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POLITICAL SOLUTION GARNERED BY THE PRINT MEDIA IN RESOLVING THE SRI LANKAN CONFLICT

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Abstract:

The 30 years of local armed conflict in Sri Lanka that broke out between the state security forces and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE) in early 1980s came to an end after Sri Lankan government demolished the LTTE in 2009. A end of such civil war was highly hoped by the people displaced by the same armed conflict to be an opportunity to return to their homes ending their protracted displaced live. The end of the war was also widely interpreted as an opportunity to renew their onetime ethnic relations, which remained vulnerably damaged after this armed conflict. Sri Lanka entered an uncertain phase of post-civil war political reconstruction. The announcement to hold early presidential elections in January 2010 added to uncertainties to Sri Lanka's post civil war political process.

KEY WORDS:

Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy, Civil war; Rebellions; Politics;

INTRODUCTION:

In the post-1994 period the politics of Sri Lanka's Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), when it re-created itself as a mainstream parliamentary political party played a critical role in the collapse of the 2001-2004 peace process. The fundamental analytical enigma of the JVP lies in a highly effective campaign of opposition to the Ranil Wickremasinghe government's two-track agenda of peace. Peace initiatives brokered by Norway (judged a failure) and the proliferation of foreign-funded NGOs involved with human rights issues, seen by many Sinhalese (such as the sociologist Susantha Goonetilleke) as "parasitic", an "ethnic studies industry... without a grass-roots understanding" of the situation

TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT

Tamil United Liberation front Chief V.Anadasangaree vehemently opposed the unitary label within united Srilanka. He expressed concern over media reports about the possibility of the All Parties Representative conferences (APRC) coming forward with package of proposals with unitary label. He warned that such a proposal would only strengthen the LTTE's call for separation and give oxygen to the dying organization and kill hopes of those who have placed their faith in (APRC). A political solution with the unitary label where the state is not willing to recognize the other communities as those with legitimate grounds of power sharing is a defeat for people like who have been changing the Tamil community to forget separation and come into path of a united srilanka. Any solution under unitary constitution will be half baked one. It will give room for further agitation in the future fuelled by the remnants of the LTTE. The result would be a disruption of the hard earned peace and the country back square back one, into another

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cycle of violence. “No political solution will be acceptable to the LTTE, other than a kingdom for Prabhakaran.....fair and just political solution will convince the Tamil people not only in the country but around the world that there is no need for tyranny and terror of LTTE”. He advocated the Indian Model as an ideal solution for the ethnic crisis, the Indian constitution does not say federal or unitary but has managed to hold the country together for 60 years.(sep,13,07,The Hindu).The editor –in-chief of the Hindu N.Ram during the annual meeting of the srilanka –India friendship society said democratic governance was the need of the hour in the east and went on to ask if the government was ready to demonstrate the political will and take reasonable risks in its quest to resolve the ethnic question.

He also added that terms or labels like “federal” or unitary were immaterial and said it would worth while for the government to consider “a quasi –federal system” for devolution of power and meeting the aspirations of all sections of the society. Parallels were drawn from Jammu and Kashmir experiences and the north and east when political leadership failed to take advantage from the gains made by security forces in weakening of the militant groups the military advances proved to be short-lived. Tracing the Indian policy towards srilanka prior to 1991 Mr.Ram said that the anti Tamil riot of 1983 had direct impact on the India –srilanka relations from the period 1983-to 1991.Following the course correction of 1991 the relations between the countries have become more independent and stable with greater depth with successive change of four governments and six Prime Minister in srilanka. The srilanka accord of 1987 was highly controversial and divisive at the time of its conception it had substantive content and valuable lessons for both the countries (sep17, 07, The Hindu).Consolidating the recent gains made by the military against the liberation tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) The Janatha Vimukuthi Peramuna (JVP) is of the firm view that Mahinda rajapakse government in Srilanka should hold elections to the provincial elections under 13th amendment.

Jvp leader somawansa Amaresinghe said that though his party was opposed to the 13th amendment made a follow up to the 1987 in the eastern part of Srilanka by coming out with a proposal on the Indian Model. In Srilanka, sections of people were allegoric to the terms” federal” and “unitary”. So the Indian model would be relevant. The two principal parties the ruling Srilankan freedom party(SLFP) and united India Srilanka accord it believed that elections in the east would encourage democracy and promote development.

“There are huge gaps in the development status of provinces. For instance, while the western province accounts for 50% of the country's GDP the share of the eastern province is more 2.5 percent. That is why we say the issue is not federalism but democracy and equality. President, Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), V.Anandasangree also wanted the Srilankan government to find out possible solution to ethnic problems the weakening of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam National party(UNP) openly acknowledged federalism as the option to solve the problem and the leftists always supported it. Mr.anandasangree said though the people had been liberated from LTTE control they were going through enormous is possible hardship. He also urged leaders and people of Tamilnadu to pressure the union government to advise the srilankan government to go in for greater devolution of powers (sep 22 3, 07, The Hindu).United National party (UNP) srilanka,s main opposition party in the statement formulated at a recent meeting of the policy making forum of the party sought to put at rest speculation in a section of the media about a shift in the position of the party vis-à-vis the ethnic question. The UNP has called for amendments to the Norwegian –brokered 2002 ceasefire agreement (CFA) and demanded an “innovative and new constitutional model” drawing on the island nation's own experiences for resolution of the ethnic question.

The CFA (ceasefire agreement) must be amended taking into account the present situation in the north east and the experiences of the last few years. Though the statement did not elaborate on the nature of the amendments to the CFA senior leaders said CFA should reflect the changed ground realities following the ouster of Tamil tigers in the east and provide space to Muslim as a party to the negotiations on the devolution of powers. The party favored greater role for the srilanka monitoring mission (SLMM) as well.

The UNP said the party also believed that long lasting peace is possible only through a negotiated peace settlement based on credible power sharing proposal acceptable to all communities. The political solution must address the grievances of Tamils the fears of Muslims in the north –east regarding ethnic cleansing and the concern of some section of the Sinhalese that devolution will lead to separatism .On the debate over the unit of devolution the UNP said that the present system (13th amendment) is based on the provinces and a decision was required whether the provinces will be the unit of devolution for the future. The UNP architect of the 2002 agreement said that the entire peace process has to be structured and efforts should be made to talks with the LTTE as well as other groups. A political solution must be acceptable to all communities. Thereafter it must be accepted by the people at referendum. Once a negotiated political solution is accepted at a referendum a constitutional amendment incorporating a political solution will be passed by parliament. This constitution amendment will have to be approved by the people at second

referendum.

United National party's special statement

The united National party believes that long lasting peace is possible only through negotiated political solution based on credible power-sharing proposal acceptable to all communities. The party's annual conventions of 2004 and 2006 reiterated this position.

The leader of the party and leader of opposition Ranil Wickremesinghe delivered during the commemoration lecture.

1. We must oppose separatism; terrorism requires a military response and causes leading to separatism require a political solution. There must be contingency plans to deal with any breakdown in negotiations or when there are obstacles to political solution.
2. The legitimate aspirations of all communities must be accommodated, that is the political solution must address the grievances of Tamils, the fears of Muslims in the north-east, the concerns of some sections of the Sinhalese will lead to separatism
3. The territorial integrity of solution, the sovereignty of the people.
4. There must be power sharing between the national governments, regional / provincial councils and local authorities. The centre must retain the powers needed for the effective functioning of the national government. People living in the north and south have the fears that their power vested in the region/province will be taken away by a future parliament.
5. Talk with the LTTE, talks with all other parties, groups,-apolitical solution acceptable to all.

TULF leader and his appeal

Especially after the death of LTTE political wing leader S.P.Thamilchelvan in air raid on November 2 President Of Tamil United Liberation front V.andanagree appealed to leaders and people of Tamilnadu to put pressure in LTTE to end war and go on to the negotiating table. Mr.Anadasangaree said that I strongly agree urge the leaders and the people of tamilnadu to take into serious consideration the several matters brought out in the urgent appeal and to demonstrate against Mr.Prabhakaran demanding him to cry halt to his meaningless war to come to terms with the government of Srilanka giving up his demand for separation and to agree for federal set up or an alternative to agree for an Indian Model for which very wide support among the sri lankans can be obtained. Let tamilandu not make a historical blunder by supporting LTTE. The TULF leader said 10 days before the killing of Tamilchelvan his leader prabhakaran had posed for photograph with 21 suicide bombings who attacked the anudharapura air base on oct 22 and Tamilchelvan cannot escape responsibility for the incident. Sri lanka is likely to finalize a power devolution package to end the 25 year old ethnic conflict before PM Manmohan singh visit to srilanka in February 2008.President mahinda rajapaksa is likely to announce the full implementation of the provisions on 13th amendment to the srilankan constitution which gave effect to the devolution provisions of the controversial indo-lankan accord signed in July 1987.Srilanka was now ready to obtain Indian endorsement for the 13th amendment to the constitution under which the provincial council system was introduced in srilanka as told by the paper "The nation".

A public opinion survey by the centre for policy alternatives (CPA) a Colombo based think tank has brought to the fore the deep divisions among the majority and minority communities of Sri Lanka on the ongoing undeclared war in the island nation. The survey conducted in 2001 showed that 48.5 percent of the sinhala community the war can be ended and peace accord restored in the country only by the government defeating the LTTE. However in the other three communities Tamil -62.3%, upcountry tamils-96.7%, Muslims-85.2% the option chosen was to stop the war and conduct negotiation.

However when asked if they feel that a political settlement is essential to end the conflict majorities in all four groups Sinhalese -35.6%,Tamil-67.1%,Upcountry tamils-40.3%,muslims-71.0 % state that a political settlement is essential. The same trio V.Anandasangaree of the Tamil united liberation front (TULF), D.sitharthan of the people liberation organization of Tamil Ealam (PLOTE), T.Sitharan of the Eelam people revolutionary liberation front (EPRLF) here on a similar mission to revive the srilankan peace process after the collapse of an LTTE Colombo ceasefire. The three Tamil parties are opposed to the violent style of the LTTE, but like the tigers complain that ethnic Tamils in srilanka don't get fair deal. They have suggested that Indian style of federalism could be a solution to the Srilanka –Tamil rift in srilanka .And they want to push through more devolution of powers to Tamils in north and east Srilanka. Delhi wanted solution to the ethnic conflict which does not involve splitting srilanka. But it is not keen to play as active a role as some Srilankan Tamils and Tamils in Tamilnadu. The moderate Tamil leader and srilankan social

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welfare minister K.N.Doguglas Devananda compared the LTTE leader vellupillai prabhakaran to pol pot and Hitler and argued that it would be no solution to the ethnic conflict in the island nation as long as prabhakaran was alive.

A permanent political solution was not feasible immediately and the party presented a formula with three distinct phases before final solution. In the first stage efforts should be made to evolve consensus parties on the effective implementation of 13th amendment to the constitution .The government should immediately set up an interim administration in the northeast.

Srilankan President Mr.Rajapakse appealed to all political parties that his government would abrogate 2002 ceasefire agreement (CFA) with the LTTE. This public announcement came after the united national party criticism of the decision to withdraw from the CFA. The government of srilanka is liable for the abrogation of the CFA .They will be condemned by the international community for their racist and war mongering policies.

The all party representative committee constituted by Mr.Rajapaksa in mid-2006 to advise him on a political package for power sharing to submit the much awaited draft for a political solution. The main opposition party united national party and Janatha vimukthi permuna have quit the APRC for different reasons. The proposals so far agreed amount to an improvement of the 13th amendment to the constitution. But the LTTE breaking its silence said it was ready to implement clause of the CFA agreement and respect it 100 percent We also request that Norway should continue with its facilitation role with the support of the international community .the LTTE made known its position through a written statement when the SLMM Head of mission,Lars Johan Solveburg met the Head B.Nadesan in killonchi.

LTTE felt that it was shock and disappointment over the abrogation of the cFA and the statement said the CFA had the necessary clauses to remove the military zone declared by the military facilitate the resettlement of the Tamil people in their land reopen the a9 Jaffna kandy and the chenkaladi badulla highways vacate the schools and places of worship that are occupied by military and remove all fishing restrictions.(Jan 11,08,The Hindu). The srilankan government rejected the revival of the Norwegian brokered treaty for it would be used to strengthen them militarily. The Srilankan government was to pull out of the ceasefire as it would expire in January 16, 2008. The srilankan government might invite the LTTE for direct talk after the report of the devolution package is accepted by political parties and then ratified by a referendum. The resumption of ceasefire by the LTTE was a joke the senior srilankan official referred that the rebel chief vellupillai Prbhakaran had resorted to such tactics whenever he was in trouble to rearm the outfit. The LTTE started waging war on the Indian peace keeping force despite signing the Indo-sri lankan peace accord on oct 10th 1987.The LTTE should have implemented the CFA of 2002 in 2002 and not in 2008. Whenever prabhakran is in trouble he is ready for peace negotiations (Jan 13, 08, TNIE).

Military solution

While condemning the assassination the EU and the US made it a point to insist that there would be no military solution to the ongoing conflict (April 8, 2008, The Hindu). The split in the anti-Indian political party JVP weakened the srilankan researcher Anuppama in ranawawa draws the conclusion that the majority community in Srilanka have been wary and disapproving of western mediation. Sri lanka is faced with a prospect of western and Japanese economic sanctions because of war and consequent violation of human rights. President Mahinda Rajapaksa has already accepted the need for pre-eminent Indian role and had promised to fully implement the 13th amendment to the Srilankan constitution a devolution scheme enacted under the aegis in 1987.

Holding elections

The APRC is of the view that conditions in the eastern province are conducive for holding elections to provincial council condition in the Northern Province are far from being peaceful. as it is not possible to hold elections in the north an interim council for northern province in terms constitution and make statues .The interim council of a province will aid advice the Governor in the exercise of his executive powers and will function until election is held in that province.

De merger of north and east

The united north –eastern province established in 1987 was divided into two in 2006 following a Supreme Court ruling. In the first ever election to the srilankan eastern province council about 60% of the nearly 10 lakh voters exercised their franchise. The opposition parties and independent observers have denounced that the election as fraudulent on the ground that the ruling party united people's freedom

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alliance (UPFA) and rebel tiger have indulged in large scale irregularities in several polling booths. The ruling coalition in the eastern province comprises the united people's freedom alliance (UPFA) and Tamil viduthalai puligal (TMVP) an armed Tamil group dependent on the government for survival. Therefore if the UPFA shows no interest in any significant devolution that the TMVP will be constrained to toe the line forgetting the long standing Tamil demand for autonomy.

As the relationship between the ongoing successful military operations and the political solution Mr.Rajapaksa made the point that the solution had to be given to the Tamil people not to the LTTE what is the use of giving solution to terrorist.

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