

Politics of Peace Processes in Sri Lanka

Reconsidered from Domestic, International and Regional Perspectives

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1. Introduction

Sri Lanka experienced the tragic war that started in 1983 between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE (Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam). The war lasted for more than two decades with some short intervals. Despite fundamental difficulties to settle the confrontation, in the long history of the war, or the longer history of political turmoil in the country after its independence, there were some occasions in which some stakeholders believed in a bleak but realistic possibility of obtaining and developing peace. With the end of the war in the form of an outright military victory of the government against LTTE forces, there remain some vital questions; What is this “peace” in Sri Lanka now? How should we understand and assess it in relation to previous efforts for making “peace”? Is the current form of “peace” desirable or avoidable? What kind of peacebuilding agendas do we indentify for the future course of this particular type of post-conflict society? What is the nature of the established framework of peacebuilding in Sri Lanka?

In order to analyze and examine the conflict and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka to answer these questions, it is vital to look at the case of Sri Lanka in history from the domestic, regional and broader international perspectives. In trying to do so, this article seeks to recognize how peacebuilding is affected by the political environment including political dynamism in domestic society, interests among neighboring states and behaviors of influential global actors toward Sri Lanka.

This article then suggests that the peace process that focused on the two conflict parties, the government and LTTE, had a fundamental limit. The structure of the armed conflict was rather a reflection of social divides existing in contemporary Sri Lanka. LTTE was such a brutal group to represent radical sentiments of Tamils, though it did not entirely represent the whole Tamil area. The government of Sri Lanka is supposed to represent the entire nation, but it more or less traditionally and politically represents Sinhala nationalism at the core. This article argues that the end of the war without international military intervention or peacekeeping mission does not imply the

accomplishment of peacebuilding in Sri Lanka. Rather, the article indicates that the future of Sri Lanka depends upon domestic peacebuilding efforts, whether or not internationals will have limited or bigger roles, to create a constructive social foundation to sustain and develop “peace,” which is at the moment still fragile.

2. History of Conflict in Sri Lanka

When we conduct peacebuilding activities, we must start with analyzing past, current and potential conflicts. Without analyses it is difficult to plan and implement appropriate peacebuilding activities. The conflict in Sri Lanka is understood as a war between the government mainly composed of the majority Sinhalese and the secessionist rebel composed of radical Tamils. With the disappearance of the latter in the escalation of military actions in 2009, the war now seems to have ended. But few believe that the end of the war is the total elimination of all social problems in the country including root-causes of the conflict. It is true that LTTE was a very peculiar armed group and many characteristics of the conflict ought to be attributed to the nature of LTTE or even the personality of its leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran. At the same time, however, it is reasonable to say that the conflict had structural causes and that the collapse of LTTE would not necessarily mean the disappearance of such structural causes in society.

The fact that there was no serious confrontation between Sinhala and Tamil or Buddhism and Hinduism in long history of Sri Lanka does not just highlight the political and military mobilization of youngsters by the ideological terrorist group as a factor of the tragically prolonged war. The fact also indicates that the structural factors of the conflict exist in the modern history of Sri Lanka in the process of its transformation into an independent nation-state. While Tamil nationalism was awake well before the birth of the state called Ceylon,¹ it was Sinhala nationalism which constituted the core element of the state at the time of its initial formation in 1948 and its various developments for more than 60 years. Historically speaking, Sinhala nationalism was not originally formed to target Tamil minorities. For instance, there were some serious confrontations between Christian and Buddhist elements with the former’s influence over the elite class in society to the detriment of the majority group of Sinhala Buddhists in the late nineteenth century during the colonial period. There

¹ See A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *Sri Lanka Tamil Nationalism: Its Origins and Development in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2000).

were violent attacks and campaigns by Sinhalese mobs against the Moors and the Malayalees early in the twentieth century.² Sinhala nationalism developed in the process of gaining power of those who had the assumption that a creation of a nation-state would require affirmation of the majority's opinions in a unified system. As a result, foreign influences were regarded negatively by the majority. Minority groups were understood as agents of bigger powers. When Sinhala nationalism cultivated and developed the idea of a nation-state in line with the majority Sinhala people's preferences, Tamil nationalism was really ignited for the vision of their own nation-state. Sri Lanka has not yet fully obtained its own common political foundation to sustain one single state based on the reality of multiplicity. As an island country, its geographical boundaries are clear; but its conceptual separateness as a nation is not so clear, for instance, like many other post-colonial countries suffering from conflicts.

At the time of independence the country adopted Westminster-style parliamentary democracy which resulted in a majority rule of ethnic politics. Political leaders in the Sinhala dominant areas resorted to populist policies to appeal to Sinhala majority (74% of population) discriminating against Tamils (18%) and Muslims (6%) mainly in the north and east. Most notably, after Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike left the country's largest Sinhalese-dominated political party, the United National Party (UNP), to form a new Sinhala dominant political party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), in 1951, he adopted a slogan of "Sihalese Only" to win the general election in 1956. Sinhala actually became the only official language in the year to achieve its implications to oust many Tamils who were proficient in English and dominant in government posts from the time of the British Empire. In the meantime, the Tamil-dominated northern and eastern territories were dominated by the Lanka Tamil State Party known as the "Federal Party" (FP) headed by Samuel James Velupillai Chelvanayakam who advocated political autonomy of the Tamils as a nation in a federal state. When Bandaranaike and Chelvanayakam tried to reach an agreement to grant moderate legislative and limited fiscal autonomy to the Tamil-led north and east, UNP together with Sinhala nationalists and Buddhist monks fiercely campaigned against the agreement to the point of its abortion. When the UNP government attempted to negotiate a compromise with the Tamils in 1965, the then opposition SLFP mobilized campaigns against it with other social forces to abort it.³

Discontent at limited social and economic opportunities especially among youth

² Koji Kawajima, *Sri Lanka and Nations: The Formation of Sinhala Nationalism and Minority Groups* (Tokyo: Akashi-shoten, 2006) <Japanese>.

³ Sumantra Bose, *Contested Lands: Israel-Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Sri Lanka* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 15-22.

led to even a failed 1971 uprising in south by Sinhala Nationalist/Marxist JVP (People's Liberation Front) in addition to various movements in the Tamil-dominated areas. But the 1972 new constitution designated Buddhism as the state religion, while a system of "standardization" and "district quotas," introduced between 1970 and 1973 as regards admission to universities, resulted in further "positive" discrimination against Tamils. In the 1970s, while the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) became the forerunner in the national parliament for the north and east, several secessionist groups came into existence in the Tamil-dominant north and east ranging from the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS) and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) renamed from the Tamil Students' Federation (TSF) though the Tamil New Tigers (TNT) under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran and the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) as a group of LTTE-split members.⁴ India's foreign intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) which covertly recruited, trained and armed Tamil militants in order to expand India's influence in Sri Lanka in fact stirred political struggles among Tamil groups.⁵

The growing ethnic tensions heightened to prompt numerous violent incidents against Tamil populations in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. President Junius Richard Jayewardene sought to crush Tamil youth movements and get parliament to enact the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act on 29 July 1979.⁶ Attacks upon cultural sites represented by the burning of the Public Library in Jaffna with 90,000 rare volumes and precious manuscripts on 31 May 1981 also shocked and radicalized Tamil populations.⁷ The killing of thirteen soldiers in Jaffna in 1983 provoked Sinhala nationalists to unleash anti-Tamil actions in Colombo and other Sinhala majority areas, which made over 1,000 Tamils dead and tens of thousands fled homes. President Jayewardene's televised broadcast on 26 July 1983 rather assured Sinhalese people that they had nothing to fear from the Tamils of Sri Lanka or of South India and destroyed the possibility of a political vision of Sinhalese-Tamil co-existence.⁸

⁴ A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *Sri Lanka Tamil Nationalism: Its Origins and Development in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2000), pp. 126-130.

⁵ Anne Noronha Dos Santos, *Military Intervention and Secession in South Asia: The Cases of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, and Psnjab* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger Security International, 2007), p. 55.

⁶ Wilson, *Sri Lanka Tamil Nationalism*, p. 124.

⁷ A. J. V. Chandrakanthan, 'Eelam Tamil Nationalism: An Inside View' in Wilson, *Sri Lanka Tamil Nationalism*, p. 160.

⁸ Wilson, *Sri Lanka Tamil Nationalism*, p. 181.

But support for numerous Tamil militant groups flourished, while hundreds of thousands of Tamils emigrated in following few years, creating international support base for Tamil separatism. LTTE as the deadliest Tamil youth militant group under the strong and charismatic leadership of Prabhakaran became dominant for secessionist causes of Tamil nationalism during the late 1980s as they violently eliminated Tamil rivals.⁹ LTTE conducted fierce guerrilla fighting and bombing campaign on central government targets and captured territories in the north and east. From 1983 to 1987 Sri Lanka was in an outright war between the Government and LTTE, which the “Tamil Tigers” described as the “Eelam War I.”¹⁰

The assassination of Indira Gandhi in late 1984 and the secession by her son, Rajiv Gandhi, gradually ushered in a change in the position of India toward Sri Lanka. In 1987, India signed agreement with the Jayewardene government and dispatched a peacekeeping force (IPKF) to the north of Sri Lanka. While India kept maintaining its interest in Tamils, it mobilized IPKF to stabilize the Tamil area of Sri Lanka to sustain a stable relationship with the country. But then IPKF was confronted with LTTE. Anti-Indian nationalist sentiment spread in the Tamil area as well as in the south including another JVP uprising. In 1990, President Ranasinghe Premadasa ordered IPKF to leave and opened negotiations with the Tamil Tigers. LTTE soon broke from talks, captured additional territory and stepped up violence, including increased use of suicide bombs even to murder Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991 and President Premadasa in May 1993. The period between 1990 and 1994 is described as the “Eelam War II.”

Another peace effort started after the 1994 parliamentary victory of People’s Alliance led by the SLFP’s Chandrika Kumaratunga who proposed peace talks with LTTE during her election campaign. Although LTTE initially responded positively and the two parties reached a ceasefire agreement in January 1995, LTTE antagonized the government by attacking the government’s naval base on the east coast to sink two navy gunboats in April 1995. The government military force retaliated with land and air attacks on the LTTE-held Jaffna Peninsula. In November the government retook the peninsula by driving the Tigers out to their strongholds in the forests on the northern mainland. The “Eelam War III” continued from 1995 to 2002.¹¹

⁹ Wilson, *Sri Lanka Tamil Nationalism*, pp. 125-133.

¹⁰ Bose, *Contested Lands*, p. 29.

¹¹ Bose, *Contested Lands*, pp. 36-39.

3. Failed Peace Processes

Prior to 2002, there were two failed peace initiatives. The first one was introduced by the sudden agreement called “India-Sri Lanka Agreement to Establish Peace and Normalcy in Sri Lanka” signed by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President Jayewardene on 29 July 1987. LTTE was not invited to the process since the Indian prime minister “presumed to append his signature on behalf of the island’s Tamil population.”¹² The following deployment of IPKF produced negative impacts upon Tamils in the north and east as well as a Sinhala majority as an ill-planned foreign intervention.¹³ The government of Kumaratunga and LTTE signed the 1995 agreement to produce a brief fragile ceasefire. But the agreement did not have a framework to facilitate an environment in which the peace process is sustained and developed. The two parties lacked substantive agendas or monitoring mechanisms to share. It was an important attempt between the two parties after the outbreak of the war, though it did not have a political ground to develop a sustainable peace process.

A new momentum came with a change in the government and new international involvements. Kumaratunga who had become President in late 1995 suffered a defeat in the parliamentary election in 2001 and formed uneasy cohabitation with new Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe of UNP. The new government negotiated ceasefire agreement February 2002 under Norwegian facilitation. In peace negotiations, the government and LTTE agreed to explore a settlement based on extensive autonomy for the north and east under a federal system. LTTE withdrew from negotiations in April 2003 citing their exclusion from a meeting with international donors and lack of government cooperation.¹⁴ LTTE presented proposals for an Interim Self-Government Authority in October 2003 as a basis for new negotiations. But President Kumaratunga, largely excluded from the peace process, acting on Sinhala anti-negotiation sentiment and anger at LTTE’s ceasefire violations, took over defense and other crucial ministries to effectively stall the peace process, which never benefited her politically. President

¹² Bose, *Contested Lands*, pp. 32-33.

¹³ *Ibid*

¹⁴ Samantra Bose comments that LTTE’s objection to their exclusion from a donor conference in Washington, D.C. in April 2003 and the refusal of the Sri Lankan military to vacate “high security zones” on the Jaffna Peninsula that occupy Tamil residential areas and farmland had dubious justifications. While the US government could not change their recognition of LTTE as a “foreign terrorist organization” to allow its representatives to enter the US, LTTE was scheduled to attend the third and bigger aid conference in Tokyo in June 2003. Also, the ceasefire agreement had an escape clause concerning vacating to except those areas either party considered to be of strategic military importance. Bose suggests that the real agenda was stagnation of the talks on the establishment of a transitional administration to govern the north and east. Bose, *Contested Lands*, pp. 45-46.

dissolved the parliament in February 2004 and called fresh elections in April 2004, which Kumaratunga's SLFP won in alliance with Sinhala nationalist JVP. After the LTTE's eastern military commander, Karuna Amman, split from the Tigers in March 2004, violent clashes between the two factions and Karuna's growing collaboration with the Sri Lankan military further complicated and undermined the conflict.¹⁵

There seemed to be a significant impact upon Sri Lankan society after tsunami ravaged almost two thirds of Sri Lanka's coastline in December 2004, as in the case of Aceh, Indonesia. Although a significant stretch of the affected coastline was under control of LTTE, however, the idea of establishing a joint government-LTTE reconstruction mechanism did not fully materialize. Donors including the United States strongly encouraged both parties to help create the joint mechanism. In June 2005, an agreement on a "post-tsunami operational management structure" was initiated separately in Colombo and Kilinochchi. But in response to the JVP's complaint, Sri Lanka's Supreme Court stayed its implementation. The JVP and its Buddhist clerical allies protested that such a joint mechanism would risk giving undue legitimacy to LTTE and all international aid should be controlled and distributed by the government.¹⁶

The significant blow to the peace process came with the presidential election in November 2005 in which SLFP's successor to President Kumaratunga, Mahinda Rajapaksa, fought his UNP rival, the former Prime Minister, Ranil Wickremasinghe. Since Rajapaksa was supported by the Sinhala nationalist alliance with JVP and Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), the peace process was at stake at the election. Rajapaksa won the election by polling 4,887,152 votes against 4,706,366 for Wickremasinghe. The boycott by LTTE reasoning that all the Sinhala candidates had no difference cast a decisive blow to Wickremasinghe's camp and the peace process itself, since most Tamil voters in fact followed LTTE's call and abstained. Tamil turnout was negligible in the north and low in the east as well as in Colombo. Especially in the Jaffna district, turnout was just 1 percent of 701,000 eligible voters.¹⁷ The decision by LTTE was destined to ruin the peace process and LTTE itself.

LTTE launched wave of attacks on police and army in the north and east. The government began brutal counterinsurgency efforts, while Karuna faction, now renamed Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) continued guerrilla attacks on LTTE in the east. After the failure of the Norwegian attempt to resume ceasefire talks in Geneva in February 2006, the government launched military offensive in July, capturing strategic

¹⁵ International Crisis Group

¹⁶ Bose, *Contested Lands*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁷ Bose, *Contested Lands*, pp. 52-53.

towns of Sampur in September and Vakarai in January 2007. Fighting caused massive displacement and heavy casualties. LTTE renewed the pre-ceasefire strategy of suicide bombings on southern civilian targets and stepped up forcible recruitment of children and adults. Prabhakaran of LTTE declared the ceasefire “defunct” on 27 November 2006 and called for a renewed “freedom struggle” for an independent state. The fall of LTTE camps in Thoppigala on 11 July 2007 gave Government forces’ control over the whole of eastern province. The government formally withdrew from the ceasefire with LTTE on 16 Jan 2008. The fighting intensified during the first months of the year accompanied by continuing rights abuses from both sides, including political assassinations, abductions, and targeted attacks on civilians. 20,000 to 30,000 including around 5,000 civilians were said to be killed between 2006 and early 2009.¹⁸

The Eastern Provincial Council elections in May 2008 saw a victory of government candidates in alliance with TMVP amid widespread reports of violence, intimidation, ballot-stuffing and other serious irregularities. TMVP leader, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan, known as Pillayan, selected as Chief Minister, with government promises to devolve power and commence major development projects. But after Karuna was released from the British jail on immigration charges and joined the parliament on 7 October 2008, tensions including killings and disappearances between the factions of TMVP leaders Karuna and Pillayan heightened. Karuna was appointed minister for national integration and reconciliation on 9 March 2009 when he and many of his fighters officially joined the SLFP.

Following the 2 January 2009 capture of de facto LTTE capital of Killinochchi, government forces won back all but small amount of territory held by LTTE in the Mullaitivu District. More than 300,000 civilians were trapped in areas of fighting, with limited access to food, water or medical assistance. The LTTE forcibly conscripted civilians and prevented others from fleeing LTTE-controlled areas by even firing at them, killing many. Government repeatedly bombed and shelled densely populated areas, including its own unilaterally declared “no fire zone.”¹⁹ UN and Western government leaders called on the LTTE to allow civilians freedom of movement and urged both sides to halt their fighting to allow access for additional humanitarian relief and humanitarian personnel, which the government unequivocally rejected.²⁰ The

¹⁸ International Crisis Group; Human Rights Watch

¹⁹ 13 March 2009 statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

²⁰ International Crisis Group, UN Agencies estimated more than 7,500 civilians dead and over 15,000 wounded between mid-January and early May 2009, but the death toll remains disputed, with government rejecting early June media reports that as many as 20,000 civilians killed in final weeks of war.

government declared victory on 18 May 2009. A picture of the body of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran appeared in the press the next day, and the entire LTTE leadership seems certain to have been killed. There have been no attacks attributed to the LTTE since the government declared victory.

One immediate task after the war is the treatment of more than 280,000 civilians who escaped the fighting and were forced to remain in overcrowded government-run internment camps. The displaced in the camps suffered poor sanitation, insufficient water supplies, inadequate food and medical care, and denial of the right to live with relatives or host families, while UN agencies and humanitarian organizations were denied full and unimpeded access to the camps and unable to deliver adequate supplies and services. As of early February 2010, some 100,000 still remain in camps, despite the government's promise to close all camps by the end of January 2010. A large portion of those released are said to be staying in government buildings and other "transit facilities." Many of those able to return home face extremely difficult conditions, with wide destruction of home districts during war, most houses damaged and/or looted, many areas not yet fully demined; opportunities to earn livelihood limited. The government continues to detain more than 11,000 suspected of LTTE ties in extra-legal detention centers, where they have no access to legal counsel, family members or protection agencies.

Amidst the calls for investigation into war crimes and human rights abuses,²¹ on 15 February 2010, European Council formally withdrew GSP+ trade concessions for Sri Lanka, citing the government's poor human rights record. But the victorious government of President Rajapaksa remains stiff against Western governments and UN organizations. In November 2009, President Rajapaksa announced an early presidential election for 26 January 2010 to secure his stronghold. Sarath Fonseka, retired general and former army commander for the final three years of war ran for the presidency with backings of an opposition coalition composed of UNP, leftist People's Liberation Front, Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and the formerly pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance. The campaign period was marked by bitter accusations of corruption and abuses of power along with widespread misuse of state resources and media coverage favoring the

²¹ UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on 5 June 2009 called for an independent investigation into alleged human rights abuses and war crimes by both government and LTTE. Philip Alston, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in January 2010 repeated calls for "independent inquiry ... into war crimes and other grave violations" committed in the final months of the war. October 2009 U.S. State Department report highlighted possible war crimes by both government and LTTE. Government has continued to strenuously object to any international investigation, though it has appointed a "committee of experts" to respond to State Department report.

incumbent and physical intimidation of opposition supporters resulting in at least four killings and scores of injured in pre-election violence. Rajapaksa was re-elected on 26 January 2010 with 58% of votes. International observers called the voting largely free and fair, but Fonseka, who won strong support in Tamil and Muslim districts, alleged widespread vote-rigging by the government and filed a legal challenge to the result. Fonseka stated his willingness on 8 February to provide war crimes evidence against army in any international investigation; hours later, Fonseka was arrested by military police for the government's accusation of plotting a military coup; many pro-Fonseka military officers were also detained or taken for questioning. Two days later, Rajapaksa dissolved the parliament and announced a general election on 8 April, which brought an overwhelming victory for him.

It seems that after the failed peace process, the government of Sri Lanka has been taking a clear position. They are not only clearly against any domestic opposition elements, but also criticisms against them by Western donors as well as international organizations. It does not seem that the government is totally isolated internationally, since it has cordial relations with non-Western sources.²² It is said that the government purchased heavy weapons from countries like China to win the war, which remained friendly to the government at large as the biggest donor with its strong interest in securing its strategic sea-lane.²³ India as the regional power remains supportive by and large and even Iran has interests in supporting the government. This situation apparently affects the course of peacebuilding and reconstruction required for the future of the country. Resonating with worldwide political scenes, Sri Lanka seems to be now making an significantly distinctive case of “post-conflict peacebuilding.”

4. Donor Assistance to Peace

The fact that the peace process was facilitated by Norway with support of other European donor nations created the importance of a very particular linkage between peace and aid.²⁴ In order for the facilitators to consolidate the peace process, the donors were expected to utilize assistances to Sri Lanka as a strategic leverage to solicit both of

²² International Crisis Group, *Sri Lanka's Return to War: Limiting the Damage: Crisis Group Asia Report N°146, 20 February 2008*, pp. 20-21.

²³ Due to the size of China's assistance in construction of the port in Hambantota, it is believed that China surpassed Japan as the top donor to Sri Lanka in 2007.

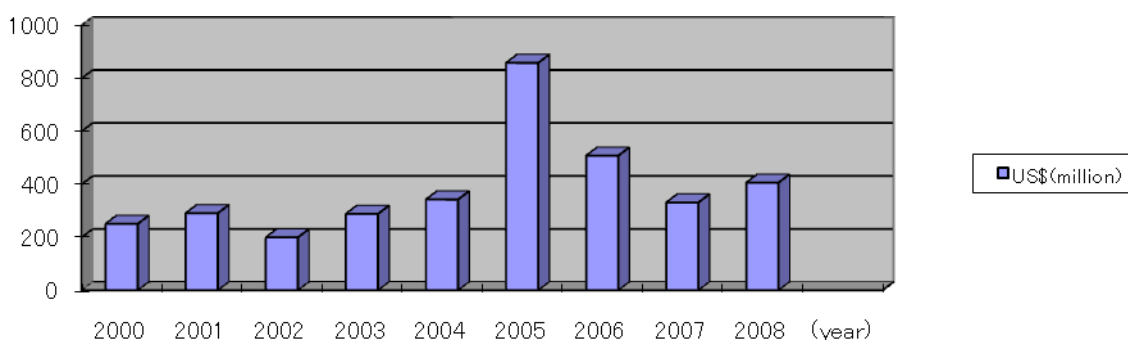
²⁴ For instance, a multinational monitoring force, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), established to monitor violations of the ceasefire agreement, consisted of some 70 personnel from Scandinavian countries.

the conflict parties. But there was no actual surge by the donor countries in assistances to Sri Lanka after 2002, despite the worldwide trend after 9-11 and countries like Afghanistan absorbed gigantic aid projects.

Graph 1 shows that no substantive change occurred in the trend of ODAs around 2002, although the tsunami of 2004 later increased the total amount of ODAs by major donor countries.

Graph 1: OECD countries' ODAs to Sri Lanka

(Author's original based on OECD DAC data)



The role of Japan as the top donor to Sri Lanka during the critical period deserves attention. When Yasushi Akashi was appointed the Representative of the Government of Japan on Peacebuilding, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Sri Lanka in October 2002, he intended to make use of the role of Japan to facilitate peace talks initiated by Norway. The government of Japan hosted the sixth round of the peace talks in Hakone, Japan, in March 2003. It then hosted the “Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka” in June 2003 by co-chairing it with Norway, the United States and the European Union. Its objectives were to “provide the international community with an opportunity to demonstrate its strong and unified commitment to the reconstruction and development of Sri Lanka and to encourage the parties to redouble their efforts to make further progress in the peace process.”²⁵ Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi stated in his inaugural address at the conference that “The international community must show its resolve to support, in concrete terms, reconstruction and development in all of Sri Lanka, including the war-torn North and East. If such support were to help the Sri Lankan people to enjoy the tangible benefits of peace, their own determination to continue efforts toward a durable peace would be even that much more

²⁵ The “Tokyo Declaration on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka” on June 10, 2003 < <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/srilanka/conf0306/declaration.html>>.

firm and steadfast.” However, as stated above, LTTE had already withdrawn from peace talks. So Prime Minister Koizumi had to say that “It is disappointing that the LTTE is not with us today. Japan urged the LTTE to participate in this conference up to the last minute, in cooperation with the Sri Lankan government and other concerned countries. Nonetheless, the Tokyo Conference represents a precious opportunity for the members of the international community to join together so as to support the Sri Lankan people's strong desire for peace.”²⁶

Mr. Akashi concluded at the end of the 2003 Tokyo conference that “Japan considers that the Conference has succeeded in attaining its twofold objectives; namely, for the international community (a) to demonstrate its strong and unified commitment to the reconstruction and development of Sri Lanka, as well as to (b) encourage the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to redouble their efforts to make further progress in the peace process. To be honest, there had been lingering doubts before the Conference about wisdom of holding of the Conference in the absence of the LTTE, but these doubts have largely been dissipated, as the Conference has proven to be a unique and historic opportunity for the international community to express its unanimous support to a negotiated settlement in Sri Lanka.” But, indeed, the Tokyo conference was held only to confirm the international community’s intention to encourage peace talks without commitments of conflict parties. It was very doubtful whether the “lingering doubts” about the validity of the conference were really dissipated by such encouragements by international donors as Mr. Akashi remarked. He summarized that “It is remarkable that the participating donor countries and international organizations together have expressed their willingness to extend assistance to Sri Lanka to a cumulative estimated amount in excess of US \$ 4.5 billion over the four year period through 2003 to 2006.” He did not fully know that this would not happen, although even at the conference he noted that “Many have stated that their commitments are based upon the assumption of a viable peace process. Some have specified significant part of their assistance to the North and East of the country. It is important to note that a number of donors indicated that the disbursement of their assistance would keep pace with satisfactory progress in the peace process.”²⁷ In fact, the Tokyo Conference confirmed that “Assistance by the donor community must be closely linked to substantial and parallel progress in the peace process towards fulfilment of the

²⁶ The “Inaugural Address by Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan at the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka, Tokyo, Japan, June 9, 2003 <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/srilanka/conf0306/pmaddress.html>>.

²⁷ “Remarks by Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Representative of Government of Japan at the Concluding Session,” <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/srilanka/conf0306/remark.html>>.

objectives agreed upon by the parties in Oslo.”²⁸ They declared so probably because they intended to facilitate the peace process. Since no progress in the peace process followed, the full disbursement was never realized.

When the first meeting to follow up the Tokyo Conference was held in Colombo on 12 September 2003 with Mr. Akashi as the chair, 12 donor countries and 7 international organizations “reaffirmed the importance of urgent humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance in the North and East” and “The participating countries and international organizations expressed their strong commitment to continue and intensify their reconstruction and development assistance to the South.”²⁹ The co-chairs of the Tokyo Conference met in June 2004 to issue the statement that “until effective administrative structures are in place in the North and East, the Co-chairs encouraged the parties to agree on the establishment of effective delivery mechanisms for donor-financed development activities in the North and East.”³⁰ Major donors ranging from Japan intended to realize the “dividends of peace” to foster the peace process. But they eventually could not find space and time to fully pursue this course. The peace process was fragile and the political environment rapidly changed.

Development assistances which take years to bear fruit could not have immediate influences. In the first place, LTTE needed a political deal. For instance, Japan started implementing projects like “Trincomalee District Participatory Agricultural Development Project (technical cooperation, September 2005) and Pro-Poor Eastern Infrastructure Development Project (Yen loan, March 2006). But development aid in the east could not have a direct impact upon the behavior of LTTE only to benefit the government side. When President Rajapaksa visited Japan in December 2007, he was reported to have told Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda that “the Government of Sri Lanka was committed to political solution and believed that using force would not be an alternative to political solution,” while he “expressed gratitude for Japan’s assistance for the past 40 years through ODA for the development of Sri Lanka and said that he would like Japan to continue its assistance for peace and development.”³¹ In the same month President Rajapaksa told Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura that “he was confident that using force would not settle the conflict,

²⁸ he “Tokyo Declaration on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka” on June 10, 2003 <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/srilanka/conf0306/declaration.html>>.

²⁹ “Press Release of the first meeting to follow up the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction and Development of Sri Lanka” <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/srilanka/press0309.html>>.

³⁰ “Joint Press Statement” on 1 June 2004 at <<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/srilanka/joint0406.html>>.

³¹ “The Japan-Sri Lanka Summit Meeting” on December 10, 2007 <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2007/12/1176846_840.html>.

and that he would make efforts to prepare the devolution package.”³² So when the Government of Sri Lanka announced it decided to withdraw from the ceasefire in January 2008 within less than a month after these remarks by President Rajapaksa, the Government of Japan had to be “deeply concerned that the decision taken by the Government of Sri Lanka may lead to the escalation of the conflict by way of increased level of violence and greater civilian casualties, and leave the peace process at a standstill.”³³ This kind of statement was, however, not understood as a sufficient pressure which some may expected Japan to exert.³⁴

One fundamental question about the “peace dividends” strategy is concerning the point that the war in Sri Lanka was political in nature. Economic incentives may make some impacts. It would be true that conflict parties may obtain as much economic gains as possible by attracting donors, as long as such attitudes do not jeopardize their political goals. But a very natural logical assumption would be that political issues would not be solved by development assistances, even when it is reasonable to say that the latter ought to be pursued in line with political strategies. The perspective of peacebuilding should more focus on political aspects of conflict and peace in the country.

5. Politics of Peace in Sri Lanka

The course of the peace process since 2002 can only be understood in the context of politics in domestic, regional and international society. While LTTE played a card of negotiated peace in the midst of terrorist activities, the consecutive governments of Sri Lanka always had to deal with domestic politics. Every time the government attempted a peace settlement, there arose two fronts of oppositions; the adversary LTTE together with sympathetic Tamil forces and nationalist Sinhalese forces. When in power, both SLFP and UNP often switched their attitudes between conciliatory and hard-line tones with LTTE. When they were in opposition, they tended to take whatever position they find advantageous to criticize the government party in power maneuvering pacifist

³² “Mr. Masahiko Koumura, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pays Courtesy Call on Sri Lankan President H.E. Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa” on December 14, 2007 <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2007/12/1176644_840.html>.

³³ “Statement by Mr. Masahiko Koumura, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, on The Government of Sri Lanka’s withdrawal from the Ceasefire Agreement” on January 4, 2008 <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2008/1/1177042_924.html>.

³⁴ International Crisis Group, “Japan: Back UN Action on Sri Lanka: Robust Security Council Measures Urgently Needed to Save Civilian Lives,” 11 May 2009.

public opinions and Sinhalese nationalistic forces.

The pattern became complex with the emergence of JVP as a considerable political factor. When the Indian intervention brought about the end of the Tamil War I, the government had to face two fronts of war: one with LTTE in the north and east and the other in the south. JVP in the south protesting against India's presence in the north is reported to have "murdered thousands of supporters of the ruling UNP in a campaign against the accord" between the government and India "on behalf of Tamils." After the withdrawal of India, in 1989-1990, it is reported that UNP death squads killed thousands of JVP supporters.³⁵ It is true to say that the collapse of the 2002 peace agreement began with LTTE's non-compliance. However, it was the presidential election in 2005 that made a decisive blow to those who were committed to the peace process. Rajapaksa's SLFP aligned itself with JVP and other nationalistic forces at the time of the 2005 presidential election to defeat former Prime Minister Wickremasinghe.

The political environment in the Tamil areas was also not simple. For instance, people in the eastern region were said to be rather fearful of the possible expansion of LTTE control as a result of the 2002 ceasefire due to LTTE's past record of child recruitment, and so on. Anti-LTTE military groups were afraid of security of their own lives. In fact, when LTTE opened its political offices in government-controlled areas, they conducted extortions for child recruitment and money.³⁶ The defection of "Colonel Karuna" in March 2004 made a significant shift in power structure in the east. Furthermore, it should be noted that one third of the population in the north and east consists of Muslims, who are supposed to constitute a separate social group. They had been oppressed by LTTE rather seriously and tended to take side with the government in the LTTE dominant area.³⁷ This was one of the major flaws of the 2002 ceasefire agreement and the following peace process which had a *de fact* presupposition that there were only two opposing groups in Sri Lanka; the government and LTTE.

When Norway began mediation between the government and LTTE, it was unintentionally dragged in the confrontational domestic politics between UNP and SLFP. The 2002 ceasefire agreement was associated with UNP's Prime Minister Wickremesinghe. If it is successful, it is his gains. President Kumaratunga was not in a position to lose anything by stagnation of the peace process. When LTTE proposed an Interim Self-Governing Administration (ISGA) in mid-2003 that angered nationalist

³⁵ International Crisis Group, *Sri Lanka: The Failure of the Peace Process (Crisis Group Asia Report N°124, 28 November 2006)*, p. 4.

³⁶ International Crisis Group, *Sri Lanka: The Failure of the Peace Process*, p. 6.

³⁷ See International Crisis Group, *Sri Lanka's Muslims: Caught in the Crossfire (Asia Report N°134 – 29, May 2007)*.

Sinhalese people, President Kumaratunga took over three key ministries, including defence, thereby severely limiting Prime Minister Wickremesinghe's manoeuvre room, claiming that she was fulfilling her constitutional duty to guarantee security. She dissolved parliament to win the election in April 2004 to replace Wickremesinghe with Mahinda Rajapaksa as Prime Minister.

The regional and international political scenes are not very different in its impact upon the conflict. India as a regional superpower has crucial roles in politics of Sri Lanka. The presence of the Tamil in both India and Sri Lanka promises India's inherent relevance to the conflict in Sri Lanka. In the 1980s and the early 1990s India was an actual player in negotiation and in military situations. But this fact, on the other hand, naturally made some other international players decide on their standpoints on Sri Lanka through the lenses of India. For instance, countries like Pakistan and China, which have traditional rivalries against India, logically tended to support the government side in Sri Lanka even to increase its military strength. LTTE solicits India's support, when desirable; it challenges the Indian government in New Delhi when India does not support it.

Thus, on the other hand, the government utilizes its connections with countries like China and Pakistan, when it wants to escalate confrontations with LTTE. When the government seeks to accommodate LTTE, it would resort to European countries, given that the presence of the Tamil Diaspora is well recognized in some Western countries. The government may make itself appear to rely on countries like Japan and the United States, when necessary, which tends to see the logic of looking at Sri Lanka according to their own concerns like China's growing influence as well as the "Global War on Terror." When the government loses interest in negotiated peace, it may not mind sacrificing its reputation among Western countries by getting closer to its non-Western friends.

This kind of patterns illustrates the great level of flexibility and fragility in domestic politics and foreign policy of Sri Lanka. The war certainly accelerated such flexibility and fragility of politics in Sri Lanka; nevertheless, we can also observe that it is such flexibility and fragility which explain the environment of the disastrous war. The war's end does not promise an immediate or automatic end of such a political environment of Sri Lanka.

6. Prospects

This article has so far analyzed and highlighted the nature of and the environment surrounding the conflict in Sri Lanka. It has argued that the recent end of the war does not promise a solid foundation of peace and stability of Sri Lanka in the future. By looking at the history of the conflict, the article rather suggests that until Sri Lanka solves structural factors of instability which may have caused the war and some other conflicts, the country may not establish a solid foundation for durable peace.

The armed conflict between the government and LTTE is just a part of a wide range of problems. The problem is not simply just ethnic, religious or territorial. The issue is also constitutional, not only in the sense that devolution has been discussed for a long time, but also in the sense that the national standard of citizenship in Sri Lanka is at stake. The political settlement must be pursued in a political arena. But politics required is not just politics of technical maneuvering. Sri Lanka should not miss a historic chance to reconfigure the political foundation of the existence of the entire country.