

International Seminar: Envisioning New Trajectories for Peace in Sri Lanka

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Session 8: Re-envisioning Sri Lanka – Lessons learned & Challenges and Opportunities

Ways Forward

Paper presenters in Sessions 1 to 7 were also requested to submit a short paper on the 'Way Forward' for the achievement of a just peace – for inclusion in Session 8. Papers were submitted by 1.Father A.I. Bernard, 2. Professor Joseph Chandrakanthan, 3.Mr. Victor Ivan, 4. Mr.Ana Pararajasingham, 5.Dr.Jehan Perera, 6.Hon. G.G. Ponnampalam MP, 7.Mr.David Rampton, 8.Mr.Brian Smith, 9.Prof. Kristian Stokke and 10 Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda. (in alphabetical order)

1. Father A.I.Bernard

Chairman, Justice & Peace Commission, Catholic Church of Jaffna

The Ceasefire Agreement signed in 2002 by the two leaders of the parties to the conflict was welcomed with tremendous cheer both at home and abroad. The resolve at the Oslo conference to explore a federal solution to the problem was also widely seen as a move in the right direction.

Now, at least the next few steps of the way forward should be along this line of federalism, although at the present stage of the quest one cannot predict the exact configuration of the final political solution.

The progress toward the final solution can be made in two stages.

(i) Experimental stage

Acknowledging the 'traditional homeland' concept, the island can be divided into two regions, each with a degree of autonomy that on the one hand does not amount to division of the island, and on the other, adequate for the distinct communities to enjoy their political, cultural, social and economic rights without interference.

This arrangement should empower each region to directly receive and dispense monies collected or donated specifically for its development.

It should further provide for a referendum, like in the case of Sudan or Bougainville, to be conducted after a certain number of years, say ten, for the people of each region to make a decision for themselves about the final 'political configuration' they want to have in relation to the other region.

Each region will have a constitution for itself (under the constitution of the island as a whole, drafted and interpreted by a constitutional court) with entrenched minority rights and other internationally recognized human rights standards.

(ii) The Referendum stage.

The period before the referendum serves an important purpose: it provides space for the people to judge from experience which relationship between the two regions is best for them: unitary state, separate state or a union of federated/ confederated states.

2. Professor A. Joseph Chandrakanthan
Associate Professor, University of Toronto, Canada

Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam as the permanent names of two distinct geographical entities within the island of Ceylon have come to stay. Many of us here have been personal witnesses to the under currents of communal feelings, offensive and defensive nationalist vigor and the interminable war that has been denuding the island for the past twenty odd years punctuated at times by a brief period of unproductive peace and peace-talks. I would like to be more realistic than optimistic, more peace-oriented than pessimistic.

My personal view is that the inner rupture, distrust and suspicion between the three communities namely Sinhala, Tamil and Moslem have reached a point of no return. There are short and long term implications to the present scenario. The planned acquisition of lethal weapons and the signing in haste of defense pacts and the appeal for help for military training and arms deals with many countries in Europe and South Asia by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksha and the belligerent and provocative words and deeds by his coalition partners are certainly not signs portending peace.

His appointment of hard-line Sinhala soldiers as the military top brass and sending ruthless military leaders into the North and East are seen as a call to war by the Tamil nation. The peace overtures of the President give the impression that the brief atmosphere resulting from the CFA as a peace and quiet of the graveyard. Even that is cast into doubt when one looks at the growing number of mutual allegations of the violations to the CFA.

A second short term solution is that to please the Buddhist-Sinhala nationalist pride and in response to the belligerent spirit of JHU, JVP and other extremist forces the President may slide into a totalitarian type of military dictatorship leading to an all out war. A third possibility is that the underlying splits within the Sinhala elites and the masses may come to the surface largely compelled by the economic disparities and deprivations caused by the interminable war and lead the entire nation into chaotic situation with strikes, protests and other forms of civil disobedience. A return to war may help him to contain this inner turmoil. A fourth possibility is to play the terrorist card and woo the support of the regional and other super powers to make the island a war play ground.

A few comments about the long term implications. For the Tamils, history is replete with betrayals of pacts and agreements and the CFA if not fully implemented within a specific time-frame may prove be a dead document. Despite a few fissures of discontent expressed by splinter groups within the Tamil community no one seriously doubts both outside and inside of Sri Lanka that a vast majority of the Tamils stand united under the "proven" leadership of Mr. Pirabakaran. Thus they may want his will to prevail! In this regards Tamils have learnt to disregard international opinion for the simple reason that no country was genuinely sympathetic to their plight when they went through catastrophic calamities as a community in the 1990s especially the major exodus of October 1995, not to mention the carpet bombings in Navally and Navatkuli that caused enormous civilian casualties.

Secondly a major division may take place within the Sinhala community itself in agreeing to accommodate the Tamil claims and grievances when they take the direction of a mutually acceptable settlement. A great Statesman is needed to do this.

The question is whether Sri Lanka has such a Statesman? Thirdly the cordial atmosphere that prevailed in the pre-independence days may never return due to the deep lacerations that have cut deep into the psyche of the Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim communities. Suspicion, distrust, and the scars of war are very hard to erase both from the memory and from the physical habitats. A fourth factor is the turn of events in Tamil Nadu cannot be side stepped. Historical consciousness indicates that Tamil Nadu will continue to be a formidable “frontline state,” and the unrest and agitation there will cause uneasy ripples in the domestic Indian polity. Tamils in Ceylon sought to have a national identity looking southwards for over a century and by their unwillingness and the Sinhalese have pushed to seek it toward further North and given the geo-political trends, this bridge between Ceylon Tamils and Tamil Nadu may grow so strong that it might even put forward an unexpected confederation by the middle of this century.

Finally collective memories are extremely hard to erase out and in all three communities and this will continue to serve as a major impediment to any form of a trust-worthy and durable reconciliation. Peace in Sri Lanka is therefore fraught with many uncertainties than war.

3. Mr. Victor Ivan

Editor, Sinhala Weekly Ravaya, Founder member of Free Media Movement of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's crisis may be considered a logical outcome of the failure of the Sri Lankan state.

Although the ethnic crisis is the main crisis among those the state is facing, it is not the only one which the state faces. The state has not only failed in managing inter-racial problems but has also established well its incapability in all other matters too.

The state has failed to resolve the crises that have resulted from its own incapability, and the fact that those crises have been prolonged and have reached a condition of rot has placed the state itself in an irreparable position. Inasmuch as the ethnic crisis is a condition that cannot be overcome through reforms, the other main crises too cannot be remedied through reforms.

The ethnic crisis as well as the other main crises can only be overcome by creating a new state which will act sensitively in regard to the present crises as well as those that might arise later, and will win the confidence and the trust of all. However, the sagacity required for such a revolutionary change does not exist in the society. On the other hand, it cannot also be said that, in regard to such sagacity, the society is in a state of petrification. The society itself is realising the incapability of the state, though gradually.

In that sense the peace negotiations cannot perform a revolutionary role at this moment. The greatest role that the peace negotiations can play at this moment is to prevent the break out of a war, pending the arrival of an appropriate time for major changes.

The process of putrefaction of the state of Sri Lanka is now happening not slowly but fast. The confidence of the people in the system of political institutions is breaking down. The institutions like the parliament and the judiciary have become a system held in contempt and ridicule. In a situation where the system of independent commissions that should be set up under the 17th amendment is disregarded, the government service is being pushed into a profound crisis that cannot be controlled.

The contradictory response of the government servants to the Tissa Devendra Commission's salary reforms and the response of the government to them show the depth of the crisis towards which the government service is moving. At the end the people's confidence had been left only in the examination results issued by the Examinations Department. That

confidence too has now broken down irreparably. The people's confidence in the political leaders is evaporating, without the emergence of any alternative leaders. The political parties have declined and only those involved in governmental power are left.

Not only the Sinhala state in the South but also the Tamil state too which is coming up in the North is in a condition of crisis. It does not have the capacity either to become a separate state or to join the Sinhala state which is collapsing. It also does not have the capability to become an alternative to the state in the South and to replace it.

In a historical sense, all these things are happening in order to permit the historic necessity to build a new state. Although how things will happen in the future is not quite clear, what should attract our attention mostly at this moment is the fundamental question of what we should do to prevent a recurrence of a war and to fulfill the historic necessity of creating a new state.

4. Mr. Ana Pararajasingham

Chairman, Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations

Professor Wilson, author of "The Break up of Sri Lanka" wrote in 1988 "*My considered view is that Ceylon has already split into two entities. At present this is a state of mind; for it to become a territorial reality is a matter of time*" Eighteen years later, this prediction has come to pass. The reality today is Sri Lanka is an Island of two states: a Sinhala State in the South under a Government elected by the Sinhalese and a de facto Tamil state in the Northeast partly occupied by the Sri Lankan army and largely controlled and administered by the Tamils.

The Sri Lanka, I envision is one where the Sinhala State and the Tamil State are able to:

- Coexist as equals.
- Cooperate with each in areas of common concern.
- Freely pursue their own political, economic and cultural life.
- Ensure that constitutional and institutional arrangements are in place to protect the rights of the 'minorities' residing in these states.
- Provide for an independent judiciary.
- Protect individual and collective human rights of all people.
- Incorporate measures that ensure transparency and accountability at all levels of governance.

This will require

The Sinhala leadership:

- Overcoming its inclination to exploit notions of 'primacy and supremacy' of the Sinhalese and instead take steps to reverse these untenable myth.

The Tamil leadership

- Addressing Sinhala fears of Tamil domination through evoking pan Tamil nationalism.

And the Sinhala and Tamil leaderships,

- Sitting down with each other and negotiating in good faith to develop appropriate political structures to enable both states to cooperate in their pursuit of common concerns.
- Exploring ways to build an overarching identity for the 'union'
- Developing measures to protect the rights of minorities living in their states.

I envision this process beginning with,

- Measures taken to build mutual confidence through the full implementation of the Cease-Fire agreement.
- Establishment of Interim arrangements to help the Tamil State rapidly rebuild its war devastated, tsunami affected economy, while negotiations are underway to develop structures for coexistence.
- International assistance to build institutions that can promote good governance, policy formulation and capacity development.

5. Dr. Jehan Perera

Executive Director, National Peace Council, Sri Lanka

At present there is no trust between the government and LTTE and other relevant parties, such as other Tamil parties and Muslim parties. Compounding this lack of trust is the political vacuum that exists in terms of an agreed political framework within which the ethnic conflict will be resolved. The lack of trust and lack of a political framework both explains and leads to the continuing efforts to obtain a position of strength vis a vis the others, even to the extent of utilising violence to undermine the others. As a result the ceasefire talks appear to have become deadlocked.

The jockeying for a position of strength by acts of direct violence and by using paramilitaries will not stop in the absence of a framework agreement on just peace and democracy. Therefore, there will be no full adherence to the Ceasefire and Geneva Agreements until the government and LTTE agree on a broad political framework. The political framework agreement would set out the scope for economic development and political control. In other words, an end to the deadlock in political talks is necessary. This can compensate for the deadlock in ceasefire talks.

A two step approach is desirable in this context. In the first step the government and LTTE would agree on a joint mechanism to ensure that financial assistance for humanitarian relief and economic development is channeled to the north east. This could be on the lines of the PTOMS joint tsunami mechanism. The second step would be the establishment of an interim government for the north east. This could be on the lines of the proposed ISGA as conditioned by the Oslo agreement of December 2002 regarding a federal solution on the basis of internal self determination.

If there is progress in agreeing on a joint economic mechanism as a starting point, and on an interim government as a second step, implementing the Ceasefire and Geneva agreements will become possible. There will be no more need for one side to weaken the other, as the main issues on which one side was seeking to weaken the other side in order to get to a position of bargaining strength, would have been resolved.

6. Hon. Gajan Ponnambalam

Tamil National Alliance, Member of Parliament for Jaffna, Sri Lanka

I believe that the international community holds the key to the future of the peace process. In my presentation on the session titled “The different dynamics of the peace process – a Tamil perspective”, I have pointed out the dynamics that the Tamil people believe will motivate the Sri Lankan State to transform to recognize the right to self-determination of the Tamil Nation. I have argued that the reasons why the LTTE and the Tamils were prepared to come into a peace process was because by the end of 2001, the LTTE through its military power had established a strategic balance that necessarily created deterrence to keep the Sri Lankan State focused on the essential political nature of the conflict, and shut the door on a military option.

So when one thinks of breaking the dead-lock and ways forward, this specific dynamic needs to be maintained if the peace process is to be sustained. Naturally, when the LTTE enters into a peace process, its ability to singularly maintain such checks and balances on the State becomes limited. This is where the international community needs to play its part in filling the vacuum. Such a role cannot be fulfilled if it continues in its thitherto preoccupation with a strategy of containment. It is precisely because the hard-liners in the South have seen through this policy of containment that they have encouraged a policy of undermining the LTTE, as opposed to dealing with it in good-faith and recognizing it as a negotiating partner.

The pro-peace, moderate elements amongst the Sinhalese have to be strengthened. This strengthening can be achieved only if the stakes are raised so that a radical transformation of the Sri Lankan State can be sold to the South, and the need to engage the LTTE can be justified. Therefore, the international community must state in unambiguous terms that the territorial integrity of the State is what is at stake. Its commitment to the territorial integrity must be made conditional on the Tamil Nation’s political aspirations being realized. In other words, secession must be recognized as a possible option. These messages need to come directly from the international community itself. To expect the moderate elements in the South to make out this case by themselves will not suffice.

7. Mr. David Rampton

Visiting Lecturer, Department of Development Studies, SOAS, University of London

Frameworks for Peace and Constitutional Reform:

What is clear from Sri Lanka’s recent history is that a lasting and just peace will require a profound measure of constitutional reform and devolution of power alongside a shift in an elite-dominated patron-client political culture. Without these measures Sri Lanka will surely continue its journey towards a gradual asymmetric dissolution into the separate states of the North-East and the South, a development that will have done little to address some of the significant political demands being made by other ‘minority’ community actors and stakeholders such as the political leaders of the Up-Country Tamil and Muslim communities. However, it is also clear that the contemporary political context is one in which obstacles to federal and devolutionary models of political change are thriving, a factor that continues to interrupt the short-term frameworks for peace before the stakeholders have even begun to be able to meaningfully discuss the longer-term and more complex question of constitutional reform.

‘Inclusivity’ and the Constraints on Reform and Transformation:

If my preceding analysis of dynamics to the peace process is correct and we are seeing the long-term rise of Sinhala nationalist actors such as the JVP, the current context becomes considerably more complex for all the national, international and transnational actors concerned, as such nationalist actors in the South are currently ill-disposed towards constitutionally-established federal or devolved power structures. One of the recommendations in the past and which is still relevant today is to promote a bipartisan strategy to peace and constitutional reform in which the mainstream actors, the SLFP and the UNP, either agree to mutually consultative proposals for devolving power and engaging in the peace process as was first recommended in the Liam Fox strategy of the 1990s or, in more robust terms, attempt to forge a stronger political coalition against the rising forces opposed to federalism and devolved political power in Sri Lanka. However, as the JVP's political star is still in the ascendant, it has also become apparent that isolating or checking such forces may no longer be possible and that stakeholders in the peace process must instead seek to impart incentives towards inclusivity with regard to such political actors.

If the political context proves to be one in which a strategy of inclusion is to be attempted, it is clear that all the stakeholders, local, national, transnational and international must take on board a more informed and sophisticated understanding of the deep nexus between poverty, uneven development, social exclusion and conflict dynamics—not just in relation to the North and East but in the South as well and the way in which these dynamics impact on all communities. Addressing and understanding such structural inequalities and molecular sites of marginalisation are a prerequisite for establishing more inclusive peace-building strategies.

They should also form the backdrop for developing wider social education and participation in the dynamics of peace-building so that negotiations and constitutional reforms can be implemented in an environment of 'trust', transparency, knowledge and reconciliation rather than fear and misunderstanding. Such an approach might also serve to transform the political approach taken by the dominant actors involved, including the mainstream parties as 'inclusivity' is too frequently seen as a way of drawing subaltern, marginal and militant actors into mainstream terms of reference rather than the inverse in an environment in which mainstream politics is frequently seen as bankrupt by the social constituencies that underlie the rise of subaltern nationalism.

Without such dynamics of understanding, openness or transparency and socio-political interaction, the space for the transformation of those actors and their social constituencies who remain either hostile to or sceptical of the peace process will be increasingly emaciated. Nevertheless, attempting a more inclusive peace process will require a framework for negotiation and constitutional reform acceptable to a wider array of stakeholders, something that will inevitably also render such processes more convoluted and difficult.

It may be that Sri Lanka's political elites have offered too little, too late leaving the path to peace markedly more hazardous if parties such as the JVP choose to remain outside the frame of inclusivity. For, it is also unclear if the mainstream parties are willing to form a political coalition or even if such parties will maintain their bipolar dominance of Sri Lanka's political system to make the isolation of the JVP possible in the long term?

8. Mr. Brian Smith

Conflict Adviser to Asian Development Bank in Colombo

Perhaps in “re-envisioning” Sri Lanka, we should first start with the admission that, after a long and deadly conflict, itself founded on years of prior injustice and resentment, that has changed the very fabric of society, the way forward will be neither simple nor without a degree of distress for most of the stakeholders.

From the point of view of an outsider, some things appear obvious: Any viable, durable solution to the conflict must include a reconfiguration of the state along federalist lines, with considerable constitutional autonomy granted to at least the North East and possibly to the other parts of the country as well. The only other real option is two separate states occupying different parts of the same island. Although let us not fool ourselves, the road to this latter alternative would not be easy either. Denial of this reality and insistence on a so-called unitary state appear only to be a populist recipe for nourishing more conflict and, with it, more economic and social underperformance.

But if the solution is obvious, how do we get there? Just as the roots of today’s conflict are deep and complex, peace is unlikely to arrive in the form of a miracle or a super-hero. I see no Nelson Mandela’s or Martin Luther King’s on the horizon. Peace will more likely be made up of a mutually reinforcing constellation of multiple factors. As with most changes, it will probably be initially motivated by a deep discontent with the way things are, rather than by a noble aspiration about the way things should be.

This discontent can and needs to come from several quarters at the same time. It must come from a few politicians who decide that the costs (and I’m not just talking about the financial costs) of conflict, even latent conflict, so outweigh the costs of peace that failing to take the risks associated with a peace process will, in the very near future, lead them into a political dead-end. It must come from within the education system, from officials who are convinced that one of the prime tasks of the country’s schools is to imbue the nation’s children not just with pride in their own group’s culture but with pride in the richness of their *island’s* culture.

It must come from women’s groups who insist on the best possible future for their children and who refuse to accept to sacrifice this future for the interests of narrow sectarian groups. It must come from private sector investors who are tired of seeing much of the rest of Asia gradually leave Sri Lanka behind, as the economy struggles under the weight of incoherent, inconsistent economic policies. It must come from workers who want to be an integral part of their family rather than being exiled to the Middle East or elsewhere to make a decent living.

Believe it or not, all of those individuals are here now in Sri Lanka. What is needed is for each of them, in their own way, to look into the pool of their discontent and to decide that that discontent need not be a bottomless well, from which there is no exit. It can rather be a fuel that drives them to demand that real solutions be found, to accept the sacrifices that such solutions will inevitably entail and to explore avenues whereby they can contribute, in their own modest way, to defining and realizing these solutions.

9. Professor Kristian Stokke

Professor, Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo

First, as the Sri Lankan conflict is produced within the political field, lasting peace is contingent on political transformations. In my view, this translates to a dual challenge of transforming political institutions and practices in the direction of substantive devolution of power (not merely administrative decentralisation) and substantive democracy (not merely electoral democracy). These challenges are inseparable: electoral democracy without devolution (rebuilding the unitary state) or devolution without democracy (constructing an authoritarian local state) will not yield a just and lasting peace.

Second, as Sri Lanka is characterised by a de facto dual state structure, there are parallel but different problems of democracy deficits within two political entities. On the one hand is the Sri Lankan state formation, which may be described as a consolidated electoral democracy that is characterised by majoritarianism within a unitary and centralised state. On the other hand is the emerging state formation within LTTE-controlled areas, where LTTE has demonstrated an ability to govern but doing so by way of authoritarian centralisation with few formal mechanisms for democratic representation.

Third, as peace in Sri Lanka has become thoroughly internationalised, a key question is how development assistance can be utilised to support peacebuilding. The strategic framework followed by the Norwegian Government highlight three mutually reinforcing dimensions of peacebuilding:

- (1) security;
- (2) political development, and
- (3) social and economic development.

If this is used as a yardstick, it can be observed that the international actors have had a prime focus on the security and development dimensions, performing roles as facilitators/monitors in regard to the formal process of peace negotiations and as donors in regard rehabilitation and reconstruction in war- and tsunami-affected areas. While these roles remain crucial, it seems pertinent for the international actors to look for practical ways of enabling political transformations towards devolution and democratisation.

Fourth, in doing so, the international actors should recognise the limits of conditionalities that have been experienced in the 5th peace process and look for promising political dynamics that can be enabled and furthered. In my view, it is crucial to identify and promote initiatives towards local political participation, protection of human rights and local government elections in LTTE-controlled areas, as well as, more generally, identify ways of furthering democratic decentralisation and governance throughout Sri Lanka.

10. Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda

Professor and Head, Department of Political Science and Public Policy, University of Colombo

The peace process that began in 2002 in Sri Lanka appears to have reached an end. It has exhausted its potential to produce a settlement agreement, even an interim one, between the GOSL and the LTTE. The main tangible outcome of the 2002 peace process is the Cease-Fire Agreement between the GOSL and LTTE. The CFA has also been under great strain in a twin context of regime change in Colombo that began in October 2003 and increasing violence primarily in the northern and Eastern provinces. The emergence of a new peace process seems to be quite difficult.

1. There seems to be some fundamental dissatisfaction, on the part of the GOSL, LTTE and the Muslim community on the outcome of the 2002 peace process. The GOSL views the CFA and the peace process as having resulted in negative consequences for state sovereignty and national security. The LTTE's assessment of the no-war no-peace situation is that it has not brought any tangible outcome to the LTTE or the Tamil people. Meanwhile, the Muslim political parties are angry that they have been excluded from the bi-lateral peace process between the government and the LTTE. They fear that even an interim agreement between the government and the LTTE would endanger their interests. The absence of a strong social support base for the 2002 peace process has been a major impediment to its success.

2. The Geneva Talks between the Rajapakse Administration have a limited agenda. It focuses on the proper implementation of the CFA. The Geneva talks are not intended to resume political negotiations between the two sides. Even with a limited agenda, the engagement between the two sides has been valuable in managing violence and protecting the CFA.

3. The CFA is facing a crisis of existence. One party to it defends it in its existing form while the other party wants to revise it. It is the pragmatic need felt by the two sides to control violence that can sustain the CFA as well as Geneva talks. Without GOSL-LTTE partnership, the CFA can survive only as a strategic condition. Sooner than later, it will become clear that without returning to political negotiations, the two sides may not be able to sustain the CFA. A post-CFA scenario can have two possibilities – all-out war or protracted low-intensity violence.

4. Concerning the future of the peace process, a maximalist trajectory of conflict resolution appears to be both unrealistic and impossible. Political conditions that exist in Sri Lanka do not provide space for a maximalist program of conflict resolution. Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim societies as well as major political actors representing these ethnic formations expect contradictory outcomes from peace. They conceptualise the idea of peace differently and expect different outcomes from peace. For example, UPFA government's notion of 'peace with dignity' is conceptually and politically different from the LTTE's notion of 'just' peace.

The goal of peace has not yet become a shared political perspective either. The inclination among the major parties to the conflict is to view peace as an outcome with unilateral gains. There is also a fear of a peace settlement. In all the three ethnic formations, the fear of peace emanates from the apprehension that external actors – the global state system -- might impose on Sri Lanka a settlement conceived externally. A peace settlement is certain to have its gainers as well as losers, but the fear of a settlement is a state of collective mind. It is concerned with the anxiety that an externally conceived peace agreement might favor one group over all the others.

Then, there is the deep-seated suspicion of a peace settlement itself. Sinhalese nationalists fear that a settlement with regional autonomy would be a stepping -stone for secession. Tamil

nationalists, particularly the LTTE, do not believe that the Sinhalese political class, even after signing a peace agreement, will implement it. They want to maintain their military structures and war preparedness in order to ensure that the terms of a settlement agreement will be implemented fully and comprehensively.

Meanwhile, Muslim nationalists fear that a peace settlement between the GOSL and the LTTE would reduce the Muslim community to the status of a permanently disempowered minority.

Finally, the Sinhalese political class, which controls the Sri Lankan state at present, does not seem to be ready for a political settlement acceptable to the LTTE. It is extremely difficult to conceive an early peace agreement signed and implemented in Sri Lanka.

5. What, then, is the path to peace in Sri Lanka? In my assessment, there is no direct, or straight, road to ethnic conflict resolution and restoration of peace in Sri Lanka. It is a crooked path with many zigzags, turns and blockades. Sri Lanka's protracted conflict requires a protracted process of transformation, reconciliation and settlement.

The first breakthrough in the peace deadlock in Sri Lanka will have to be a conceptual one. I suggest that the realization of the protracted, contingent and recurrently unstable nature of the peace process constitutes that conceptual breakthrough. No sensible observer of Sri Lanka's politics can think of any other breakthrough in the peace process, except opportunistic and pragmatic 'deals' between the President and the LTTE leader.

6. A protracted period of no-war with no formal peace agreement without the GOSL and the LTTE relapsing to all-out war, seems to be the best available option for peace through conflict transformation in Sri Lanka. The maintenance of no-war no-peace is predicated on the willingness of the GOSL and the LTTE to honour, strengthen and amend the CFA. At the moment, the two sides appear to have a rather narrow approach to the CFA. The government thinks that the CFA violated the constitution and the law of the country. It has committed to properly implement the CFA purely as a pragmatic necessity.

The LTTE, on the other hand, does not see any need or political space to revise the CFA. Both these are narrow and partisan approaches to the CFA. To maintain the present no-war no-peace situation further, it is crucial that the two sides agree to strengthen the CFA by amending it at least in one crucial area. It concerns the capacity of the SLMM to monitor, enforce and ensure compliance on the proper implementation of the CFA. If the SLMM cannot perform these crucial functions, there should be an international body with powers to monitor and investigate violations and ensure compliance with the decisions of the monitoring body.

7. A protracted period of no-war will not be able to sustain itself without addressing humanitarian issues of the people living in the North and East. In this regard, the government and the LTTE need to build up a partnership. Such partnership will be based on the realization that addressing humanitarian issues should be linked to a rapid economic development process covering entire Sri Lanka. External assistance for a humanitarian agenda needs to be seen only as a short-term measure.

Rapid economic development in the North and East requires the assistance of the Sri Lankan state and linking the North-East economy with the economy of the rest of the island. Similarly, rapid economic development in one region will enhance the economic development in the other. Realization of inter-dependence and mutuality of outcomes in economic development can ideally be an incentive for the government and the LTTE to work out a framework of partnership.

8. The question of political democracy will invariably emerge in a long period of no-war. This will pose a major challenge to the LTTE. The LTTE needs to realize that without democracy and plurality in representation, its agenda of representing the Tamil nation will face a serious crisis. The goal of peace needs to be conceived not as prior to democracy. In the politics of 'national emancipation' peace, justice and democracy should be simultaneous processes.