government began to send its army to Sri Lanka with the intention of disarming the LTTE. The LTTE began to resist the Indian Army, or the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF), and soon the confrontation between the two sides developed into a major war. After two years of fighting the LTTE, with about 85,000 of its troops, the Indian army withdrew its forces from Sri Lanka in 1990 with mission unaccomplished.

The experience of the Indo-Lanka Accord and its aftermath provides some important lessons for conflict resolution. Let us identify and briefly discuss the main lessons.

The Role of the Third Party

In the literature of conflict resolution and peacemaking, there is an extensive body of ideas about the role of the third party. In this literature, the neutrality of the third party is often emphasized. The notion of neutrality means that the mediator should not be seen as favoring one party over the other, because the mediator's role should be acceptable to both parties. In Sri Lanka's experience of India's role in the proposed settlement of July 1987, it was not clear whether India mediated or intervened in bringing about a settlement framework. In a pure case of mediation, the third party may bring the conflicting parties together, facilitate negotiations between them, help them to work out a settlement on mutual acceptance and ultimately assist the parties to implement the settlement. In this process, the mediator may use political, diplomatic and perhaps military coercion, but in a manner that will not jeopardize the avowed principle of neutrality.

It is on the question of neutrality that India's role in 1987 can be first examined. The Sinhalese people did not believe that India was a neutral outsider in Sri Lanka's conflict. They believed that the Indian government and its state government in Tamil Nadu had supported and directly assisted the Tamil militant movement. As a result, there was overwhelming Sinhalese suspicion about India's intentions in Sri Lanka's problem. Then in July 1987, when the Indian government tried to broker a peace settlement, the Sinhalese nationalist forces thought that India had a

hidden political agenda. The issue became more complicated when the Indian government sent the IPKF to disarm the LTTE. This military intervention meant that India used its direct military power to implement the settlement. Then, a full-scale war broke out between the IPKF and the LTTE, running into about two years. In this process, India became a direct party to the conflict. This process indicates how India's role in Sri Lanka's conflict gradually *changed from mediation to military intervention and then to be a party to the conflict.*

Role of Multiple Parties in the Conflict

A conflict is usually resolved by the active engagement of the direct parties to the conflict. By agreeing to resolve the armed conflict, the parties are supposed to seek non-military options and work out political measures to address the causes of the conflict. But, the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 and its implementation process raises many questions about the role of various indirect parties to the conflict in the exercise of settlement. These questions can be clustered around two issues: (I) What was the role of direct parties in working out the settlement agreement? (II) What was the role of indirect parties in making the settlement agreement unworkable?

On the question of the role of direct parties in formulating the framework of settlement, the Indian and Sri Lankan governments did the negotiations between them while keeping Tamil militant groups away from the negotiation process. It appears that the Tamil groups were 'consulted' by the Indian officials, yet there was no direct communication between them and the Sri Lankan government. In fact, the representatives and leaders of the two governments decided the entire framework of settlement. In this sense, *only one direct party to the conflict*, the Sri Lankan government, *played a direct role in the proposed settlement.* Even that role was limited to negotiations with the Indian government, an interested third party. This, from a conflict resolution perspective, was a major weakness in the 1987 effort at conflict settlement in Sri Lanka. When one side of the conflict is excluded from the negotiations, that side has no political responsibility to abide by the settlement. As the position taken by the LTTE clearly demonstrated, such a peace effort can be interpreted as an attempt to impose a solution by force. It is obvious that the Indian government overestimated its own possible role in bringing a settlement in Sri Lanka.

A settlement effort can also be undermined by the actions of indirect parties to the conflict, as it was the case in Sri Lanka in 1987 and after. The Sinhalese nationalist opposition led by the radical *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP), opposed the Indo-Lanka Accord so violently that the implementation of the agreement itself became a major political challenge for the government. Indeed, the JVP derived much public support for its anti-state rebellion primarily by appealing to anti-Indian nationalist sentiments of the Sinhalese community. The JVP described India's military intervention in the North-East as a prelude to a larger project of colonizing Sri Lanka. The JVP-led resistance also became the rallying point for a variety of Sinhalese nationalist forces including the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the nationalist Buddhist Sangha and the Sinhala nationalist intelligentsia. Utilizing the new nationalist/patriotic political space opened up by the Indo-Lanka Accord, these forces seized control of the political debate thereby de-legitimizing to a considerable extent the very concept of a political solution to the ethnic question. The lesson to be learned from that experience is that there are *both direct and indirect parties* to the Sri Lankan conflict *and their actions can shape the entire fate of the settlement.*

This leads us to identify a much more fundamental lesson to be drawn in conflict resolution. In an ethnic conflict, which has deeply divided ethnic communities, a settlement can regenerate deeply held fears of the majority ethnic group when that settlement intends to recognize the legitimacy of minority ethnic demands. In other words, a settlement in the nature of compromise with a minority ethnic group, is likely to regenerate fears and anxieties among sections of the majority community whose majoritarian world view is shaped by a deep-seated feeling of political insecurity. Indeed, this is not unique to Sri Lanka. In plural societies where there is competition and tension between the ethnic majority and minorities, the fear of the minorities gaining supremacy is a deeply felt anxiety among nationalists of the majority community. In such a context, there is the ever-present

possibility of extremist groups within the majority community mobilizing those fears in a campaign of militant resistance to compromise. They see compromise with the ethnic 'enemy' as a betrayal, an act of treachery that has to be resisted violently and as a matter of patriotic duty. For a negotiated settlement to succeed, it is important to recognize the crucial need to politically manage the post-agreement process in such a way that extremist political groups, which are intrinsically opposed to peacemaking through compromise, are not allowed to occupy the political centre stage.

Political Consensus

The point we just made above warrants some reflection, so that we can learn another lesson from the 1987 experience. In a society where an internal ethnic conflict has taken a violent and military form, the polity can become an intensely fragmented entity. Various political groups can have different and competing understandings of the conflict and conflicting approaches as to what the solution should be. When one party works out a solution, say by the government, there is always the possibility of other forces in society radically opposing the government's decision. Such a development can have unforeseen and complex consequences, as evidenced in Sri Lanka in 1987-89. It can politically isolate the government, thereby making the government incapable of properly implementing the settlement. It can also deny legitimacy to the settlement itself. Without public support, no ethnic conflict settlement can be realistically implemented. And finally, there can be fears among sections of society about the settlement itself. Public fear of the consequences of conflict settlement is a major barrier to any conflict resolution process. The lesson to be learned then is that *in a deeply divided society, ethnic conflict resolution requires consensus among political actors as well as between the government and the people*. Bringing about such a broad consensus requires political education of the masses of the people, redefining the terms of the political debate and providing intellectual and political leadership to society in a direction of ethnic reconciliation.

UNP-LTTE Talks in 1989/1990

Two years after the failure of Indo-Lanka Accord to bring Sri Lanka's conflict to an end, another round of talks was held in 1989-90 between the UNP government, headed by President Premadasa, and the LTTE leadership. The initiative for this round of talks was taken by Mr. Premadasa, within a few months of his being elected to the office of the President. In April 1989, he made an open call on the JVP and the LTTE to come to talks with the government. While the JVP, which was engaged in a rebellion to capture state power, rejected Mr. Premadasa's offer, the LTTE, while fighting the IPKF, responded positively. The talks were held in Colombo. From the government's side the President himself, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and senior government officials took part in the talks. The LTTE side was represented by its political representatives and headed by Anton Balasingham. During the talks, which went on for about a year, there was an understanding between the two sides to refrain from hostilities, although they did not sign a formal cease-fire agreement.

The talks suddenly broke down in June 1990. The LTTE appeared to have unilaterally walked off negotiations with no public explanation. The breakdown of talks and the resumption of hostilities were a violent event. It was reported that the LTTE suddenly surrounded a police station in Amparai, took nearly 200 policemen prisoners and some of them were executed. Although the government made an attempt to resume talks by sending the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Jaffna to meet the LTTE leadership, the latter refused to engage in any further talks on the argument that the government had not been sincere in its approach to negotiations.

On government-LTTE talks of 1989/1990, there is very little information available. There are no records available to find out what the two parties discussed in these talks. The content of discussions was not reported in the press either.

The main lessons to be drawn from 1989/1990 talks concern the objectives of participants. The available information suggests that the two parties did not have a commitment to resolution of the ethnic conflict as such. Instead, *the two sides appeared to have had their own and distinct strategic objectives to be achieved in an exercise of talks*. For the Colombo government under President Premadasa, forcing India to withdraw the IPKF from Sri Lanka was an immediate issue in its political agenda. During this time, the government was also fighting the JVP insurgency in the south, with all its armed forces and the police and the state machinery involved in a massive counter-insurgency operation. Neutralizing one military front was obviously an objective in real politics. In achieving that objective, the government perhaps sought a strategic political alliance with the LTTE. From the LTTE's own perspective, the removal of Indian military forces from the Northern and Eastern provinces was an immediate politico-military objective. They then found an ally in President Premadasa in whose agenda too the Indian military presence in Sri Lanka was a factor of priority. When their respective strategic objectives coincided, they began to talk and refrained from hostility. But when the Indian government withdrew the IPKF from Sri Lanka by March 1990, the need for further continuation of that strategic alliance was perhaps not there. In this sense, it is difficult to characterize the 1989/1990 talks as negotiation for conflict resolution as such.

Then, the overall lesson to be learned from UNP-LTTE talks in 1989/1990 is that *negotiation for conflict resolution requires a vision and commitment to resolving the conflict. When short-term strategic or tactical objectives are allowed to take precedence, no tangible outcome can emerge through talks*. Yet, it is also important to recognize that in protracted conflicts, the occurrence of such 'negotiations' for short-term gains cannot be totally ruled out. Indeed, parties might meet at the negotiation table in order to secure specific objectives that can be military or political. In such situations, when one party realizes that talks have served its objectives, or even talks cannot serve its goals, that party will have no moral or political barriers to withdraw from talks unilaterally and even giving no reasons for its action. Subjection of negotiations to tactical objectives of parties does not serve the objectives of conflict resolution. Such action can result in delegitimizing the very concept of a negotiated settlement. Similarly, the party that suffered from the other's unilateral termination of talks is most likely to develop a deep mistrust of the outcome of future talks. It can also strengthen the arguments against a negotiated settlement. And its most pernicious effect would be the possibility of public cynicism concerning negotiations as well as a non-military settlement.

The 1989/1990 talks also provide a lesson concerning the absence of a facilitator or mediator in the negotiation process. The context in which President Premadasa made the offer for talks in 1989 was characterized by a deep crisis suddenly developed in the aftermath of India's mediation and involvement in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. India's third-party role had not only failed, but also had brought the conflict to a new stage of intensity. In that context, the suspicion of the role of a third party in conflict negotiation had gained ground in Sri Lanka. The assumption developed at that time and publicly articulated by President Premadasa was that Sri Lanka's conflict was a purely internal matter that required no outside involvement. However, what appears to be clear from the 1989/1990 experience is that *when parties meet at talks without a mediator, there is always the risk of the talks being unilaterally terminated by one party with no possibility of their return to the negotiation table*. This experience was indeed to be repeated subsequently too, during 1994/1995 peace talks.

PA-LTTE Negotiations of 1994/1995

The negotiations between the People's Alliance government and the LTTE in 1994/1995 provide a host of important lessons in negotiation for conflict resolution. When this round of negotiations began, there was a great deal of expectation and optimism about peace returning to the country. This is the first time that the people in Sri Lanka and the international community took

government-LTTE negotiations seriously in the hope that at last the parties to negotiations would manage to find and work out a lasting solution to the ethnic question.

In 1994/1995, there were four rounds of talks between government and LTTE representatives. The talks were held in Jaffna. The last round of talks was held on April 9-10, 1995. A few days after the last round ended, the LTTE unilaterally terminated the negotiation process by resuming military hostilities on 19 April, 1995. The main lessons to be learned from this experience of negotiations concern why the exercise of peace making failed.

Preconditions for Compromise

A conflict settlement means that the parties to the conflict are ready for a compromise. Willingness to compromise by both sides is an essential precondition for a successful negotiated settlement. A compromise in a conflict involves the willingness of the major parties to seek a middle ground from where they can seek a mutually acceptable framework of settlement. It requires from both parties to the conflict to abandon their maximum goals. Then, the question we can ask is whether in 1994/1995 the PA government and the LTTE had reached such a stage of middle ground and compromise. The PA government declared that it was willing to pursue a political settlement through enhanced devolution, but it was not clear whether the LTTE was ready to accept devolution as an acceptable framework of settlement. When the two sides went into negotiations, they have declared publicly that they were committed to a settlement, but what remained undeclared was the framework within which they could find a common ground.

Finding a common ground between two parties that have been engaged in an internal armed conflict for years is usually not an easy exercise. However, this difficulty may be possible to overcome by parties if the following preconditions are also present:

- (i) Parties to the conflict realize that the war is no longer useful, necessary or helpful to achieve their respective political objectives.
- (ii) There is also the realization that the ultimate goal that the parties had set for themselves at the beginning of the conflict is no longer viable and a new goal, short of the initial goal, needs to be worked out.
- (iii) The new goal can be achieved through negotiation and compromise.

In the conflict resolution theory, the presence of this set of preconditions in a conflict is described as constituting a moment of *conflict ripeness*. It means that the conflict has reached the stage of certain maturity in the sense that it is ripe for resolution. William Zartman says that a conflict is ripe when (i) there exists a situation of deadlock and deadline, and (ii) the parties realize that "unilateral solutions are blocked and joint solutions become conceivable" (Zartman,1985). When we apply this concept to the situation in Sri Lanka's conflict in 1994/1995, it is difficult for us to see that the conflict had reached a dangerous stalemate which could push both parties simultaneously to finding a solution through the difficult path of negotiations.

Nevertheless, there existed some important preconditions for negotiations. Most important among them was the public clamor for a negotiated settlement. In Sri Lankan society, among all ethnic groups, there had developed a sentiment in favor of a negotiated settlement. There were also many civil society groups that had actively campaigned for ending the conflict through negotiations. The political change in 1994 to a great extent gave expression to this change in the public mood. The new leadership that came into power in 1994 – People's Alliance led by President Chandrika Kumaratunga – also enjoyed a uniquely favorable status for finding a settlement to the conflict, precisely because this leadership had not identified itself with the conduct of the war. Rather, it had identified itself with the section of the political opinion in the country that opposed the war and stood for an early political settlement. Consequently, the political leadership of the government enjoyed a considerable measure of confidence among the Tamil people too.

But 1994/95 negotiation experience tells us that public support for a settlement and the political leadership's *commitment to finding a settlement by themselves are not sufficient conditions for successful conflict resolution*. Undoubtedly, they are important conditions in the sense that they enabled the negotiation process to begin. They were indeed enabling preconditions. But, when actual negotiations started and new and complex challenges came on the way, the negotiation process entered into a period of crisis, ultimately resulting in the collapse of the entire negotiation exercise. We can draw another lesson from this experience: *the favorable preconditions to begin negotiations may not be sufficient enough to bring about a settlement. There is a long way to go from negotiations to a negotiated settlement*.

Negotiations are a Process

When negotiations between the government and the LTTE began in 1994 soon after the PA government came into power, there were many expectations in Sri Lanka and abroad that the negotiations would succeed and the success would come soon. There were also skeptics who repeatedly argued that the negotiations were doomed to fail, because a negotiated settlement was not possible or feasible with the LTTE. But, when we look back now at the experience of negotiations from a somewhat detached point of view, with the benefit of retrospective insights, we are more likely to see how complex the entire negotiation exercise was. As we noted above, the negotiations began with a great deal of optimism. The two sides, the government and the LTTE, also initially demonstrated a positive, optimistic and result-oriented approach to negotiations. There were encouraging letters exchanged by President Kumaratunga and Mr. Prabhakaran expressing their commitment to, and willingness of pursuing, an early settlement to the conflict. In the first week of January 1995, the two parties signed a cease-fire agreement. By this time, the government had announced a number of initiatives that can be described in the language of conflict resolution as 'confidence-building measures.' These included the lifting of the ban on many consumer items to Jaffna, a plan of rehabilitation and reconstruction, provision of electricity, the facilitation of civilian travel from Jaffna to the rest of the country and the supply of food and medicine to the civilian population in the north. But, in February 1995, there emerged some signs of the negotiation process beginning to face a crisis. It first manifested itself when the LTTE and the government developed a disagreement over the monitoring of the cease-fire agreement's implementation. In the agreement, there was a provision for international monitoring of the working of the cease-fire agreement. While the government had invited a team of foreign monitors, the LTTE did not allow the monitors to enter into areas under their control. Ultimately, the monitoring exercise failed. It is still not clear why this happened and what contributed to the LTTE's thinking. But we can draw a general lesson from this experience: once negotiations begin, there can be unforeseen circumstances that have to be treated with care, patience and prudence. If these unanticipated issues are not handled prudently by both sides, the negotiation exercise itself may suffer.

There were many other similar instances that brought the negotiation exercise under pressure and stress. For example, the lifting on the ban of consumer commodities to Jaffna was hailed by the government as an indication of its own commitment to the normalization of civilian life in the north. But the LTTE repeatedly argued that although the government made public statements to that effect, the commitments were not properly implemented. The LTTE even went to the extent of saying that the government was not sincere. An intense debate between the government and the LTTE ensued. While the government, reiterating its commitment to an early end to the ethnic conflict, demanded that the LTTE should engage the government in negotiating the political and constitutional framework for ethnic conflict resolution, the LTTE took up the position that what was immediately important was the addressing of the consequences of thirteen years of war and not the root causes of the ethnic conflict. These were indeed two different approaches to the negotiation exercise. It is an approach that can be described as root causes of the conflict vs. consequences of the conflict. The two sides indeed could not solve this issue.

What is the lesson we must draw from this and similar experiences of the 1994/95 failed peace negotiations? A basic lesson is that conflict negotiation is not a one-off affair. Rather, it is a complex exercise with unforeseen challenges and difficulties. Parties to negotiations should consider *negotiation as a long process that has to be rescued and sustained at every turn of complex events*.

Negotiation Collapse and Fall Back Strategies

To treat negotiation for conflict resolution as a process, *it is important that parties have strategies to deal with crisis situations*, like the crisis which Sri Lanka experienced in April 1995. The LTTE, accusing the government of dragging on negotiations disregarding its demands for 'normalization of civilian life,' issued an ultimatum to the government in April and then within a week of that ultimatum resumed hostilities. Ever since, the two sides have been engaged in an intense war with no effort being made to resume negotiations. The lesson to be learnt from this is *that a peace process needs serious strategizing. Strategizing peace is as important as strategizing war*. Like in war, in negotiations too, there are inevitable setbacks while there may be occasional successes. It does not mean that the peace process should be abandoned. Northern Ireland negotiation process points to a lesson in contrast. There, the cease-fire agreement was broken a number of times, yet the US mediator and the parties continued with the negotiation process, exploring new options and resuming the exercise of talking. In Sri Lanka, there was no mediator to bring the parties back to the negotiation table after the resumption of hostilities. Neither did the parties appear to have any sustainable fall back plans to reactivate negotiations. The result was that the parties went back to an exclusively military strategy.

Cease-Fire and its Lessons

Another important lesson to be learnt from the breakdown of 1994/95 negotiations concerns the question *whether a cease-fire agreement is really necessary in negotiating peace in an armed conflict*. In conflict resolution, a main argument in favor of cease-fire agreement is that a mutually-agreed 'no war' situation would help humanize the conflict, strengthening the peace process. A cease-fire may also enable civilians to return to a normal life, after years of being caught up in the war. It can also create conditions for the parties to trust each other, enabling them to negotiate in an atmosphere not colored by hostility. In this sense, a cease-fire agreement can be viewed as an important confidence-building measure for conflict resolution. But, Sri Lanka's experience demonstrated that although those favorable conditions were present at the beginning of the cease-fire agreement between the government and the LTTE, it also generated complex challenges to both sides, challenges that had a negative impact on the entire peace process.

One lesson to be learned in the Sri Lankan experience is that *a cease-fire agreement can bring a lot of pressure on the negotiation process itself*. There can be many reasons for this possibility. There is always the likelihood of the terms of the agreement being violated, intentionally or unintentionally. Combatants on the ground may, for purely local reasons, exchange fire at each other. Parties who have signed the agreement also might violate the terms on tactical grounds, in order to bring pressure on the other side. There can also be groups among the negotiating parties that are opposed to negotiations and therefore, might try to undermine the talks by intentionally breaking the rules of behavior as specified under the agreement. These are contingencies that can make the cease-fire situation unstable. Indeed, such a situation can be further complicated by the fact that although the two sides have signed a pact to cease hostilities temporarily, they are deeply suspicious of each other's strategies, motives and goals. Because of calculations based on mistrust, there is the likelihood of one party going back to war on the assessment that negotiations are useless.

Yet another crucial issue on cease-fire during negotiations emerged in the government-LTTE peace talks in 1994/95. It concerns the suspicion developed by both parties that each side utilized

the cease-fire period to rearm and regroup themselves. The LTTE began to accuse the government, even within a month of the cease-fire agreement, that the government, behind the veil of cease-fire, began to rearm the armed forces, recruit new troops and then prepare for a major offensive in Jaffna. The government also suspected that the LTTE was busy in recruiting new guerillas, training them and acquiring new weapons. In fact, some critics of the peace-talks accused the government of falling into the LTTE trap of ceasefire. Their point was that the case-fire gave the LTTE, which had been militarily weakened, much needed breathing space to regroup and re-arm itself. This points to an important lesson: *a cease-fire agreement, initially perceived as a confidence-building measure between two conflicting parties, may run the risk of leading itself to greater mutual suspicion and new possibilities of hostility.*

The challenge then is, how to handle such unforeseen contingencies that may arise as direct consequence of the cease-fire agreement in such a way that the negotiation process is not disrupted? There are two possible answers to this question. Firstly, a third-party mediation can be of great help, as demonstrated in many peace negotiations in other countries. The mediator's role is to help the two sides to overcome those challenges and prevent them from walking out of the negotiation table. The second response is that, perhaps, a cease-fire agreement as a precondition for talks between the two warring parties is not necessary. In this argument, *what may be important is not the cessation of hostilities, but a sustainable negotiation process that can eventually lead to a workable cease-fire agreement as a positive measure of conflict deescalation.* When two parties to an armed conflict begin talks, it is perhaps not necessary for them to establish mutual trust at the beginning of talks. Even if they want such mutual trust to be established at the very beginning, a cease-fire agreement is perhaps not the best mechanism for that, because once the agreement breaks down, there is every possibility for the negotiation process to collapse. There can be other, less strenuous confidence-building measures like a mutually agreed commitment to a framework for negotiations, an agenda for negotiations and perhaps a time frame. In this process of pre-negotiation talks, once an exploration into issues are jointly made by the two sides, the cease-fire option can also be explored into. Then, a cease-fire arrangement can be worked out under conditions favorable to its sustainability.

Summary

- For conflict negotiations to succeed, there should exist favorable preconditions for a negotiated settlement.
- A negotiated settlement in a conflict would mean the emergence of a compromise among contending positions. It is a 'middle ground' which should be jointly pursued by the parties to the conflict. Negotiations often succeed when there are preconditions for peace.
- When short-term objectives, political or military, of parties enter the negotiation agenda, conflict resolution through negotiation becomes difficult.
- In political conflicts, there are direct and indirect parties. For conflict settlement, the role of indirect parties also needs to be considered.
- Negotiation can be a long and complex process with setbacks. For a negotiation process to succeed, there need to be efforts to sustain the process.
- A peace process needs serious strategizing. Strategizing negotiation and peace is as important as strategizing war.

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8

Learning from Bangladesh's Practical Approach

Jehan Perera

When it is thought about from Sri Lanka's distance, Bangladesh is usually an object of humanitarian concern. This densely populated country of 120 million is often projected as the basket case of South Asia and Mother Nature's step-child, plagued with floods and cyclones. But to at least some of the members of the Sri Lankan delegation who were in Bangladesh to study the peace process in the country, their visit may have evoked memories of Sri Lanka's own economic boom years in the late 1970s when Colombo's skyline changed with a startling rapidity. Dhaka today may be polluted and chaotic, but there is a dynamism that Sri Lanka lost a decade and a half ago, in its terrible ethnic war.

If not for far-sighted political leadership on both sides of the divide, Bangladesh too may have got bogged down endlessly in its own ethnic war. In 1976, even before the Sri Lankan conflict got under way, a guerilla movement calling itself the Shanti Bahini, and based in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in the eastern extremity of the country bordering India, took up arms against the state.

It is easy to wax eloquent about the rights of others in other countries, while violating the rights of people at home. For many years, Bangladesh was caught up in this dilemma. A small community of people in Bangladesh wished to obtain autonomy and a protected status for themselves. The initial response of the state was to try and suppress them by force of arms. Especially in the immediate aftermath of the successful liberation war of 1971, and independence, there was a strong and fierce pride in Bengali nationalism. There was a sense that Bangladesh must have a centralized state and be one people and one country. But the realities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts called this notion of Bengali nationalism into question.

The example of Bangladesh shows that whatever may be the proportions of the majority and minority populations, when the minority rises in protest, no amount of physical coercion can suppress them. They have to be dealt with politically. In Bangladesh, the right to autonomy has not become an issue of separation, but rather of ensuring equal rights to a smaller national

community. Interestingly, due to the pragmatic nature of Bangladesh's leaders, they did not become bogged down in endless conceptual debates on the rights of "nations," "homelands" and "self-determination," but arrived at a solution by which these values could be protected.

"Anti-National"

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is located at the eastern extremity of Bangladesh and borders India. It constitutes about 10 percent of the territory of the country and has a population of little over 1 million, which is less than 1 percent of the population. It is populated by a non-Bengali people. They are called "tribals." But they prefer to be known as hill people or "Jumma" people. The largest of the groups is the Chakmas who are largely Buddhist by religion. Across the border in India are a similar people in the states of Mizoram, Tripura etc.

During the partitioning of India, the middle classes of the hill people preferred to join India as it was ethnically diverse and secular. But the British rulers gave the CHT to Pakistan. Hill leaders who protested were harassed and fled to India. From then on India became the destination of refugee hill people, including the leaders of the militancy. They also became seen by the Bengali population as "pro-India" and "anti-national."

The Liberation War of 1971 in which Bangladesh was formed, saw certain key leaders of the hill people supporting Pakistan rather than the Bengali liberation movement. For a second time, at a key junction, the leadership of the hill people went against the sentiment of the people by whose side they lived. During and in the immediate aftermath of the war, many atrocities were perpetrated on the hill people in the name of getting rid of pro-Pakistan collaborators.

In June 1972, shortly after the liberation of Bangladesh, activists among the hill people formed the *Parbatyo Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti* (PCJSS). The armed wing of the PCJSS was called the Shanti Bahini. For a short time the leadership of the hill people worked together with the government of Bangladesh. But with the assassination of the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975, they went underground and declared armed struggle to secure a political solution to their problems.

The new leaders of Bangladesh were not happy with the position taken by the hill people during the Liberation War. They were also not prepared to respect the different identity of the hill people or give the region a special status. In addition, the government sent in about 400,000 Bengalis to settle down in the CHT, both to ease the pressure on the land in other parts of Bangladesh and to dilute the dominance of the hill people in the CHT. The population balance shifted dramatically. In the census of 1951, Bengalis were only 9 percent of the population; in the census of 1991 they were 49 percent of the population.

Some of the initial demands of the hill people were a) compensation for the approximately 100,000 people who were displaced by the construction of a giant hydro-electric dam; b) expulsion of the new Bengali settlers; c) reservation of 3 seats in the parliament; d) declaration of an exclusive region for the hill people; and, e) a regional council with autonomy.

There are many parallels to be seen with Sri Lanka in the subsequent events that unfolded in Bangladesh. For instance, in 1980, President (General) Ziaur Rahman termed the problem to be an "economic" one. He called for "unconditional surrender of the miscreants." In 1987, President (General) Mohamed Ershad said "We may continue the fight but peace will not come." He spoke of the need for a political solution.

At peace talks held in December 1987, the government agreed to 26 points put forward by the Shanti Bahini, but refused to accept the following: a) to take back the Bengali settlers; b) to withdraw the army; c) to merge the three districts of the CHT to set up a single regional council with autonomy; and d) to exclude from the peace talks those whom it termed "national betrayers"

(ie. those hill groups who opposed the Shanti Bahini). Like the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the Shanti Bahini saw themselves as the "sole representatives" of the hill people; the government of Bangladesh attempted to sideline the Shanti Bahini by negotiating with the other hill groups.

Thus, in February 1989, the government of President Ershad signed an agreement with prominent leaders of the CHT who were not from the Shanti Bahini. The government established three district councils with "limited autonomy." This was rejected by the Shanti Bahini but accepted by the other hill groups. Elections were held to these district councils. Polls observers were not permitted and the elections were rigged.

The Shanti Bahini rejected the establishment of the three district councils and called for their dissolution. They demanded the formation of a merged regional council with a guarantee clause in the constitution. The armed conflict continued. Soon it became clear that there could be no peace in the CHT without the Shanti Bahini coming into the peace process.

New Phase

The peace process entered a new phase with the formation of a non-military-based democratic government under Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. In 1992, the BNP government of Khaleda Zia formed a multi-party "Committee for CHT" formed with members of all mainstream political parties in parliament, including the opposition Awami League. The Shanti Bahini also declared a cease-fire. The Shanti Bahini leader, Shantu Larma, came out in public for the first time since 1975 to hold talks with the 7-member Committee for CHT which was headed by a government minister. But despite several meetings, no final settlement was reached.

After a new government headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League came to power in 1995, they resumed talks with the Shanti Bahini. The government set up a "National Committee for CHT" with other political parties joining it, but the main opposition party, the BNP, boycotted the committee.

What is invaluable for Sri Lankans to note is that *the new government under Sheikh Hasina did not proceed to throw away what the old government had negotiated, like successive Sri Lankan governments have done. Instead it built on what had already been negotiated.* The new government also appointed a multi-party National Committee which negotiated with the Shanti Bahini just as its predecessor had done. This time the negotiations were successfully completed and the two parties signed a peace accord on 2 December, 1997.

Due to the peace accord's essential continuity with the past, the opposition protests against the accord would surely be seen as politically motivated by large sections of the population. This may partly explain their reluctance to be mobilized in street demonstrations against it. In addition, other influential segments of Bengali society are aware that a peace settlement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts will be crucial in enabling the port city of Chittagong to benefit from being a hub of Southeast Asian commerce and an economic powerhouse of the Bangladeshi economy.

The dire consequences that the opposition predicted would result from the peace accord have not occurred. They include mass street protests against the Accord, the need for passports to travel to the Chittagong Hill Tracts and massacres of Bengali settlers. The present position of the opposition is that the new legislation violates the "unitary" nature of the Bangladesh constitution and, hence, is unconstitutional.

The reason for the failure of the opposition protests against the peace accord is that the ordinary Bengali citizens prefer to live in a country at peace than at war. Besides, the government did not have to go way out of the political mainstream in signing the peace accord. They built on what the former government under Mrs Khaleda Zia had already negotiated with the Shanti Bahini.

The peace accord has led to the formation of a single regional council for the CHT, which is an overarching body that coordinates the three district councils of the CHT. In addition, the government agreed to resettle the refugee hill people who had fled to India and to allocate them land and compensation. For its part, the Shanti Bahini agreed to disarm. They also agreed to take over an interim regional council without elections until such time as elections could be held.

Model Process

What Sri Lanka has to learn from Bangladesh is not so much the content of the solution. The quantum of powers to be shared and reallocated between the centre and the regions will undoubtedly vary according to the specific circumstances in the two countries. What can be emulated, however, is the process that the conflicting parties in Bangladesh adopted in working out a political solution.

An important breakthrough was made when the government of Bangladesh stopped the futile task of attempting to militarily defeat and politically exclude the Shanti Bahini. They also did not try to monopolize the negotiation process and hog all the political credit for themselves. They formed multi-party committees to negotiate directly with the Shanti Bahini. They accepted the fact that the ethnic problem was specific to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and so limited the devolution of powers to that region only, instead of applying it symmetrically to the whole country.

The Sri Lankan approach to peace making stands in contrast to the Bangladesh approach in all these key areas. The government is still trying to militarily defeat and isolate the LTTE. While several governments have tried to negotiate with the LTTE, no government has ever formed a multi-party committee to negotiate with the LTTE. Another albatross around the country's neck is the notion that all provinces should be granted an equal amount of devolved power. This would leave the central government deprived of much of its powers, and entails such a fundamental restructuring of the state, that both politicians and bureaucrats are nervous to countenance it. Even at this late stage the idea of asymmetrical devolution put forward by the opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe should be seriously considered instead of stubbornly being rejected.

Another important feature of the Bangladesh agreement was that the parties to the conflict did not get bogged down in quibbling about the meaning of divisive political terms such as "unitary," "nation" and "self-determination." Instead they got down to the discussions of a practical framework for governance. This appears to be the approach suggested by the government's leading thinker on the ethnic conflict, Minister Prof G.L. Peiris. In a speech he delivered at the Marga Institute's commemoration of the Nobel Peace Prize, Prof Peiris made a strong case against the two sides coming to agreement on a common set of principles.

It seems that Prof Peiris' concern was that the debate over principles would revolve around the Thimpu Principles put forward by all the Tamil parties in 1985, which specified the issues of nation, homeland, self-determination and equality. However, it is necessary that any political agreement should have a value-based vision underlying it. Where Sri Lanka is concerned, the values that would have to underlie a political solution would be democracy and the equality of all peoples who live in the country, both as individuals and as members of distinct ethnic, religious and language groups. This way of approaching the problem can also be seen as integral to the Bangladesh approach to peace making.

If not for far-sighted political leadership on both sides of the divide, Bangladesh too may have got bogged down endlessly in its own ethnic war. The sooner that Sri Lanka's leaders emulate those of its SAARC neighbor, Bangladesh, the better it will be for its people.

The CHT Conflict : Main Events

- 1) The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is located at the eastern extremity of Bangladesh and borders India. It constitutes about 10 percent of the territory of the country and has a population of little over 1 million, which is less than 1 percent of the population. It is populated by a non-Bengali people. They are called "tribals." But they prefer to be known as hill people or "Jumma" people. The largest of the groups is the Chakmas who are largely Buddhist by religion. Across the border in India are a similar people in the states of Mizoram, Tripura etc.
- 2) During the partitioning of India, the middle classes of the hill people preferred to join India as it was ethnically diverse and secular. But the British rulers gave the CHT to Pakistan. Hill leaders who protested were harassed and fled to India. From then on India became the destination of refugee hill people, including the leaders of the militancy. They also became seen by the Bengali population as "pro-India" and "anti-national."
- 3) During the Liberation War of 1971 in which Bangladesh was formed, certain key leaders of the hill people supported Pakistan rather than the Bengali liberation movement. For a second time, at a key junction the leadership of the hill people went against the sentiment of the people by whose side they lived. During and in the immediate aftermath of the war, many atrocities were perpetrated on the hill people in the name of getting rid of pro-Pakistan collaborators.
- 4) In June 1972, shortly after the liberation of Bangladesh, activists among the hill people formed the *Parbatyo Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti* (PCJSS). The armed wing of the PCJSS was called the Shanti Bahini. For a short time the leadership of the hill people worked together with the government of Bangladesh. But with the assassination of the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in August 1975, they went underground and declared armed struggle to secure a political solution to their problems.
- 5) The new leaders of Bangladesh were not happy with the position taken by the hill people during the Liberation War. They were also not prepared to respect the different identity of the hill people or give the region a special status. In addition, the government sent in about 400,000 Bengalis to settle down in the CHT, both to ease the pressure on the land in other parts of Bangladesh and to dilute the dominance of the hill people in the CHT. The population balance shifted dramatically. In the census of 1951, Bengalis were only 9 percent of the population; in the census of 1991 they were 49 percent of the population.
- 6) Some of the initial demands of the hill people were :
 - a) Compensation for the approximately 100,000 people who were displaced by the construction of a giant hydro- electric dam
 - b) Expulsion of the new Bengali settlers
 - c) Reservation of 3 seats in the Parliament
 - d) Declaration of an exclusive region for the hill people
 - e) A regional council with autonomy
- 7) In 1980, President (General) Ziaur Rahman termed the problem to be an "economic" one. He called for "unconditional surrender of the miscreants." In 1987, President (General) Mohamed Ershad said "We may continue the fight but peace will not come." He spoke of the need for a political solution.

- 8) At peace talks held in December 1987, the government agreed to 26 points put forward by the PCJSS, but refused to accept the following:
 - a) To take back the Bengali settlers
 - b) To withdraw the army
 - c) To merge the three districts of the CHT to set up a single regional council with autonomy
 - d) To exclude from the peace talks those whom it termed "national betrayers" (ie. those hill groups who opposed the PCJSS)
- 9) In February 1989, the government of President Ershad signed an agreement with prominent leaders of the CHT who were not from the PCJSS. The government established three district councils with "limited autonomy." This was rejected by the PCJSS but accepted by the other hill groups. Elections were held to these district councils. Polls observers were not permitted and the elections were rigged.
- 10) The PCJSS rejected the establishment of the three district councils and called for their dissolution. They demanded the formation of a merged regional council with a guarantee clause in the constitution. The armed conflict continued. Soon it became clear that there could be no peace in the CHT without the PCJSS (Shanti Bahini) coming into the peace process.
- 11) A new spirit entered the peace process with the formation of a non-military-based democratic government under Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. In 1992 the BNP government of Khaleda Zia formed a multi-party "Committee for CHT" formed with members of all mainstream political parties in parliament, including the opposition Awami League. The Shanti Bahini also declared a cease-fire. The PCJSS leader, Shantu Larma, came out in public for the first time since 1975 to hold talks with the 7-member Committee for CHT which was headed by a government minister. But despite several meetings, no final settlement was reached.
- 12) After a new government headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League came to power in 1995, they resumed talks with the PCJSS. The government set up a "National Committee for CHT" with other political parties joining it, but the main opposition party, the BNP, boycotted the committee. After several meetings, a peace accord was signed between the government and PCJSS in December 1997.
- 13) The peace accord has led to the formation of a single regional council for the CHT, which is an overarching body that coordinates the three district councils of the CHT. In addition, the government agreed to resettle the refugee hill people who had fled to India and to allocate them land and compensation. For its part, the Shanti Bahini agreed to disarm. They also agreed to take over an interim regional council without elections until such time as elections could be held.
- 14) The government passed the legislation based on the peace accord with a simple majority only, as the main opposition parties refused to support it and provide the necessary 2/3 majority for constitutional amendment. The main opposition parties also tried to mobilize popular opposition to the peace accord but failed. Their warnings of an Indian takeover of the CHT and "passports" that would be required for travel there failed to mobilize the people. The opposition parties now say that the peace accord is illegal since it violates the "unitary" nature of the constitution, and therefore requires a 2/3 majority to amend the constitution. For its part, the PCJSS is also critical of the implementation of the peace accord.

They complain that the law that was passed in parliament was diluted and less than what was promised in the peace accord.

Summary

- In peace negotiations, it is important that a government change does not result in a change of strategy. Even when the governments changed, the new government in Bangladesh in 1992 built on what had already been achieved by the previous government.
- Although opposition parties tried to mobilize people against the peace accord between the government and rebels, they failed. The main reason was that people in Bangladesh preferred a country at peace, and not at war.
- Bangladesh had a successful process of negotiations. No single party tried to get the political credit for peace.
- Government and rebels, instead of getting locking themselves into difficult issues, focussed on practical issues of governance and worked out a mutually acceptable settlement.