National Security Dilemmas of Developing Small States: A Study of Sri Lanka

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Abstract:

The concept of national security dilemmas of small states illustrates the salience and impact of domestic political and military structure, nation building process, policy-making fragility, economic and technological under-development, ethnic, religious and social cleavage in the ever-expanding populations and the severe eco-political pressures affecting small states. The ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka is one of the most internationalised ethnic conflicts in the world. The case of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict illustrates how political structures and ethnicity can influence national security dilemmas. In this broader context, the paper attempts to provide main reasons for national security dilemmas of Sri Lanka, which are generally based on internal factors but in the process make them vulnerable to external constraints and incentives. In a nutshell the Tamil separatist struggle on an ethno-regional basis has grown to be a serious threat to the internal and external security as well as policy capacity of the state and its nation building project.

1. Introduction

Since the decolonization commencing with the end of the WW-II, the national security dilemma of small states has been a dominant discourse in international relations, propelling many small states into independence and where they form the largest number of states in the international system (Singer, 1972; Vandenbosch, 1964: 293-312). However, by definition, as they lack most resources of power, particularly military wherewithal, military security and proper nation building projects have been particularly affected and exposed small states to all types of security dilemmas from within and without (Vital, 1971: 1-12; Rickli, 2008: 309-310). Thus, from the point of view of a broad contextual set up, national security dilemmas of developing small states may depend on the preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity of a state. Hence, political and military security issues have become the two most important factors, which inflict constant pressure on the national security interests of small states.

In the case of Sri Lanka, in the post-independence years, her constant fear-factor emanating from a huge neighbour like India. The subsequent territorial integrity demure out of the ethnic conflict of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) has forced it to re-think on the political and military security, which compels them, even after the end of the war with the LTTE, to become more inward looking. In this case, the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka has generated a series of security dilemmas for this small state, paving the way for its vulnerability internally and externally. In this background, the paper intends to find main reasons for national security dilemmas of Sri Lanka. To answer the above research question, we propose the following hypotheses; (1) the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka in its violent and protracted nature plays a vital role in the security and stability of the state, (2) the role of regional and international actors are not able to secure a sustainable peace and security environment in Sri Lanka.

The paper examines whether these hypotheses are true or not true in Sri Lankan context. The analysis is based on single case study method. A case study is preferred when the research is supposed to be done to enquire a specific aspect. The research question has been answered by using standard research tools including descriptive and analytical methods. Moreover, the paper involves both qualitative and quantitative methods. The relevant data have been drawn from a wide range of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include constitutions, parliamentary debates, and reports that have been conducted to find out perspectives and problems of national security dilemmas of Sri Lanka. The secondary sources involve various books, articles, news papers and the internet.

The rest of the paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 presents the review of literature on the national security dilemmas arising out from the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Section 3 of the paper defines the concepts of the national security dilemma and developing small states. Section 4 conceptualizes security dilemmas of small states with special reference to different ideas presented by realists and neo-realists. In section 5, the paper analyses the nature of the national security dilemmas of Sri Lanka. Section 6 presents major findings and concluding remarks. The list of references is given at the end of the paper.

2. Review of Literature

While exploring the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, some scholars have focused their attention on analyses of the national security dilemmas of Sri Lanka. Gunaratna (1998) in his book on *Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis & National Security* gives a detailed historical background of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, regional and international cooperation and the broader network of the LTTE. According to him, the LTTE receives sanctuary, finance, weapons and training from various governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In a

nutshell, he emphasizes that the national security of Sri Lanka is seriously vulnerable in the face of the existing ethnic conflict.

Apart from this, de Silva (1995) in *Regional Powers & Small State Security: Indian & Sri Lanka* analyses the nature of security issues of India and Sri Lanka and the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka from the historical perspective and regional power perspective. According to de Silva, the involvement of India in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka in the period from 1987 to 1991 has resulted in internationalization of the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka. Further, he adds that the protracted ethnic conflict has seriously affected the survival, well-being of Sri Lanka as an independent small state.

The book *Security Dilemma of a Small State: Sri Lanka in the South Asian Context,* edited by P. V. J. Jayasekera in 1992 analyses political and geo-strategic aspect of the security dilemma of Sri Lanka in the beginning of 1980s. Chapters in this book apply the concept of security, including colonial legacy, political, defence and foreign policy factors but not excluding social, economic and cultural vulnerability, of Sri Lanka. Moreover, it deals with the security dilemma of Sri Lanka, with the main concern being as to how Sri Lanka could accommodate its security requirements within the demands of the regional power. The book on *Security Dilemma of a Small States: Internal Crises and External Intervention in Sri Lanka* edited by Jayasekera and Werake (1995) analyses the internal crises of Sri Lanka and their implications, leading to direct external involvement after 1983. These two books analyse the issues confronting the post-colonial state and society and the different dimensions of the crisis. Moreover, the authors of these two books have also focused their attention on the Indian intervention in the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka.

In his book on Sri Lanka, *Pangs of Proximity: India & Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis*, S. D. Muni in 1993 examines how the foreign policy of India affects its neighbours' development and internal problems since 1947. In particular, the author analyses the attitude of India towards the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka since 1980. Furthermore, he analyses the nature and implementation of the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and the role played by the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) including its achievement, costs and failure. This study is another classic example for the extent of India's involvement in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka.

In addition to this, Bandarage (2009) in *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy*, provides a detailed historical based analysis of the origin, evolution and potential resolution of the civil conflict in Sri Lanka to establish a separate state. She argues that the Sri Lankan conflict cannot be understood simply as a primordial ethnic conflict between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority. Bandarage's work is a major academic exploration that challenges the orthodox views of the Sri Lankan conflict.

With an institutionalised rationalization of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, Sahadevan and DeVotta's (2006) in their book on Politics of Conflict and Peace in Sri Lanka analyses the Sinhalese-Tamil divisions that were exacerbated due to linguistic nationalism, and evaluates the extent to which the political structure of the island encouraged ethnocentrism. Further, it also makes clear as to how such ethnocentrism has contributed to illiberal democracy and political decay. The study shows that Sri Lanka as an illustrative case of international promotion of liberal peace and also of the tensions between internationalized and elitist crafting of peace and contextual power relations and political dynamics in conflict situations.

Amita Shastri in 2009 in an article focuses on the peace process initiated in 2002 that was led by Norway and supported by the international community. Shastri (2009) analyses how the process interacted with the fragmented political situation in Sri Lanka, which however produced the contrary result of a return to and intensification of the war. Jayadeva Uyangoda in his book titled *Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Changing Dynamics* examines the conflict and peace puzzle in Sri Lanka (Uyangoda, 2007). He argues that the protracted war has redefined the core issue of state power as one without negotiable options. According to Uyangoda, the circumstances of political engagement have not been adequate to move the main parties of the conflict in the direction of a credible compromise. He also emphasizes that mediation, facilitation, and negotiations have been necessary but insufficient instruments for effectively altering the route of the conflict.

It is clear that there are many studies on the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka. Even though the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is one of the most widely researched conflicts of the world today the existing literature has given less attention to the analysis of relationship between the national security dilemmas of Sri Lanka and the ethnic conflict. On the contrary, literature that are dealing exclusively with the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka do not provide a comprehensive theoretical perspective on the national security dilemma of Sri Lanka. From this perspective, the present study is an attempt to fill the above research gap by analysing the relationship between the national security dilemmas of Sri Lanka and the ethnic conflict.

3. Conceptual Definitions
National Security Dilemma

The Concept of Security Dilemma is one of the most important subject matter developed by realists in fields of international relations as well as

international politics. During the period of Cold War, the concept of security dilemma was developed by Herbert Butterfield, John Herz, and Robert Jervis. Herbert Butterfield highlights that the key to understanding the security dilemma as a tragedy (Butterfield, 1951). The security dilemma, according to John Herz, constitutes an intractable feature of human life in the condition of anarchy, especially within the field of international relations (Herz, 1950: 173). With the end of the Cold War, Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler who are the most important neo-realist scholars in the field of international relations and international politics define the security dilemma as a two level strategic predicament' consisting of the "dilemma of interpretation", and the "dilemma of response". The dilemma of response follows from the dilemma of interpretation, and defines the difficult choice faced by states in formulating policy responses to a given interpretation of another state's objective (Booth and Wheeler, 2008: 4-5). Further Snyder and Walter analyze that security dilemma is a social situation with social and perceptual causes, not simply a fact of nature (Snyder and Walter, 1999: 24).

Developing Small States

For the definition of the developing small state, the quantitative criteria used so far have been population, size and gross national product (Katzenstein, 1985). Some scholars define developing small states in terms of power rather than size (Handel, 1981: 10-11; Elman, 1995: 171). This conventional model generally assumes that developing small states are characterized by one or more of the following: (1) small land area, (2) small total population, (3) small total Gross National Product (GNP), and (4) a low level of military capabilities (East, 1973: 557).

Even though, the term of the developing small state is rather old and established, there is a consensus on how to conceptualize it. In this context,

Hakan Wiberg finds two types of definitions which are called absolute and relational, respectively. According to him,

> *"In first case, indicators of size are sought, such as population, area, Gross National Products, military capability, etc., and attempts are then made to correlate other variables with the size indicators. Relational definitions, on the other hand, are based on the underlying idea that the essence of 'smallness' is either lack of influence on the environment, or high sensitivity to the environment and lack of immunity against influences from it, or both" (Wiberg, 1987: 339).*

4. Conceptualization of National Security Dilemmas of Small States

By definition small states are those with small populations, land area, production levels, wealth, and military capabilities (Hey, 2003: 2-3; Joenniemi, 1998: 62). The general patterns of small states security is compounded by the particular instability of the governments. Governments in small states will have serious concerns about domestic threats to their own authority (Wiberg, 1987: 339-363). It is interesting to note here that most of the small-states suffer from the '*usurpation of state representation by a few of the groups that constitutes the population of the state*'. Thus, the institutions of the state and the bureaucracy only extend to the peripheral communities, which in itself create the threat to the traditional power holders of the communities. This fact, in itself is relevant in the case of Sri Lanka, where the elite state-making approach (*by the Sinhalese Majority community*) created a paradoxical effect of creating resistance (*by the Tamil minority community*) to the regime in power (*constituted by the Sinhalese majority population*). These threats can also take many forms including military coups, guerrilla movements, secessionist movements, mass uprisings (Buzan, 1988: 24). This has been envisaged in the case of Sri Lanka through the formation of the political unit of the Tamil minority and later transformation of it into a

secessionist guerrilla resistance by the LTTE. Most small states exhibit a lack of consensus on the basic rules of political accommodation, power-sharing and governance.

'*Regime-creation*' and '*regime-maintenance*' is often a product of violent societal struggles, governed by no stable constitutional framework, and is directly related to '*legitimacy*'. The narrow base of small states regimes and the associated various challenges to their survival affect the way in which national security policy is articulated and pursued (Rickli, 2008: 308-311). Often the regime in power struggles to consolidate their legitimacy by neglecting '*nation-building processes*' . This has been evident in the case of Sri Lanka, where the citizens were arguably not necessarily loyal and willing to support state policies of creating a monolithic unitary state. The issue of regime and state legitimacy thus, is laid in the heart of the Third World security problems. Thus, in such a milieu, the regime's instinct for self-preservation often took precedence over the security interests of the society or the nation. In his argument on the security dilemma of small states, Alford articulates the following three important points (Alford, 1984: 377-382):

1.   Non-crisis security dilemmas
2.   Internal security dilemmas
3.   External security dilemmas.

Alford has focused his critical attention with '*non-crisis security conditions*'. To substitute this argument, Ernest Muteba and Joseph J. Therattil emphasize that in their weak position, small states are unable to train their own security forces (Muteba and Therattil, 1971: 145). Hence, they will need and they are looking for the assistance from the outside powers either by training abroad certain key members of the security forces or by training in place by means of training teams (Alford, 1984: 379). In addition to this, outside powers can also

provide physical security in terms of guards, bodyguards, and technical advice. Thus, when there is a security problem, small states may have to request appropriate arms, information, and intelligence from outside powers. Thus, their military weakness made them politically and diplomatically weak (Vandenbosch, 1964: 294). In addition to this, Alford reveals that there is a growing problem of management of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of small states in general and island micro-states in particular and the prevention of illegal fishing, smuggling or drug-running. Moreover, he has pointed out that those vulnerable small states demand assistance from outside powers. Often, that may put the small-state in a vulnerable situation, as has happened in the case of Sri Lanka, where assistance in terms of arms and ammunitions from China.

On the other hand where the state is small, its physical base may be well-defined to constitute a clear object of national security. But its ideas and institutions are internally contested by various groups and so it undermines the security and stability of state. Hence it is more appropriate to view security in small states *"in terms of the contending groups, organisations and individuals, as the prime objects of security"* (Buzan, 1983: 67). Thus, socio-political cohesion is one of the most important determining factors of the security of the small states. A common feature of small states is that there is a high level of concern with internal threats which endanger the security of society and state as a whole. In these states, the lack of proper political and social consensus on vital domestic issues opens the society to various threats of internal subversion, conflict and violence, which undermine the security of the state. In this regards, Alford emphasizes that the external armed support may be quickly needed. Moreover, he suggests *"if there is a single external military power under obligation to stiffen a regime, it might be better to use that power in the short run"* (Alford, 1984: 380).

In addition, revolutions, insurgencies and ethnic separatist movements frequently spill over across national boundaries to fuel discord with neighbours. Ethnic minorities fighting the dominant elite rarely honour state boundaries, often seeking sanctuary in neighbouring states where the regime and population might be more sympathetic to their cause. Small states are more vulnerable to foreign intervention, as outside powers could take advantage of their domestic strife to advance their economic and ideological interests (Muteba and Therattil, 1971: 148). In his argument, Alford (1984) states that there is no reason for worrying much about external threats to the security of most small states of the world. When there is a large war, great powers at war will seek to take or to defend small states if it is in their strategic interests (Fox, 1959: 2-3). But the author has pointed out that there are external threats to small states from regional neighbours. Thus, security dilemmas of a small states needs to be structurally studied taking into consideration the immediate region as a unit component.

Similarly, Alford (1984) also emphasizes that external security problem of small states can be manageable. But the domestic crises of small states cannot be easily coped with. Moreover, because of their weakness and small position, these states are unlikely to provide much or even any of the logistics, training, intelligence, and infrastructure normally associated with internal and external security. This is perhaps comparatively the greater danger that the small states face in all its complexity.

Because the socio-political cohesion within a state largely determines the security environment of a state, small states face an endemic security problem on account of internal problems like social divisions, political fragmentation and domestic turmoil. Hence in all these states, there is a lack of convergence of state and society, and as a result division of identities and loyalties within the state

occurs, which in turn jeopardises the process of nation-building, as has happened in the case of Sri Lanka, where acculturation occurred by the overriding national identity of the Sinhala Buddhists supplement the ethnic identity of the Tamils, Muslims, etc. Consequently in the absence of national unity and integrity, the state becomes vulnerable to both internal and external threats. In this context national security cannot be viewed without considering the internal structure of the state which largely determines its external security environment.

5. Nature of National Security Dilemmas of Sri Lanka

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, formerly known as Ceylon (pre-1972), is a small developing island state with a population of 20 million located about 31 kilometres off the Southern coast of India. The insecurity perception of the Sri Lankan political class, in the post-independence (after 1948) era, has been shaped by both external and internal factors and warranted a change in policy making in favour of security concerns.

Internal Security Dilemma

The ethnic conflict is considered as the single largest factor of the decade in determining the 'security paradigm' of Sri Lanka. Tamil insurgency of Sri Lanka slowly developed in the mid-1970s in a context of the politics of minority grievances, and assumed the character of a protracted armed rebellion for secession in the early 1980s (Orjuela, 2008: 5-6; Tambiah, 1986: 16-17). Since 1983, a number of militant groups took up arms against the Sri Lankan state (Manoharan, 2008: 52-53). Apart from others, the key elements for the Tamil nationalist movement are the grievances about language rights, equality of treatment and exclusion from the spheres of state power (Uyangoda, 2007: 2; Wickramasinghe, 2006: 252-275; Wilson, 2000; Sivarajah, 1995: 129-132; Muni, 1993: 44). From independence in 1948 to the emergence of the LTTE in 1972,

Tamil aspirations for human rights and parity in linguistic and cultural recognition had been largely ignored or even repressed through military action by the Sri Lankan government (DeVotta, 2000: 58-61). This escalation in tension resulted in the quick dissolution of any prospect for peace. The Sinhalese government asserted their policies aimed at Tamil marginalization, while the Tamils resorted to peaceful protests and demanded for seats in government with a measured self-determination (Kearney, 1986: 222). That in itself turned into radical militancy with a call for total political sovereignty in less than twenty-five years. The Sinhalese government did not compromise their policies and intentions, and the Tamils began to see no other alternative avenue for equal rights than the establishment of their own homeland. The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) initially viewed the rising Tamil militancy as a *law and order issue* that could be dealt with by means of police-military action and through emergency and anti-terrorist legislation (Senaratne, 1997: 64). The attitude that the state could manage the radical Tamil nationalist by means of a counter-insurgency approach was also based on the perception among the Sinhalese political class that the Tamil claim for autonomy was totally unjustified and unwarranted. This perception in its turn was embedded in the idea that the *minority Tamil* community is a potential threat to the *majority Sinhalese Buddhist* in Sri Lankan state (Phadnis, 1989: 190-206). The Tamil nationalist struggle featured a long list of parties and militancies. Most of them had been effectively sidelined or annihilated by the LTTE, but some parties continue to advocate a dissonant stance. Therefore, there are major internal conflicts both within the state as well as within Tamil nationalism. Accordingly the ethnic conflict has had enormous costs in terms of Sri Lanka's physical, financial, human and social capital. It contests the nation building project itself.

It is unfortunate to accept that most of the successive Sri Lankan governments have been unable to make a viable political solution that would

allow the minority ethnic groups of the island to live with dignity and self-respect. It is important to mention here that Sri Lankan politics have been dominated by a bipolar system and bipartisanism of the United National Party (UNP) and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Both parties have a historic record of undercutting their opponent's policy on the Tamil issue. Political rivalry between the SLFP and the UNP has hindered peace efforts. Apart from this, each ruling party faces constant pressure from the Janathā Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and from hard-line Buddhist-nationalist parties. Most Sinhalese do not accept federal solution to the ethnic conflict with a deep sense of vengeance. They believe it could eventually lead to the dismemberment of Sri Lanka. In addition to this, the radical Sinhalese and Buddhist nationalists insist that Sri Lanka be maintained and remain as a unitary state.

Generally, lack of some common national values as enunciated in the nation building project has been responsible for the growing differentiations in the Sri Lankan state which has resulted in an unending cycle of violence. In a multi-ethnic society like that of Sri Lanka, the ethnic divisions have percolated to all spheres of the state and hence the state and its institutions have been subject to serious contest. In this light, the ethnic conflict has assumed serious dimension with the erosion of unity and integrity of the society.

External Security Dilemma

External security dilemma emanates simply speaking from the *'others' perception'* and *'others' intention'*. The dilemma generated thereby is essentially reactive and not proactive. In the case of Sri Lanka, her close proximity to India seems to have created a specific *'psychology of insecurity'*. As K. M. de Silva demonstrates, *"the country's survival in the post independence situation was foremost in Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake's thinking. His survival agenda was shaped by the belief that India was the most likely threat to Sri Lanka's*

independence" (de Silva 1995: 17). In order to address this security threat from India, Prime Minister Senanayake relied heavily on the outgoing colonial power and signed a defence agreement with Britain (Kodikara, 1973: 1121). However, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) regimes that held power after 1956 introduced an entirely different approach in dealing with India. Prime Minister Bandaranaike who came to power in 1956 requested Britain to withdraw its troops from Sri Lanka (Kodikara, 1973: 1123).

Despite the SLFP's policy of closer ties with India, the perception that India constituted to be a threat to Sri Lanka persisted; first in the late 1960s and then in the 1980s. The Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) popularised the notion of '*Indian expansionism*', which enunciated the view that India was in the process of territorially annexing its small neighbouring countries. The active opposition of JVP against the Indian intervention in the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka in 1987 was justified on the same argument of Indian annexation of Sri Lanka.

The second context was the spread of the Tamil insurgency in the early 1980s. The United National Party (UNP) government perceived the Indian support of the Sri Lankan Tamil militants as a policy of '*backing the secessionist insurgency*'. To counter the Indian influence on Sri Lanka, the UNP government began to cultivate closer ties/relations with the West (DeVotta, 1998: 462-463). It is interesting to note here that since 1990s, the Western threat has significantly widened the scope of the insecurity paradigm of Sri Lanka, thereby creating a significant political consequence. The Sinhalese nationalist forces have posited the West as a continuing source of threat to the interests of the majority Sinhalese Buddhist community. Thus, the intrusion of religious flavour to this conflict has come to the fore. Furthermore, the nationalists use the argument of a '*Western threat*' in their campaigns to justify the denial of minority rights and rationalise grave human rights violations. The blocking of concrete steps towards

political reforms in the context of the ethnic conflict is also justified by portraying the political reforms as an essentially Western-inspired process (Stokke, 2009: 937-938). Similarly, another group of nationalists emphasize the external power intervention in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka by arguing that the external forces have the vested interest in gaining access to the vast stretches of undeveloped rich agricultural land, magnificent beaches, strategic Trincomalee harbour, and the potential mineral resources of Sri Lanka in general, and in the Northern and Eastern Provinces in particular (Bandarage, 2009: 223). Thus, much of the financial and ideological support for the Tamil separatists struggle emanated from the Tamil diaspora elite and the worldwide Tamil community, making the Sri Lanka separatist struggle a trans-national phenomenon increasingly without domestic realities (Norwegian Against Terrorism, 2007).

The international community has historically viewed the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka as an internal problem. Though India's predominance is a relatively constant factor, there have been rather drastic changes with regard to the international involvement in Sri Lanka's conflict. The acceptance of the Indo-centric character of sub-continent has served to limit political attention or intervention of global powers. But a few of the states such as China and Pakistan have adopted a more prominent role. Especially China has also reportedly increased its military relationship with Sri Lanka since 2007. Military support and arms procurement from countries such as Pakistan and China have been of paramount importance to the end of war efforts (Venkateshawar, 1989: 89; Kaniyalil, 1986: 1076; Kodikara, 1987: 644-645). But the Government of India and the United States of America are unhappy with the GOSL's close and friendly relationship with China and Pakistan because India and America do not want the GOSL to go closer to either Pakistan or China. This further accentuates the security dilemmas of a small state like Sri Lanka in a belligerent environment. A small state becomes a victim of power rivalry in the region.

Moreover, Western countries have limited geopolitical interests in Sri Lanka. Unlike Kosovo, where Western regional interests were at stake, there is little basis for a long-term commitment to intervention in Sri Lanka. Western countries, Japan, the EU, multilateral agencies and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have interests in Sri Lanka in terms of trade, migration, diplomacy, international principles and ideologies and development agenda. In order to fulfil their own interests, the international community through donors have imposed both conditions and non-conditional inducements on the GOSL. This makes a small state further insecure.

With defeat of the LTTE in the battlefield, the GOSL faces the immediate challenges of neutralizing LTTE activities and dealing with humanitarian issues with the plight of internally displaced persons (Security Council, 2009). It also faces a long term challenge of how to address Tamil concerns and grievances and achieve the effective reintegration of the Tamil people into the Sri Lankan nation and make them a part of the nation building project.

Further, alleged war crimes and human rights violations will be pursued as potential areas of conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and elements in the international community. Many in the international community are appalled by the reports of the indiscriminate shelling of civilians in LTTE held areas by government forces in the closing phase of the war (Oana, 2009). In addition, various international bodies including the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights call for a war crimes inquiry against Sri Lanka (The Lanka Academic, 2010). The role of Tamil diaspora in pressurizing international community on impartial investigation on war crimes and human rights violation furthers the insecurities of this small state.

6.   Conclusions

The national security dilemma is common to all the states, big or small, strong or weak and rich or poor in the world of conflict and domination. Further it is clear that the domestic political fragmentation makes the state weak, and vulnerable to external threats. This scenario has generated a series of security dilemmas for every state, particularly for developing small states. The case of Sri Lankan ethnic conflict illustrates how political structures and ethnicity can influence security dilemmas. From the above discussion, it is revealed how Sri Lanka as a developing small state has faced serious domestic fragmentation, security, regional and international tensions since her independence. It is clear that the ethnic conflict has seriously eroded the unity and integrity of the Sri Lankan society. Moreover the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka is one of the most internationalised ethnic conflicts in the world. The number of outside actors playing a role in the ethnic conflict has rapidly increased over the years. But they have not been able to help resolve the protracted ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. As a result of external interference to the internal affairs, Sri Lanka is confronted with serious national security dilemmas. According to the existing theoretical background on the national security dilemmas of small states, the role of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka in its violent and protracted nature has been of critical importance to the security and stability of the state. The Tamil separatist struggle on an ethno-regional basis has grown to be a serious threat to the internal and external security as well as to policymaking capacity of the state and its nation building project.

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