

## A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE INSECURITY DILEMMA OF SRI LANKA

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### **Introduction**

The study of insecurity is a sub-discipline of the wider subject still referred to as International Politics. During the Cold War period, the notion of insecurity was perceived as military threats from external sources (Herz, 1950: 173). It is important to mention here that among the scholars who tried to conceptualize insecurity dilemmas of states within the context of the Third World, Brian L. Job is one of the most important experts the security study. He analysed the phenomenon and introduced a contrasting new line of thought in applying the concept of the security dilemma to the small states of the Third World (Job, 1992: 11-35). Brian L. Job, especially, seeks to rethink the national insecurity dilemma in the post-Cold War setting. As Job demonstrated, the "insecurity dilemma" is the core concept in the field of security studies. This is applied to states without cohesive nationalism, with weak institutional capacities to secure peace and order, with a pre-occupation of internal threats rather than external ones, and with legitimacy problems (Job, 1992: 17-18).

### **Research Problem of the Study**

The research problem of any given research tends to explore the lacunae of a given situation, and also deals with the parameters of probabilities. In this case, the research question posed through this paper is related to the broad applications of the security

behaviour of small states, and how Sri Lanka in particular has been able to cope with the armed ethnic secessionist struggle, and ultimately achieved success on the one hand, and on the other, how the fear psychosis generated by this long power struggle has ruptured the main security policy framework of Sri Lanka. Thus, this study seeks to examine the main reasons for the national insecurity dilemmas of the small states, which are generally based on their internal factors and which in the process make them vulnerable to external constraints and incentives.

### **Research Questions of the Study**

- What are the main reasons for the national security policies of the small states that are largely influenced by long term protracted intra-states ethnic conflict?
- Why is the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka in its protracted nature vital to the security and stability of the state?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The present research is an attempt to understand and analyse the case of Sri Lanka from the perspective of insecurity, and its connectivity with the ethnic conflict. Sri Lanka is recognized as a small state that faced a severe ethnic conflict, and ultimately emerged victorious, militarily. It can be added that the experience of Sri Lanka along with all its characteristics

constitutes an ideal case for the study of the national insecurity of small states.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is based on a single case study method. The research question has been addressed by using standard research tools including descriptive and analytical methods. Moreover, the research involves both qualitative and quantitative methods. This research draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources.

### **Discussion**

Since decolonization that commenced with the end of the WWII, the insecurity dilemma of small states has been a dominant factor in international relations, propelling many small states into independence. These states now form the largest number of states in the international system (Vandenbosch, 1964: 293-312). As a result of the increase of intra-state ethnic conflicts, the study of the relationship between the insecurity dilemma and internal threats for the small states has assumed considerable importance. The first writer to utilize the insecurity dilemma as an explanation for ethnic conflict is Barry R. Posen. The basis of Posen's argument is that insecurity dilemmas within states can occur when conditions are similar to those between states in the international system (Posen, 1993: 27-47). In this way, he claims that the collapse of multi-ethnic states can profitably be viewed as a problem of emerging ethnic conflict (Posen, 1993: 27). It is important to mention here that the causes of ethnic conflict are grounded on the religious and ethnic divisions of the societies, the government's lack of respect for

basic human rights, corruption, lack of efficient administration, poor infrastructures and weak national coherence (Bardalai, 2006: 07). In this regard, Barry Buzan emphasized that "for perhaps a majority of the world's people threats from the state are among the major source of insecurity in their lives" (Buzan, 1983: 26). This reveals that the state is not simply a provider of security but a source of insecurity too.

It is clear that the Tamil separatist struggle on an ethno-regional basis in Sri Lanka in its protracted nature grew vital to the security and stability of the state (Manoharan, 2008: 52-53). The ethnic conflict has grown to be a serious threat to the internal and external security as well as the policy capacity of the Sri Lankan state. However, since the independence of Sri Lanka in 1948, political rivalry between the political parties has consistently hindered peace efforts in the country. Apart from this, each ruling party faces constant pressure from patriotic groups against the peaceful solution of the conflicting demands (Shastri, 2009: 91; Sahadeven and DeVotta, 2006: 110-374). Even though the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka has become one of the most internationalised ethnic conflicts in the world, regional and international actors were not able to secure sustainable peace in the security environment in Sri Lanka.

### **Conclusion**

The ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka has generated a series of insecurity dilemmas for this small state, paving the way for its vulnerability internally and externally. The military victory of

the Government of Sri Lanka over the LTTE is not a long term solution for the insecurity dilemma of the Sri Lankan state. Therefore, the Sri Lankan state should try to find out more stable common ground between the federal pattern and the existing Provincial Council pattern or a unitary state system with certain federal features. At the same time it should work towards comprehensive national unity and integration of the aggregation of national needs, values and interests in the society and a completion of its nation building project to protect the national security interests of the Sri Lankan state.

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