

## A STUDY ON POLICIES TOWARDS HORIZONTAL INEQUALITIES: CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA AND POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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### **Introduction**

Violent conflict within the multi-ethnic and multi religious countries is a major problem in the world today and this gives rise to prolonged wars which result in the loss of lives, genocide, displacement, refugees and so on. To the extent that Horizontal Inequalities (HIs), or inequalities between groups in access to economic, social and political resources, are an important source of conflict, then correcting them should form a significant aspect of policy design in the post-conflict period. The situation with respect to HIs is complex in Sri Lanka, which encountered decades of brutal armed conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil Militants (most prominently the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, LTTE) (Yacub 2011:8) further increased the grievances of the Tamil speaking population, as they were disproportionately affected by violence and ensuring underdevelopment. This violent conflict, born out of a multitude of factors, came to an end in May 2009 after a military battle which saw the defeat of the LTTE and the reclaiming of all rebel-held areas of the country (Samarasinghe 2009:436).

Stewart (2005:10) discusses policies towards correcting HIs can be interpreted as a form of affirmative action. This is action taken towards the allocation of political and/or economic entitlements on the basis of membership of specific groups, for the purpose of increasing the specified groups' share of entitlements. When we analyse Sri Lankan context with the use of the Stewart's concept, the British colonial legacy in Sri Lanka had implemented divide and rule policy to maintain their imperialistic ambition. Incidentally, well planned favour had been supported to Tamil minority "by the British colonial administration, enjoying relatively privileged access to education and government employment which Sinhala Majority had not prized in the first half of the twentieth century" (Glewwe 1986). It was caused larger demarcation within both communities, with intra-group differentials greatly exceeding inter-group.

According to Stewart it was the situation of horizontal inequalities in Sri Lanka. To correct Horizontal Inequalities in the country, certain policies adopted by the majority Sinhalese government in the post-independent (1948) era beneficial and supportive to the majority community and ulterior motives of politicians are cited as the factors of this protracted violent conflict/civil war in the country. For an example such policies towards targets and the first major discriminatory legislation came in 1956, when the SLFP replaced English as the official language with Sinhala (The Sinhala Only Act), effectively excluding minorities (Tamils and Muslims). Popular opinion also saw the enactment of this language policy as a means not only of reducing the position of Tamils in state services but also of increasing the access of the Sinhala-educated to prestigious jobs (Jayawardhana 1987). In addition to that quota system in education, the granting of a special place to Buddhism and resettlement of

landless Sinhalese in Tamil speaking people dominated areas all contributed to the sense of majority domination (Hogglund & Orjuela 2011:23).

These policies implemented in terms of economic and social aspects. Further, majority governments introduced political marginalization policies such as minorities percentage reduced by number in political decision making, power, army, police and civil service. Although, new set of present policies for post-war peacebuilding are also introduced in the aim of address horizontal inequalities, it is considers to analyze in this study. Importantly, it is very clear that Stewart's theory of Policy towards Horizontal Inequalities (HIs) has failed in the Sri Lankan context. Governments of Sri Lanka continuously introduce set of policies to correct horizontal inequalities which are basic causes for conflict. Same policy formulation and implementation continue in the aftermath of the war which is challenges to post-war peacebuilding. The Sri Lankan Post-war situation can primarily be described as a series of missed opportunities (Hogglund & Orjuela 2011:28) with regards to more inclusive policy approach to accommodate minorities into political system. Major development policies implemented towards south of the country such as high way, ports and airport. Further, prevention of replace to violence is done through heavy militarization and it cause for an inflow of Sinhalese settlers to traditional Tamil areas.

Since there has been a number of issues neglected in the academic literature with regard to post-independence development policies in Sri Lanka, this academic exercise is undertaken to address the scholarly neglect by bringing into a sharp focus of the issue by critically reviewing the current debates on policies related to horizontal inequalities and its impacts on Sri Lanka in a different dimension. As such, the objective of the study is to explore the post-independent policies towards horizontal inequalities in Sri Lanka and to identify how these exclusive approaches marginalised minorities and became entrenched factors to cause protracted war. To examine policy approaches in the post-war peacebuilding process and its query on inclusiveness, and to suggest policy implication to the potential initiative of the government in the future development aspects.

### **Methodology**

This study will be carried out mainly through a qualitative field research by using both bibliographic survey and field work. Field work is consisting of in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and informal discussion. The first part of the data collection will be done based on a bibliographic survey which I will review all the literature available on the subject of affirmative action and policy towards HIs in Sri Lanka. Further, materials will also be collected from books, previously conducted research and reports, journals, government policies and additional relevant documents. Field work composed of 20 interviews and 02 focus group discussions. In this study, to categorize the exact persons to be interviewed, purposive sampling method will be utilized, asking key informants from elites and others with an attention in and knowledge of peacebuilding in the region. A descriptive analysis will largely be used to analyze the data collected during the field work of this study.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

he study show that the Sri Lankan Tamil minority had been favoured by the British colonial administration, enjoying relatively privileged access to education and government employment which Sinhala Majority had not prized in the first half of the twentieth century. Yet there was much differentiation within both communities, with intra-group differentials greatly exceeding inter-group. It also reveals, certain policies adopted by the majority Sinhalese government in the post-independent (1948) era causes for 3 decades brutal war in

the country. Finally, new set of present policies for post-war development also failed to address minorities' grievances and no proper inclusive approaches were adopted to maintain accountability, transference and check and balance.

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