

IMPERATIVES OF POST CONFLICT SRI LANKA AND IMPACT OF ITS RELATIONS WITH CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka had been engaged in a prolonged armed conflict for nearly thirty years' time and the 2009 military victory by then government against the Liberation Tigers Tamil Elam (LTTE) who fought for a separate state, provoked the attention of international community towards Sri Lanka which resulting involvement by many external actors in to the domestic affairs of Sri Lanka. Under this premise the main research focus of the study is to distinguish major imperatives and find out the impact of certain external actors' involvement with post-conflict Sri Lanka to determine to what extent they impact on state affairs. When consider the external actors' involvement, among them China plays a crucial role during and after the 2009 conflict and this study therefore focus on its relations with Post-Conflict Sri Lanka and its impact on it.

One of the objectives of the study is to identify the major imperatives of Post-Conflict Sri Lanka and another objective is to determine the impact of China's relations with post-conflict Sri Lanka. This study has been carried out through qualitative approach and to achieve aforesaid objectives secondary data gathered from various sources such as journal articles, newspapers, books, government publications in both electronic and printed versions were used. When analyzing data the documentary analysis and descriptive analysis had been used and at the same time some of the theoretical aspects derived from relevant theories also have been used to describe data more comprehensively and analytically.

As for the research findings it was revealed that the major imperatives of post-conflict Sri Lanka could be defined under two categories, mainly economic and socio-political. The external responses towards post-conflict Sri Lanka also derived from both regional and extra regional actors such as India, China, and the U.S.A. who were the major influencers. When discussing

the imperatives Sri Lanka government had to accelerate both reconciliation process and economic development which requires a similar weight. China responses very positively for the second imperative which came with no political strings and other external involvement such as the U.S.A and India mainly focused on socio-political aspects of reconciliation, human rights plus good governance. Government faces with a dilemma of prioritization and the tilt towards China for economic gains created a rift between other external actors and Sri Lanka in its relations. Geopolitical explanation on Chinese projects revealed that except for two projects those strengthen China's diplomatic relations others have entangled Sri Lanka in to a debt trap. The recent developments indicates that Sri Lanka is attempting to convince the international community of its progress towards establishing good governance since Sri Lanka had understood that it cannot totally trade off its relations with the other external actors to China.

Key words: Imperatives, China, Post Conflict, Sri Lanka

1. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka fought a war of thirty years with the separatist terrorist movement which is known as LTTE (The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam). LTTE was one of the most dangerous terrorist groups who introduced human suicide bombers to the world. In the year 2009 Sri Lankan military forces defeated the LTTE terrorism and achieved their victory. Therefore, 2009 is a significant year in the Sri Lankan history. Post conflict Sri Lanka had to face numerous domestic and external challenges as a country which requires accelerating its economic development on one hand and on the other hand finding a political solution for its ethnic conflict while restoring peace and reconciliation as soon as possible. When facing the two challenges Sri Lanka government preferred home grown solutions for the ethnic issue and

there were strong allegations against the Sri Lankan government committing war crimes during the conflict and the international actors more rigorously addressed this issue at the United Nations which was the most unfortunate situation of post conflict Sri Lanka. As a result of that their external relations became more complicated and problematic more than ever before. Main reason was, with the support of India, western powers made a resolution in the Geneva human right council against Sri Lanka. They repeatedly exclaimed against the Sri Lankan armed forces on human rights violations in the last few days of the war.

On the part of China as one the key external actors involved in post conflict Sri Lankan affairs played a vital role through soft power approach which was attractively perceived by the Sri Lankan policy makers. Considering the geostrategic importance of Indian Ocean and position of Sri Lanka rim state, it has a significant value for both regional and extra regional actors involved in the Indian Ocean.

For any powerful nation who is alert on the power potentials in Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka becomes inevitably significant for them. Sri Lanka is a close ally of China since early stages of their relations. China-Sri Lanka relations have extended through variety of areas such as military, diplomacy, economy, trade, investments, culture and political factors. China as an emerging global power and while achieving its interests, contributed a lot for the economic needs of Sri Lanka.

Based on above background the main research problem of this study is to identify the imperatives of post conflict Sri Lanka and find out the impact of China's involvement in Sri Lankan affairs especially after 2009. As mentioned before 2009 military victory has many repercussions on Sri Lankan economy and polity. Sri Lanka needed to accelerate its economic development and similarly pay its attention in restoring peace and reconciliation. Both were striking challenges for then government and with China's economic expansion interests it looks for the greater opportunities available in Sri Lanka for consolidating its relations further. Sri Lankan government also priorities the economic development as the foremost need of the country and this created a rift with rest of the external stakeholders since their main pressure was to bring about solid political solutions for the ethnic issue and the government mostly preferred Chinese assistance rather than political maneuverings of the other states such as India and the U.S.A. As a result of Sri Lanka's tilt towards China it possess geopolitical implications for other external actors who were interested in Sri Lankan affairs and this study therefore mainly focus on determining the imperatives of Post-Conflict Sri Lanka to identify what are the major concerns of Sri Lankan polity and economy while

finding out the impact of China's involvement in the country and its repercussions.

To that end the one of the objectives is to identify the major imperatives of Post-Conflict Sri Lanka and another objective is to determine the impact of China's relations with post-conflict Sri Lanka.

The existing literature on China's relations with Sri Lanka could be reviewed from broader prospect evolved from its interests in Indian Ocean to South Asia and to Sri Lanka. Since it expects to look at the impacts of China's relations, the responses of major external actors such India and the U.S.A cannot be excluded from the discussion. Yet as a limitation of the study it was decided to consider only the responses of India on this context since India is a determining systemic factor throughout the history and even in today's domestic and external affairs of Sri Lanka.

China and India as key stakeholders in the Indian Ocean affairs are engaged in power struggle and therefore one another's relationships with Indian Ocean littoral states too has significant impact on determine the nature of interstate relationships among these nations. To that end the literature review mainly focus on the interests on Sri Lanka, China and India as well as to understand the imperatives of post-conflict Sri Lanka.

On the side of China its major objective in South Asia is to avoid any military confrontation with India, it tried to enhance the autonomy of small states in South Asia. India is seeking domination of South Asia that would preclude China from pursuing its interests in its neighborhood; Chinese presence and interest in Myanmar, and sale of military hardware to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal were adversely perceived by India at a time. China attempts at developing healthy relationships with the South Asian Countries plus other Indian Ocean states through bi-lateral and multilateral terms in trade and investments to achieve all round opening up and establishing landscape of economic cooperation [1]. To that end Indian Ocean is the core area for China to achieve aforesaid objectives. Jinglian states that "opening up in coastal regions greatly promote regional economic development" [2].

India has emerged as a great power because it meets above mentioned criteria in Southeast Asia. India's transformation from a South Asian power into one capable state can change the regional order in Asia [3]. And also he emphasized the demand for the great power status and its need to acceptance by other great powers and the regional states. Furthermore India's 'emergence is very slow compared to the China in early days. But later India presented significant development economically and also gradually emerged as a powerful

nation [4]. According to Uyangoda (2010) International actors seemed to focus on three issues they considered crucial for post-civil war peace-building in Sri Lanka: (a) early resettlement of displaced Tamil civilians in and outside of refugee camps; (b) provisions for speedy humanitarian aid to civilians with international assistance, participation, and monitoring; and (c) implementation of devolution.

This is what the India plus western powers mainly focus on while Chinese focus is originally economic, diplomatic and geostrategic purpose [5]. On this account the present study observe the impact of China's relations with post conflict Sri Lanka and when discussing the impacts it has focused on the implications of Sri Lanka and China relations on India also as one of the consequences.

2.METHODOLOGY

Qualitative approach has been adopted in finding the answers for the research questions of the study. The main research questions of the study are:

What are the imperatives of Post-Conflict Sri Lanka?

What is the impact of China's relations with Post-Conflict Sri Lanka?

This study makes use of secondary data gathered from various sources such as journal articles, newspapers, books, government publications in both electronic and printed versions were used. Document analysis descriptive analysis and theoretical analysis has been used as data analyzing methods. Through document analysis the available documents and data which are related to the study has been interpreted to find out specific issues which helps to develop better understanding of the study. The theoretical analysis which makes use of certain concepts derives from the theory has been used to interpret data more comprehensively. To interpret some factors descriptive analysis has been used which describes the basic features of the data in a study. They provide simple summaries with simple graphics analysis.

3.FINDINGS

3.1 Imperstives of Post conflict Sri Lanka

3.1.1 Human Rights allegations

The post conflict political situation in Sri Lanka gradually turned in to a more controversial state due to

Domestic political interests of internal factors in the country and also from outside world.

After defeating LTTE terrorist movement, Sri Lanka became the first nation which physically eliminated terrorism from the country in 21st century. After the defeat of terrorism, LTTE allied diaspora¹ with the support of some western nations and made a resolution against Sri Lanka in 2009 at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. First resolution on human rights violation against Sri Lanka debated on 26th and 27th of May 2009. Thus when comes to Indo-China involvement on the issue, India conducted pro-west allied position by neglecting Sri Lanka's interests as well as the historical friendship between two countries. Consequently, Indian behavior on Sri Lankan issue, made the foreign policy of Sri Lanka narrower towards China. In International arena China voiced for Sri Lanka with their fullest support. Especially, in the United Nations Security Council, China strongly rejected those accusations over Sri Lanka by using their veto power. China was a back support to Sri Lanka to eradicate the civil war in its northern parts and to bring peace. America, India and some other western nations denied their foreign aid and support to Sri Lanka during the time when it's most needed due to the allegations against war crimes and human rights violations. Therefore, the foreign policy of Sri Lanka started to align towards China during the tenure of Mahinda Rajapaksa

4. Economic development of Sri Lanka and invlovement of China

Same as in history, again China draw its attention towards Sri Lanka due to its strategic location. Accordingly Sri Lanka becomes a special landmark in the new maritime silk route which created through China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) concept. In future Sri Lanka will become the center in the maritime trade route which connects China with Middle East and Europe. While energy Sources and goods are being transferred through this Zone it also let profits and benefits in to Sri Lanka. For this China invests over billions of funds and it enhance the development of infrastructure facilities and implementation of large scale development projects in the region and Sri Lanka has received huge infrastructure development projects from China during past few years.

¹Diaspora means "to scatter" in Greek, but today we use the term to describe a community of people who live outside their shared country of origin or ancestry but maintain active connections with it. A diaspora includes both emigrants and their descendants (www.diasporaalliance.org)

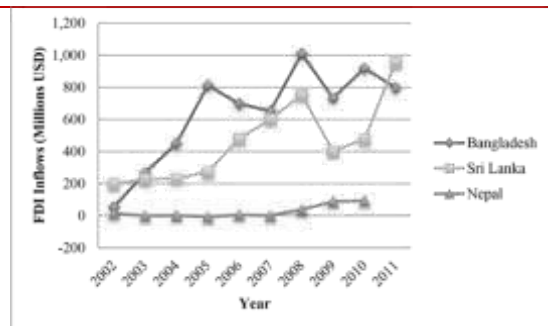


Figure 1: Focus Countries' FDI Inflow, 2003-2011

Reference: Brunjes, Levine, Palmer and Smith (2013, p.11)

As shown in Figure 1 all the three countries receive ODI from China and the total FDI for these countries are also increasing. Sri Lanka has the biggest total inward FDI in year 2012 and Brunjes, Levine, Palmer and Smith (2013, p.10) explains “ This overall trend for Sri Lankan FDI is mirrored in the Chinese ODI trend to Sri Lanka, suggesting that China is not alone in increasing investment in the country since 2009. At the same time, China’s share in the total Sri Lanka inward FDI has risen since 2009, albeit from a very low point.”

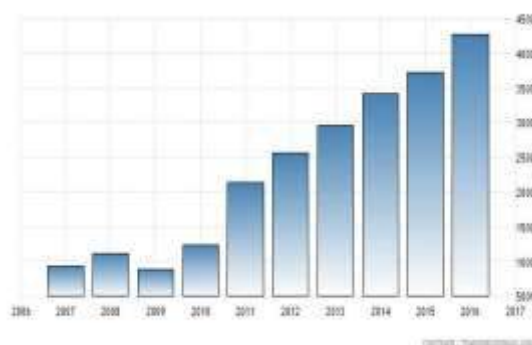


Figure 2: Sri Lanka imports from China

Reference: (<https://tradingeconomics.com>)

Sri Lankan imports from China has shown through the Figure 2. The value of Sri Lanka Imports from China was US\$4.27 Billion during 2016, and it clearly shows a gradual increase from 2006 to 2017 whereas the next figure depicts that India has many fluctuations in its imports. Year 2009 has the less number of imports and the year 2016 has the highest number of imports. From 2007 to 2010 there is a fluctuation in Sri Lankan Exports. But after 2010 there is a long term trend until 2016 [6].

Table 1: China’s Big Projects in Sri Lanka

Project	Facilitate Trade?	Facilitate Military Movement?	Income Potential for China?	Chinese Workers or Materials?
Hambantota Deep Seaport	Yes	Yes	High	Yes
Mahinda Rajapaksa International Airport	Yes	Potentially	High	Yes
Norocholai Coal Power Plant	No	No	Medium	Yes
Matarakataragama Railway Project	No	No	High	Yes
Mahinda Rajapaksa International (Cricket) Stadium	No	No	Low	Yes
Mahinda Rajapaksa Lotus Pond Theatre	No	No	Low	Yes

Reference: Brunjes, Levine, Palmer and Smith (2013, p.30)

China has made use of its workers and materials and out of 6 mega projects four of them have High and medium income potentials for China whereas other two are used for China's image building in the host country in the long run as long as people see these constructions carrying the Chinese legacy in the country.

Major part of Outward Direct Investments of China came in the form of mega construction projects in the sectors of infrastructure facility development, energy programmes and agriculture. In these investments there are two underline factors on the side of China. The profit maximization and geopolitics can be identified as two major reasons for Chinese investments in Sri Lanka. Many of the Chinese state enterprises handled the majority of mega projects and they make use of Chinese laborers and their materials from China and it can be seen both a long term projects as well as investments in constructions. When observe it closely the invested money goes back to China

5. CONCLUSIONS

As for the research findings it was revealed that the major imperatives of post-conflict Sri Lanka could be defined under two categories, mainly economic and socio-political. The external responses towards post-conflict Sri

Lanka also derived from both regional and extra regional actors such as India, China, and the U.S.A. who were the major influencers. When discussing the imperatives Sri Lanka government had to accelerate both reconciliation process and economic development which requires a similar weight. China responses very positively for the second imperative which came with no political strings and other external involvement such as the U.S.A and India mainly focused on socio-political aspects of reconciliation, human rights plus good governance. Government faces with a dilemma of prioritization and the tilt towards China for economic gains created a rift between other external actors and Sri Lanka in its relations. Geopolitical explanation on Chinese projects revealed that except for two projects those strengthen China's diplomatic relations others have entangled Sri Lanka in to a debt trap. The recent developments indicates that Sri Lanka is attempting to convince the international community of its progress towards establishing good governance since Sri Lanka had understood that it cannot totally trade off its relations with the other external actors to China.

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