Conflict Transformation in Post War Sri Lanka

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Abstract: This paper examines the conflict transformation in post war Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka, the internal war, which is the major outcome of the ethnic conflict between the Tamils and Sinhalese, was ended in 2009 by the military victory of the government. In conflict period, the conflict parties had been abandoned opportunities to get the peaceful settlement through negotiations. It causes to make the protracted war and difficulties in its termination. However, the government of Mahindha Rajapaksha fought against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) with dedication and got the victory. Although the war is ended, the conflict is transforming endlessly. The end of the war creates the many changes in post war Sri Lanka and provides the opportunity for state and society reconstruction. The aim of this study is to explore the nature of conflict transformation at present Sri Lanka. This research is built on qualitative research methodology by using both primary and secondary data. In the primary source, the qualitative interviews and focus group discussion are used where necessary. In the secondary source such as books, magazines, internet articles are used. This paper finds out the conflict transformation since 2007. Many positive things has made in post war situation such as resettlement, rehabilitation, infrastructure development and welfare services. Although some negative things are brought in conflict transformation such as military intervention, anti-Muslim sentiments, diaspora's activities, increasing the crimes and international pressures. They can redefine the conflict in a new form.

Keywords: Conflict, Conflict Transformation, Peace, Harmony

Introduction

Sri Lanka is a small island in the Indian Ocean, has own experience in conflict, resolution and war. In this country, there are three major ethnic people (Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims) living, although, the ethnic conflict raises among the Sinhalese and Tamils mainly. This conflict affects not only these ethnic groups but also others. The root causes of this conflict were grounded in the colonial period, they have been developed after the independence. Anyhow, as the efforts to resolve this conflict in the peaceable way by the Tamil leaders were not successful, the conflict was transformed as an armed conflict by the Tamil youths under the leadership of Prabakaran in 1970s. The raising of the arms groups in Sri Lanka, the demands and means of minorities caused to be transformed to the violence. When this conflict rapidly changed, many third party mediators come forward to resolve it. While the government of Sri Lanka considered the ethnic conflict as an internal matter, the Tamils, particularly the LTTE, attempted to internationalize the conflict as a strategy to gain external legitimacy (Sivarajah, 1995). But the governments tried to oppress the arms groups by using the military, government of Mahindha Rajapaksha made it possible. The government forces won the LTTE in May 2009 and the internal war was ended. It is a time to reconstruct and build peace in our country. After the war ending the conflict is transforming as a new dimension. This study explores the conflict transformation at present Sri Lanka in the post war situation.

Objective

The objective of this study is to identify the nature of conflict transformation in post war Sri Lanka. Especially, it tries to find out the transformations in descriptive and prescriptive level at present.

Methodology
This study has been carried out mainly through the qualitative research by using primary and secondary data. This paper is based on 20 qualitative interviews and supplement with limited observations to get the primary data. The secondary data collection is based on a literature survey which I reviewed all the literature available on this subject.

Literature Review
Conflict transformation is an important approach to handle the conflict.It relates to protracted civil wars. Conflict transformation means that conflict make the changes to the conflict parties, their relationship, issues and it transforms the entire dynamic of the conflict. It is the result of the experience of long struggle. Different authors and practitioners use this term in inconsistent ways.

According to Wallensteen (1991: 129) transformation, in short, is a generalized learning from historical experiences. In this approach, parties are affected by their conflict experiences and thus changes themselves so that the original conflict takes on a new forms. As well as he mentions that a successful case of conflict transformation is one where the parties, the issues and their expectations are changed so that there is no longer a fear of war arising from the relationship (Ibid: 131).

Ledrach's work serves as one of the most comprehensive statements to date of conflict transformation thinking for practitioners. He sees peace building is a long term transformation of war system into a peace system. The key dimensions of this process are changes in the personal, structural, relational and cultural aspects of conflict, brought about over different time periods and affecting different system levels at different times. He indicates that conflict can be understood in two ways, descriptively and prescriptively across the above four dimensions (1999: 82-83).

Vayrynen argues for a conflict theory based on the idea of transformation rather than settlement, stressing that it is important to understand how conflicts are transformed in dynamic terms. His approach is primarily analytical and theoretical, but is also suggestive of the types intervention that peace builders should be considering (1991: 4-5).

● Actor transformations – internal changes in parties, or the appearance of the new parties
● Issues transformations – altering the agenda of conflict issues
● Rule transformations – changes in the norms or rules governing a conflict
● Structural transformations – the entire structure of relationship and power distribution in the conflict is transformed

As well as, Johan Gultung's theory of conflict transformation is heavily utilized. According to his theory, the outcome of conflict transformation is threefold (1996: 96). In creative conflict transformation, something new, usually unexpected emerges from the process, enabling transcendence of the underlying contradiction. Compromise is the second outcome of peaceful conflict transformation. It means both parties accept the positive of attaining less than their full individual goals. Another outcome is that some goals have been given up or withdrawal by the conflict parties.

Findings
Sri Lanka has the victory to defeat the LTTE separationist by using the government forces. In 2007 LTTE was terminated in eastern province Sri Lanka and rest of the country in May 2009. It is remarkable ending to the one of brutal internal armed conflicts in the world. Many transformations in social, political, cultural and economic vice have been occurring since 2007 in our country. They are as follow.

This study explores that many developments are carried out in post war Sri Lanka. Most of the infrastructure developments are made according to the 'Mahindha Chinthana' policies. Road development, reconstruction of the schools and hospitals, electricity, irrigation and rural industry are extended. A9 road is opened and people from all parts in country have the opportunity to visit any part of Sri Lanka. Poverty alleviation program is introduced to the people to improve their livelihood and to get the sustainable development. Many welfare services are made to empower the people.MOH offices and health centers are brought to the war affected areas and they assist to reduce the mortality. People who surrendered to the forces in war period are rehabilitated by the government and provided the counseling treatment. Most of the former combatants are reintegrated into the civil life and given the opportunity to continue their studies and employment. In most of the areas, land mines are removed

and resettled the people who are IDPs. And people who migrant to abroad in conflict period, can return their homeland as per their wish. To make the peaceful society, trilingual concept is implemented. Many judicial courts are established newly in war affected areas and police has the authority to handle the civil issues. Most of the development projects have made to construct the people as economic vice. Foreign investment increases in post war Sri Lanka and the ratio of unemployment decreases. As the development of tourism industry, the culture of Sri Lanka is developed and takes the important place in other countries. The cultural places are renovated and rural areas are developed to attract the tourists.Local governments and provincial council election is conducted to develop the local democracy and provethe Sri Lanka as the democratic country to the world

As well as many positive transformations in political vice occur in post war Sri Lanka. During the war period, the former, combatants of LTTE, especially Sivanasethurai Chandrakanthan and Vinayahamoorthi Muralitharansplit from the terrorist group. They join and support the Sri Lankan government to the counter terrorism activities. This fragmentation of the LTTE is concerned as an important event in conflict transformation. It helps to conquer the LTTE in north and east. This change shows rather than the conflict between the LTTE and government.

After the falling of LTTE who declared themselves as a real representatives of Tamils,the formercombatants, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan and Vinayakamoothi Muralitharanrepresents the Tamils in eastern province. It is an evidence to get the interest from the government through the friendship without any violence. Eastern province was separated from the temporarily merged north-east provincial council and specific election was conducted to the eastern province. Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan who is a former combatant, was elected as a chief minister in first eastern provincial council election in 2008, Vinayakaamoorthi Muralitharan gets the seat in national parliament through national list. It is a very good tactic of government to handle the conflict in eastern Sri Lanka and it mentions the transformation of the conflict actors.

At the present, the demands and requests of minorityis also changed from earlier such as federalism, autonomy and 'Tamil Ealam'. After the independence, minorities had tried to establish the federal government and to get the autonomy. After that the LTTE had a vision to achieve the 'Tamil Ealam'. The above explains that the demands of minorities increase day by day, although, the end of the war changes these demands of minorities and it causes to minimize their requests. In 1987, while the 13th amendment and provincial government system was introduced, the minorities, especially, the LTTE refused this resolution. Now, as the Tamil leaders do not have the strength to continue the aim of 'Tamil Ealam', least, they try to get the power in provincial council system completely. It describes the changes in their objective of conflict parties. According to the Galtung's concept of peaceful conflict transformation, some goals are withdrawal or given up by the conflict parties. It happens in post war Sri Lanka, the 'Tamil Ealam' goal is given up and 13th amendment have been more considered.

Although, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) neglected the eastern provincial council election in 2008, it participates in the 2nd election and the 1st northern provincial council election. It is concerned as a positive thing in conflict transformation in Sri Lanka. It gives an opportunity to bring the minorities into the democratic transition. In the conflict resolution efforts, the government tries to take TNA into the Parliament Selected Committee (PSC). Some minority representatives who are at present government also support to this effort and insist the TNA to participate.

As well as, post war situations provide the opportunity to the people who are in various field to participate in politics. C.V. Wikneshwaran who studies and implements the law for a long time as a judge in Sri Lanka, enters into the politics on ethnic conflict, finds a new change in the political history of Sri Lanka. In the first northern provincial council election, the Tamil leaders propose him as a chief minister candidate on behalf of the Tamils with unity. He, who is not related to the politics before, wins the election with majority and takes oath in the president Mahindha Rajapaksha(Ceylon Today, 08.10.2013). It is a signal of harmony in many things.

After the returning to the civil life of rehabilitated people, they involve in local politics and express their counter politics activities. Anandhi Sasitharan, who is rehabilitated by the government gets the membership in the first northern provincial council. People of north province accept her political life. It is a very meaningful transformation of the way of conflict parties. It prevents the society for a long time from the threat of violence.

Conflict transformation can happen in both descriptive and prescriptive levels. If it happens in prescriptively, it will cause to the new form of conflict again. Sri Lanka has some significant of the conflict transformation in prescriptive level.

The conflict transformation means that even conflicts are continuously transformed its causes are not resolved. In this processing, the parties, issues and the expectations are changed so that there is no longer a fear of war arising from the relationship. Even though, as the causes of conflict are not solved, the original conflict takes on new forms (Wallenstein, 1991).

As far as Sri Lanka is concerned, there is no war and no terrorism, though, the root causes of conflict prevail still now. The constitution of Sri Lanka provides the foremost place to Buddhism, no proper implement the bilingual concept, discriminating in state service and other causes are continue and there are not enough efforts to resolve them. The current issues also motivate to raise the conflict again. It is possible to create the conflict in a new form.

In colonial period, there was a riot between the Sinhalese and Muslims in 1915, it was not a protracted conflict. But, in recent years, the anti-Muslims sentiments are increased suddenly by the radical Buddhists. Some radical movements such as Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) and Sinhala Ravaya (SR) and some political parties have the common goals and try to disturb the tranquility of Muslims and the country. They make some issues such as halal certificate, attacks on Muslim's worship places, slaughtering animals and attacks the business firms. The end of the war brings the opportunity that the country could become united. But these issues are as a new challenge to the social harmony of Sri Lanka. Now, the conflict of Sinhalese and Tamils is not very important but Sinhalese and Muslims has a new dimension. As Buddhists concerns themselves as the real nations of Sri Lanka, they try to dominate others. As Tamil separationists were defeated by the war, their concentrations turn on Muslims. It is a negative thing of conflict transformation in post war Sri Lanka.

Post conflict developments of Sri Lanka rapidly increase, but they are not enough to construct the people in mental vice and construct only the infrastructure development. There are not enough resolutions to find the missing people. Nation building is limited for only the majorities and minorities are almost not considered. As the mega developing projects are concerned as boons, they increase the support of present government highly in south part of Sri Lanka.

The north and east are released from the LTTE terrorists, though, the military intervention suddenly increases in these areas. The military has appointed in civil posts. Rehabilitated people are monitored by the military continuously. Although, the resettlement of people almost finished, there is a complaint on this regard. People do not resettle the suitable place for living and employing. Majorities are included in this resettlement process. It is an important event in conflict transformation in post war Sri Lanka.

The end of the war brings the violence in various forms. The threat of 'grease man', capturing the traditional weapons in north province, increasing the robbery and kidnapping in other parts of the country, violence against women, child abuse and other crimes increase day by day. They are reflected the new forms of violence in post war situation.

Another transformation is that the United Nations Party (UNP) and TNA which have the different ideologies and, join and active against the government. One of these activities is that the May Day celebration in 2012 in north province.

In the war time, the international community support to the Sri Lankan government to defeat the terrorism in Sri Lanka. Because the LTTE organization is included in the list of terrorist groups by many countries. Although, in the post war situation, the international community make the pressures to the Sri Lankan government against war crimes and human rights violations. And they start to express their unsatisfaction. After the September attacks in the United States, most of the countries announce the LTTE as one of the terrorist groups and they implement many sanctions against the LTTE. But, now they try to go against Sri Lankan government. It is shown as one of transformations. Because of that EU(European Union) stops theGSP+ (General System of Preference)to Sri Lanka, UNHRC (United Nations Human Rights Council) passes the 3rd decision and Canada did not participate in CHOGM in 2014. These are the negative consequences of conflict transformation.

As well as the diaspora community gives fully support to the LTTE separationists, although, their supports are almost financial and propaganda vise. But the end of war make the changes into the diaspora community's activities. They make the pressures on the government where they live, these

governments insist the Sri Lankan government to investigate the war crimes in the international court. Canada stops the fund for the CHOGM and Britain has the more concentrations on Sri Lanka, are the effects of diaspora. They initiate many things at the international level in political vise is considered as a conflict transformation of the ways and expectations of conflict parties.

Conclusion
As the discussion of this research shows, the conflict transformation in post war Sri Lanka has more things negatively rather than descriptive event. As the post war developments are also favor for the majorities, Sri Lanka do not reach the sustainable peace and development yet. This transformation not only make the changes in internal but also international level. Also radical thinking of the majority elites increases the threat to the minorities, especially, Muslims. The conflict transformation does not make the co-existence and harmony in the Sri Lankan society. The final point of this paper is that, the conflict transformation of post war Sri Lanka has the possibilities to a new form of conflict again in Sri Lanka.

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