An analysis of how fear, distrust, division between the parties and specific types of social structures resulted in Protracted Social Conflicts: Special reference to Sri Lankan Conflict

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Social conflicts are everywhere which are visible in our societies and even in the world. But protracted social conflicts are crucial as they are very complicated in terms of giving them a proper resolution. Known as one of the fathers of conflict resolution, Edward Azar born in Lebanon in 1938, moved to the United States as a graduate international relations student, and subsequently specialized in what was at first a mainly quantitative analysis of interstate conflict (Rambotham, 2005). The influential work of Dr. Edward Azar has provided a theoretical conceptualization and foundation from which many PSC scholars have built. While other works have added to the theoretical foundation established by Azar through descriptive analysis, the further development of the theoretical foundation and conceptualization of PSC beyond his original work has been limited (Ramsbotham, 2005). Azar explains his view of protracted social conflict as "The prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions an economic participation" (Ramsbotham, et al, 1999). Azar, goes further and he identifies that protracted social conflicts have no clear start or ending. 'Many conflicts currently active in the underdeveloped parts of the

world are characterized by a blurred demarcation between internal and external sources and actors. Moreover, there are multiple causal factors and dynamics, reflected in changing goals, actors and targets. Finally, these conflicts do not show clear starting and terminating points (Azar, 1990).

Azar defines four clusters of variables as preconditions for Protracted Social Conflicts. Those are the communal content of a society, human needs, the state's role and international linkages (Reimann, 2002). In protracted social conflicts have typical characteristics that account for prolonged nature. Significantly they have the features like economical and technological underdevelopment and unintegrated social and political systems. Also it includes distributive injustice which requires the elimination or substantial modification of economic social and extreme disparities in political privilege and opportunity. The fact is that ethnic and communal cleavages as a source of protracted social conflict. Ethnicity is an important case, as the study of the ethnicity and the drive for ethnic identity enables us to understand the nature of the conflict generally. It is the denial of the human needs of which ethnic identity is simply one that finally emerges as the source of conflict. (Azar, 1990). For Edward Azar, in a sustained sequence of studies published from the early 1970s, the critical factor in protracted social conflict (PSC), such as persisted in Lebanon, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Northern Ireland, Ethiopia, Israel, Sudan, Cyprus, Iran, Nigeria or South Africa, was that it represented 'the prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation (Ramsbotham, 2005). Social protracted theory can be discussed with Sri Lankan conflict. Sri Lankan conflict has a longer history as a communal conflict and a result of structural violence. Protracted social conflicts are breeders of crises and armed struggles as well as struggled structural violence and underdevelopment (Davies & Kaufman, 2002). Edward Azar coined the protracted social conflict to describe conflict partners similar to those that have been present in Sri Lanka since 1984 (Winslow & Woost, 2004). In addition, Sinhalese violence against the Tamils continued even after the ethnic violence in 1983. According to Human Rights Watch, after 1983, tens of thousands of people ended their life in prison cell (Imtiyaz & Stavis, 2008). The protracted war and violence has also frozen ethnic identities, reinforced hostilities among ethnic communities, and has even created epistemic ethnic enclaves in the country (Uyangoda, 2006). Thus, the origin of the Sri Lankan protracted conflict could be traced to the era of colonialism, which introduced

beliefs about racial and superiority and identity. This controversy led ultimately resulted in two oppositions between two groups (Nwanolue, Iwuoha & Mary, 2013).

Sri Lanka was a colony under Portuguese (1505), Dutch (1656-1796) and later under the British rule (1796-1948).The conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE has its origin in nationalist politics that can be traced back to the marginalization of Tamil minority that began after the country's independence from the British colonial rule in 1948. The central government and ruled support from the Sinhala majority introduced different linguistic and religious restrictions that had severe consequences for the Tamil minority (Ramses & Amer, 2011). This can refer to the Azar's social protracted conflict beyond anthropology history and sociology (Ramsbothan, 20015). Due to the discrimination Tamil began to demand a right to self-determination for Tamils in the North and East and demand in the beginning only involved non- violent methods, later on evolved in to an armed struggle led by LTTE. This represents the division between the ethnic groups mainly the results of the underlying consequences. In his conceptualization of protracted social conflict, Azar emphasized the role of human needs and particularly the need for acceptance and recognition of identity as the primary motivating factors of that conflict (Davies & Kaufman, 2002).

The violent struggle to establish a separate state in the name of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka, ultimately led by LTTE began in mid-1970s. The main cause of it was the failure of Sri Lanka's post independent political leadership to agree upon on a political system that would grant citizens of all ethnicities equal access to the resources and protection of the state. (McGilvray & Gamburd, 2010). The passage of the Official Language Act (1956) precipitated a current of aggression between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. This was significantly leading to the increasing marginalization of the Tamil minority. Once violent interactions become the norm, retributive violence led to a mutually enforcing hostile environment between the Tamils and Sinhalese. However, by 1977, Tamil youths had become extremely dissatisfied with the Sinhalese government and the Tamil leadership alike. They had begun resorting to terrorist activity, committing assassinations of Tamil 'collaborators' and police officials while robbing banks to fund their activities. Furthermore, the partisan violence exhibited by the Sri Lankan armed forces has convinced the Tamil people that their physical security is not provided by the Sri Lankan government. These two taken together led the Tamil people to lose all faith in

the Sri Lankan state and its institutions and demand their own state (Obriain, 2012). This directly impacted on the beginning of the 1977 Anti-Tamil Riots. These were led by the armed forces, were extremely brutal, and simply led to the marginalization and radicalization of more Tamils. Then, in 1983, the LTTE successfully carried out an attack which killed 13 soldiers. This sparked retaliation by soldiers, who took to terrorizing Tamils in Jaffna. The result was the worst violence yet in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. The cycle of terrorist activity, responded to by Security Force crackdown, which leads to more terrorist activity, shows how once violence became normalized, it became mutually reinforcing and only heightened the divide between Sinhalese and Tamil. This can be seen as the last factor which guaranteed that the ethnic conflict would turn out to be a blood-spattered and violent secessionist movement, with little compromise and no mercy involved (Obriain, 2012). The period from 1983 to 2009 is commonly referred to as the Sri Lankan civil war, during which nearly 100,000 people died according to estimates of the United Nations, and hundreds of thousands of people were internally displaced or fled to neighboring countries. Both parties to the conflict committed killing. The Tamil Tigers organized attacks on police, military and civilian targets. Their tactics included traps and suicide bombers, and they were famous for their use of child soldiers (Ruff, 2015). In this protracted civil war, it had created major terrors in between not only Sinhalese and Tamil but also among Muslims despite of gender, age, religion and cast. LTTE attacks were always creating tension and mass destruction among the civil areas and in 1983, The LTTE killed thirteen Sri Lankan soldiers through the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These Shock waves from this assault spread within the majority Sinhala community. Sinhala gangs killed nearly 5000 Tamils in these bloodletting, often as the police looked on (Nalapat, 2011). This drastically set examples of the terror and the fear created by the Sri Lankan protracted conflict which threaten the lives of human and other species in this land. Children were used prominently in the LTTE protracted guerilla and terrorist campaigns and according to the Sri Lankan Directorate of Military intelligence, 60% of fighters are below 18 years. Over 100 of the women killed belonged to the dreaded Black Tiger suicide squad. Former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated on the night of May 21, 1991, during an election rally at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu by Dhanu, a woman suicide-bomber of the LTTE. This is precisely shows how this protracted conflict created fear among nations even with the internationally lengthened terror. The LTTE and Sri Lankan forces have had severe fights in this war and it created several types of social structures and it dramatically changed its contents.

Coser, (2005) suggests that conflict tends to be dysfunctional only for social structures in which there is insufficient toleration or institutionalization of conflict. Highly intense conflicts that threaten to "tear apart" society tend to arise only in rigid social structures. Thus, what threatens social structures is not conflict as such, but rather the firm character of those structures. LTTE had established corresponding civil administrations within Sri Lanka. During this conflict social order and structures were separately handled by the opposition (LTTE) as maintaining a separate police force, law courts, postal services, banks, administrative offices, television and radio broadcasting station, etc. The most prominent of the LTTE 'state structure' is the 'Tamil Eelam Judiciary' and the 'Tamil Eelam Police'. The 'Tamil Eelam Police', with its headquarters at Kilinochchi was formed in year 1993, and reportedly has several wings, including traffic, crime prevention, crime detection, information bureau, administration and a special force. LTTE cadres collect taxes, its courts administer their version of justice and the entire law and order machinery is LTTE-controlled[1]. Overall, the Tamil people had no faith in the Sri Lankan state by 1983. Not only had it lost faith in the Sinhalese leadership's ability to meet Tamil needs, it had also lost faith in the Tamil leadership's ability to bring about those changes through peaceful government institutions.

In conclusion, since this protracted war in Sri Lanka created fear, distrust and the division of social structures, the terrorism has been defeated .But still Tamil people likely to have no faith with the Sinhalese rulers of Sri Lanka and do not trust the military to protect them. Although concessions have been made over the past 30 years regarding autonomy and language issues, it has been shown that promises made by the Sinhalese government rarely materialize in reality. A certain level of trust must be fostered between these two groups in order for them to occupy the island together in relative harmony. The Sinhalese government cannot simply occupy the Tamil areas and rule through force. The Sinhalese must be sincere this time around. They must preserve their promises to the Tamil people and show them that their interests and security can be provided within a united Sri Lankan State (Obriain, 2012). At present government is practicing these factors to some extent. There are still displaced people in Sri Lanka. By adopting this policy the Government commits to taking all the necessary measures to end displacement including

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1   Liberation   Tigers   of   Tamil   Eelam   (LTTE),   Retrieved   from
http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/terroristoutfits/Ltte.htm

the commitment of adequate monetary and human resources for this task (National Policy on durable solutions for conflict-affected displacement Report, 2016). And it's essential to address the issues in the past, the land claims, landless, facilitating refugee returns, shelter and livelihood and co-existence among the nations.

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