

JSS 20-63  
323.27  
Political Sci.

## **THE CIVIL WAR: AN IMPEDIMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Introduction**

“All major disaster problems in the Third World are essentially unresolved developmental problems. Disaster prevention is thus primarily an aspect of development, and this must be a development that takes place within sustainable limits”

(Odd Grann, Secretary General, Norwegian Red Cross, WCED Public Hearing, OSLO, 24-25 June, 1985)

Sustainable development emerged as a concept in the late 1970s as a result of the realization that traditional development fails to deliver what is promised - a better life for humanity. Sustainable development attempts to replace the economic and short term aspirations of development with a holistic and long term perspective. It is important to note that what sustainable development attempts to sustain is “development”.

Sustainable development, as a concept, is certainly superior to traditional development, and also more acceptable, but the strategies to achieve sustainable development have not yet been fully developed. Sustainable development is long on conceptual and theoretical discussions and short on implementation.

One of the most important questions that a society has to face in attempting to achieve sustainable development is to see whether the broader socio-economic context within which it has to be implemented is in place. The socio-economic structures and most of the contemporary economic problems of today, are in fact the products of “development era”. These structures need to be changed and problems solved if we are to achieve sustainable development. In Sri Lanka, one of the most

pernicious problems impeding sustainable development is the on-going civil war.

The civil war and its impact directly and indirectly challenge all principles of sustainable development. The war destabilizes society and the country's economy preventing their smooth functioning and growth. It directly undermines the development that has already been achieved. The most devastating impact has been on the human resources. For example, the quality of education in the affected areas have declined sharply and the number of children receiving formal education has gone down markedly. Instead, a large number of young are attracted to the insurgency. The health and other social services are greatly disrupted. The quality of life of people in the war zone has declined to its lowest. The war, which now absorbs over 20 per cent of the government expenditure, has robbed the country of much needed investment. It has scared away foreign investors to a significant extent. The general outcomes of this have been rising inflation and, making the life of the poor very difficult. The civil war also prevents development in the areas controlled by the insurgents increasing the spatial disparities in development. Finally, the war simply prevents, if not makes it impossible for , caring for the future generations.

A continuing war makes it almost impossible for any country to seriously engage in sustainable development. Therefore, it is imperative that the war be stopped. This requires an attitudinal change of all parties directly or indirectly responsible and linked to the war. The Tamil community and the insurgents must realize that the guerrilla war cannot ever deliver their goal of a separate state. Sinhalese community and the political leaders must realize that devolution of power is essential as a democratic solution to the problem. In fact, increased people's participation in decision-making-the essence of devolution - is also an intrinsic element of sustainable development. The first part of the paper discusses the principles and strategies of sustainability and the second part, examines how the war has affected development as practised today. The brief third part, discussing the solutions to the civil war, points out that sustainable development cannot be imposed but it is a collective decision the entire society has to make.

## **The Context**

The concept of sustainable development emerged in the late 1970s as a reaction to the crisis of economic development which is epitomized by continuing underdevelopment on the one hand and increasing depletion of the natural resource base on the other. Whatever the arguments and subsequent modifications, the definition provided by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) remains valid. It simply defines sustainable development as the "Development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

The present phase of the modern world economy started with the end of the World War II. The world after experiencing the bitter and devastating consequences of the War devised strategies to deal with them. Identifying poverty and underdevelopment as major potential causes for a future war, the powerful states led by the United States accepted that they have to help the poor countries to achieve economic development. Identifying the lack of capital as the major impediment to development in the poor countries, the newly created global institutions such as IBRD and IMF began to make the necessary capital available to the poor countries.

The dominant ideology that came to be accepted by all countries in the post-World War era was that of rapid economic growth and GNP was devised as the index to measure economic growth. This strategy required the exploitation of natural resources in all parts of the world. Although the nature provided all the resources for development, nature was seen as inefficient and a hindrance to development. Thus development came to be seen as an exercise of "winning against nature".

The economism intrinsic to the then popular concept of development was based on several fundamental assumptions; that development is economic growth, that development could continue unabated, that there is an abundance of resources, and that nature is infinitely resilient. This anthropocentric developmental thrust expanded both in extent and intensity at an exponential rate both in developed and developing

countries. However, by 1970s, a new phenomenon hitherto unknown to the world became very evident in many parts of the world, especially in the West. The drastic changes that man induced on environment in their effort to develop began to change the environment quite unexpectedly. In a number of places, the initially hospitable environments where man began his development activities have now transformed into not-so-hospitable environments. These came to be known as “environmental problems”. Environmental problems, which were confined to relatively small locations in the early 1970s soon grew into regional and even global levels.

The intellectual thinking closely followed the world realities of the rising environmental problems. Although the environmental changes effected by human activities did receive some scholarly attention, it was largely confined to the universities. It was a few pieces of writing that emerged since the early 1960s that alarmed the world on the impending danger of the environmental problems.

One of the early statements in this tradition was the *Silent Spring* written by Rachel Carson (1962). Carson very convincingly warned the world about the potential danger of the introduction of man-made chemicals to the natural environment especially pointing at the impacts of the use of DDT. Another powerful document was the *Limits to Growth* published by the a group of intellectuals popularly known as the Club of Rome (1968). As the self-explanatory title suggests, it simply argued that economic growth cannot continue indefinitely as there are definite limits of the resource base. E.F. Shuemarcher (1973), in *Small is Beautiful*, pointed out that development as pursued by the contemporary world has led to problems because of its expansive demand on resources, and argued that we have to go in the direction of small scale. This is simply an argument for optimization as opposed to maximization. The growing awareness of the environmental problems which continue to expand both in intensity and magnitude compelled the policy makers at national and global levels to take it very seriously. The UN took the lead and appointed the World Commission on Environment and Development to study the problems in 1983. The outcome was ‘Our Common Future’, (1987) which introduced the concept of “sustainable develop-

ment” as the realistic alternative to traditional development. Since then, the concept has received world wide attention and much has been written about it. Recent UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the largest gathering of world leaders at Rio, prepared the Agenda 21 as a comprehensive guide for the member states to ensure sustainable development. Sustainable Development is now a globally accepted concept; it has become a household word. Various attempts have been made by governments, supra-governmental and non-governmental organizations alike to achieve sustainable development. Sri Lanka too has taken many steps in this direction (e.g. the adoption of National Environment Act which mandated environmental impact assessments for large scale development projects which are likely to have significant impact on the natural and human environment).

## **The Concept**

The most obvious fact about the concept of sustainable development is that it is primarily about sustaining development. But, unfortunately a widespread misconception exists; that sustainable development is a bottleneck to the development process. The concept of sustainable development rests on simple and obvious facts. The first is that unless one can ensure the sustainability of inputs of development, development itself cannot be sustained. Inputs for development come from the environment which consists of physical, biotic and human spheres. Therefore, it is elementary logic that development and environment are not two opposing phenomena but two sides of the same coin. If you slit it through the middle to separate them you have just lost both.

Second involves the moral responsibility of human beings towards themselves. People are expected to be responsible for and fair by their own off springs. The resources that we have today are there only because our ancestors left them for us. The moral principle that is embedded in the concept of sustainable development is that the present use of resources should not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs using the same resources. Built on these very simple and obvious realities, the concept of sustainable development is based on the following principles.

1. Limit human impact on the biosphere to a level that is within its carrying capacity; From maximum to optimum.
2. Maintain the stock of biological wealth; Maintain life-support system
3. Use non-renewable resources at a level that do not exceed the rate of creation of renewable substitutes.
4. Equitable distribution of the benefits and cost of resource use and environmental management in terms of both generational and income equity.
5. Promote technologies that increase the benefits from a given stock of resources, energy efficiency, conservation, switching to renewables.
6. Use of economic policy to help maintain natural resources.
7. Adopt anticipatory, cross sectoral approach to decision making. This include changing from short term to long term, single sector to multi sector and react and cure strategy to anticipate and prevent strategy.
8. Promote and support cultural values compatible with sustainability
9. *Maintain Political stability.*
10. *Develop human resources.*
11. *Prevent destruction.*

It is amply clear from the above list that sustainable development requires an integrated approach that transcends the economic into all other areas of life and activities of a society. Although this integrated approach makes sustainable development appear a very complex phenomenon, it is in fact very simple and common sense. Sustainable development is nothing but a more technical term for “good life” in its fullest sense. The items one through eight in this list specify activities to be promoted to achieve sustainable development. The last three items relate to the social context within which sustainable development can be achieved realistically. Unless the proper socio-political context is established, other principles cannot be practised. It is here that civil war become an impediment to sustainable development.

On the contextual basis of sustainable development, *Our Common Future* points out that sustainable development requires, among others “a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision

making, an economic system that is able to generate a surplus and a social system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development". Thus, very stable political, economic and social systems are essential preconditions for sustainable development. Writing on the relationship between the environment and development in Sri Lanka, Arudpragasam argues that "sustainable development demands a rational mix of the three dimension (economic, political and environmental)" and that "the political dimension has to enter the picture but where such considerations override the other two, both the development process and the environmental background tend, most often, to be adversely affected" (Arudpragasam;1996). In Sri Lanka, ethno political consideration has not only over ridden development and environment but it has debilitated all other aspects of life. The guerrilla war instigated by the LTTE undoubtedly receives the first priority of the Sri Lankan state today. The government as the protector of the Sri Lankan state has no choice but to confront the LTTE guerrillas and as long as the guerrillas remain a formidable force, the civil war will receive the top priority.

### **The Main Impacts of the Civil War**

Civil war is undoubtedly the foremost factor that impede the Sri Lanka's attempt towards sustainable development. The civil war has negatively affected all three ingredients needed for sustainable development, namely maintaining political stability, developing human resources and prevention of destruction of development that has already been achieved. Without these three factors being realized sustainable development will remain only as a rhetoric.

The impact of the civil war can be identified at both national and regional levels. While the national level impacts will invariably trickle down to regional levels, regional level impacts may vary from place to place depending on the magnitude and intensity of the war fought in these particular places.

## **National Level Impacts**

“If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand” (Bible, Mark, 2:25)

“It is the ethnic crisis which has evolved into a war which currently engulfs the north and east. It has adversely affected every facet of Sri Lankan public life, seriously impairing every progressive move that we, as a nation have striven to make”

The latter statement clearly explains the impact of the war on the country. It is impossible to estimate the total cost of the civil war in monetary terms precisely because it has affected every facet of life. The effects of the war can be seen from its direct destruction of development infrastructure to indirect areas such as psychological changes among the young due to the growing war culture. Cynically though, even my own time spent (wasted) in writing this paper and your time reading this is a cost of the war; we could be doing something more useful.

## **Destabilizing the Economy**

Destabilization of the economy is one of the most devastating impacts of the civil war. A stable society and economy are essential requirements of sustainable development. Since the early 1980s, Sri Lanka has been deprived of this essential requirement, which has become a scarce luxury. The country has lost many prominent leaders because of assassinations and the country was thrown into chaos and confusion during many such occasions during the last ten years. Although the society has been resilient enough to bare such shocks, the potential loss and the damage will never be known. A number of development programs could not be sustained because the initiators and vanguards were lost in these assassinations. The economy responds to politics very closely. Stable politics will ensure stability in the economy, and therefore, long periods of growth. However, unstable politics will scare away investment as there is no reliable guarantee on the security of the investment and a return on the investment. As a

result, the country has been unable to maintain a steady rate of growth during the last decade. The roller coaster ride of Sri Lankan economy has manifested in a number of other areas which will be discussed below.

### **Disruption to Ordinary Life**

“War is a game in which princes seldom win, the people never”

(Charles Caleb Colton, *Lacon*, 1825, 1.534)

The civil war has led to a general disruption of ordinary life and work in the country and the disruption has peaked during such occasions as massive bomb attacks and assassinations. The civil war has compelled the government to take precautionary security measures which have greatly inconvenienced the population. Road blocks, closing down of roads, security booths at the entrances of government institutions, frequent checking of passengers travelling in public and private transport are some examples of how the war has impacted on the ordinary life in the country. The landscape of the country has become militarized because of the omnipresence of military in many areas of the country and specially in the major cities.

Away from the centre, in the border villages of the Northern, Eastern and North Central Provinces, the disruption of the lives of the ordinary people has reached its peak. It is such a common occurrence that disruption to their daily life has become very ordinary. In many villages, daily life is re-patterned by regular migration to the jungle or to a common religious compound for the night and to the houses and the fields for the day. In some places the disruption is complete; people have lost not only their houses but villages and they are forced to live as refugees. Although it is difficult to quantify the disruption to ordinary life in the country, sustainable development has become a difficult goal for Sri Lanka. It is almost unethical to preach sustainable development to the victims of the war, when the perpetrators of the war are trying to make the war sustainable to achieve their expedient political ambitions.

## Direct Cost of the War

“War involves in its progress such a train of unforeseen and unsuspected circumstances that no human wisdom can calculate the end. IT has but one thing certain, and that is to increase taxes”

(Thomas Paine, Prospects on the Rubicon, 1787)

The war is a non-productive and a destructive activity, thus, leading to a double tragedy. Before the outbreak of the civil war, the Sri Lankan defence forces were very small in number and were maintained primarily as a ceremonial force to parade at independence day celebrations. Defence expenditure was one of the lowest in the world and its share in the government budget was negligible during this era. However, with increasing guerrilla activities by the Tamil extremists since the late 1970s, defence expenditure has risen rapidly.

**Table 1: Rise of Defence Expenditure**

Year	Rs.(Billion)	% of GDP
1977	0.4	1
1984	0.8	3.7
1993	8.0	-
1994	20.0	-
1995	28.0	4.7
1996	46.0	6.5

*Source: Central Bank Annual Report, 1996)*

The share of defence expenditure is expanding, simultaneously reducing that of other sectors. For example, the defense expenditure was 12% and 20% of government expenditure in 1995 and 1996 respectively.

A developing country like Sri Lanka, which desperately needs to improve the quality of life of its people cannot afford to spend 20% of its government expenditure on a war which brings no returns. One of the

best investments that can be made to achieve sustainable development is on education, because it leads to the development of human resources of the future generations. Yet in 1996, Sri Lanka has spent four times more on defense than the entire education sector. The daily cost of the Civil war in 1996 was over Rs. 125 million (US \$ 2.27 million). This is a large sum of money from any standard. We, certainly are very far from sustainable development.

The basic infrastructure that is required to achieve sustainable development is not sufficiently available in Sri Lanka; in fact it is in a very poor state. The transportation system in the country, both highways and railways, is very unsatisfactory. A large number of people still do not have access to clean water and electricity to their houses. In the cities, sewage and solid waste disposal systems are poorly developed. Educational and health facilities too are not adequate. Vocational and professional training is in a poor state. Sri Lanka can no longer boast of its high PQLI - a legacy of past welfare investments by the state. In the recent years, as the relative share of the investment on welfare has declined, the PQLI too has dropped. Mere basic literacy, not supported by professional training, is not useful to a changing economy.

If one follows the simple logic of "cost incurred is a benefit foregone", the civil war expenditure has really robbed the country of much needed capital for development to the tune of 125 million rupees a day in 1996. This is only the cost that the government has incurred. The overall cost born by society could be much higher if one can collect the relevant data. A conservative estimate indicates that the country loses about Rs. 250 million a day as a result of the civil war.

The increasing cost of the war is financed by taxing the people and the industries. The government is deducting 2 per cent of the income from those earning between Rs. 15,000 - 30,000 and 3 per cent from higher income groups. In addition, the government has introduced a National Security (Defence) levy of 4.5 per cent in general and 2 per cent for capital goods imported into the country.

The rising cost of the war means non-investment in economically productive areas. The impact of the non-investment in economically productive areas will only be felt by the country in the years ahead. It will postpone our attempts to reach the NIC status in the near future. It is clear that Sri Lanka cannot maintain even the present level of its economy, let alone reaching the NIC status with 20 per cent of the government income wasted on the war.

The Provisions of the draft Constitution containing the proposals of the Government of Sri Lanka relating to devolution of power, 1996 clearly state that “a vast volume of resources that might have been invested in development, in our future, was sacrificed to the war effort instead”. Arguing for the need to end the war, the same document warns that “if we do not escape the clutches of the crisis, if we do not resolve this dilemma, our future will continue to be shrouded by the shadow of the conflict”. The 1995 Annual Report of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka points out that the “.....hostilities continued to be a drag on the economy in terms of production and investment”. Nothing is further from the truth.

#### Refugees: Victims of the Civil War

“When the elephants fights, the mousedeer between them is killed”

(Malaysian Proverb)

“I have seen children starving. I have seen the agony of mothers and wives. I hate war”

(Franklin D Roosevelt, speech at Chutauqua, NY.,  
Aug 14, 1936)

The civil war in Sri Lanka has produced a very large number of refugees. The number of refugees have increased almost to a million at the height of the Jaffna war in 1996. But as many of the Jaffna Tamils have returned to their homes in 1996 defying the LTTE ban, the number of refugees have declined to about half a million. This includes different categories of refugees. While there are over 200,000 refugees currently

living in refugee camps set up by the government, another 100,000 people have found refuge with their kith and kin. About another 150,000 Tamils have used the civil war to seek greener pastures in the Western countries. At the highest, the civil war produced over 500,000 refugees while at present over 100,000 refugees live in refugee camps scattered throughout the border areas. Over 15,000 fishing families have become refugees simply because the civil war totally halted fishing activities in the North. Unfortunately there has never been a serious attempt to estimate the loss incurred by the refugees. Again a rough estimate indicated that it may be well over Rs. 50 billion. This certainly is an unbearable loss for a developing country like Sri Lanka.

All the Sinhalese and Muslims who lived in Jaffna prior to 1983 have become refugees as they were pushed out by the LTTE. A large number of Tamils also left Jaffna and they migrated to Tamil Nadu or to Colombo fearing the LTTE. In the border areas, a large number of Sinhalese farmers have become refugees.

A refugee is a person who has been deprived of his basic needs. Thus, refugee is a dependent. The country has not only lost their economic contribution, but also it has to look after them. Similar to the war, a refugee is also a double loss to the country. The long term impact of refugees is much greater especially because the younger generation is deprived of access to normal education, good health and sufficient nutrition. In refugee camps, the younger generation is brought up in a totally alien social environment which is not at all conducive to a healthy development of a growing child. They will not be able to face the normal society which looks down upon the refugees for no fault of theirs. Unknowingly, the country is producing a whole generation of refugees who have developed hatred towards larger society for allowing them to become refugees. The impact of the war will not end with the conclusion of the war.

### **Destruction of Infrastructural Facilities**

In our attempt to reach sustainable development, the least we can do is to protect and maintain the existing developmental infrastructure which forms the basis for future development. The destruction of

infrastructural facilities has been an integral part of the strategy of the Tamil Guerrillas. In the most recent bomb attack the LTTE destroyed the centre of Colombo including the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and a few months earlier, they had attacked and destroyed part of the petroleum storage facilities in the vicinity of Colombo.

The LTTE has destroyed the industrial base in Jaffna by vandalizing the major cement, chemical and glass factories during the last 15 years. The electricity grid to Jaffna from Vavunia and within Jaffna Peninsula, and in many parts of the Eastern Province have been totally destroyed. Jaffna has been without electricity for the last thirteen years after LTTE blew up Chunnakam power plant. The railway and the main highway from Vavunia to Jaffna has been destroyed. The electricity grid and the railway network in the East is under frequent attack by the LTTE. These destructions make it very difficult to sustain the current productions and services let alone an increase in the production.

In the war torn areas, a large number of houses, offices, schools, hospitals, and other private and government property have been destroyed. Jaffna hospital, for example, went down from 30 wards with 1015 beds to a mere 17 wards with 380 beds by 1996. Similarly of the 470 schools in Jaffna peninsula only 266 were functioning in 1996. The attendance of teachers were down to less than 40% and students 60% in Jaffna schools in 1996.

Towns such as Kilinochchi, and Paranthan are heavily damaged. The destruction is so vast that the total cost of it will never be known. According to Dr. Michael Schubert of Medical Emergency Relief International, in Jaffna town, 60 per cent of buildings were in need of repair. An estimated five percent of all buildings have been severely damaged as a result of the civil war. Writing on the destruction of Jaffna a newspaper reported that "Jaffna economy is non-existing". An entire regional economy has to be created anew in Jaffna.

### **Cost of Rehabilitation**

The first step in the direction of sustainable development is to reconstruct or rehabilitate what is already destroyed. The rehabilita-

tion and reconstruction of Jaffna peninsula which has been liberated from the LTTE control is no simple task because it has to cover almost every aspect of life in Jaffna. The main component of the programme includes resettlement, relief assistance, bringing arable land under cultivation, resurrection of small and medium industries, rehabilitation of 500 kms of roads and Kankasanturai port, refurbishing over 200 schools, Jaffna general hospital and 12 peripheral hospitals, provision of telephones, 20 MW of electricity, reviving fishing activities, and the re-establishment of the administrative infrastructure. The cost involved in the rehabilitation program proposed by the government is US \$ 284 million or Rs. 13,000 million. All this investment intends to bring Jaffna back to what it was in early 1980s. While Jaffna economy as a result of the war is one and a half decade behind the rest of the country, all the new investment will not change the picture very much because it only rehabilitates what was lost in the war. It will take a very concerted effort and long years for Jaffna to catch up with the level of development in other parts of the country, especially Colombo.

#### Rehabilitation Program Proposed by the Government - 1996

Two stages of the proposed programme.

1. Resettlement and rehabilitation costing US\$ 112 million
2. Economic development, infrastructure, services costing US \$ 162 million

#### Main components of the Rehabilitation Programme

1. 100,000 families to be provided with relief assistance
2. 100,000 families resettled
3. 5000 ha Of arable land to be brought under cultivation.
4. Industrial base to be resurrected and small and medium industries to be reactivated
5. 492 kms roads to be rehabilitated
6. 200 primary and secondary schools to be repaired and facilities reestablished.
7. Jaffna hospital to be rehabilitated and 12 peripheral units reestablished.

8. Telecommunication to 1000 subscribers
9. 20 MV power to be generated through diesel generators.
10. Kankasanturai port to be rehabilitated
11. 14 Multipurpose cooperative Societies to be rehabilitated.
12. Fishing activities of 15,000 displaced families to be revived
13. Livestock to be improved to pre damage period
14. Administrative infrastructure to be reestablished
15. Normal postal and telecommunication to be resumed.

Rehabilitation may not be as easy as the government is contemplating, as long as the LTTE remains a formidable force even in the Mullativu forests. The LTTE has already warned the government that they may not tolerate the rehabilitation programme initiated by the government. It argues that "development and reconstruction (by government) are aimed at blunting the desire among the Tamils for (National) liberation. What is the need for development and rehabilitation after (your) rights, freedom, and self respect have been lost? The people have to be careful about development plans" (LTTE Pamphlet, Untitled, 1996). This is very unfortunate because it indicates that LTTE could sabotage the rehabilitation programme in Jaffna. And as long as the LTTE is engaged in such destructive activities and sabotage, Jaffna economy will continue to suffer and fall behind the rest of country.

### **Declining Foreign Investments**

As a Third World country, Sri Lanka is forced to depend on foreign investment for its economic development. Foreign investment to the country has come in many forms and two of the most prominent sources have been tourism and direct investment by multi-national corporations. Since the early 1980s, international tourism replaced tea as the largest foreign exchange earner. Both these sources of foreign exchange depend on the prevalence of a stable economy and society. A country torn apart by civil war is seen as a dangerous place by people and the corporations in most western countries. In fact the United States has been issuing frequent travel advisories to its citizens who intend to visit Sri Lanka and they are advised not to travel to the north and eastern parts of the island. The burning buildings, government installations,

dead bodies of innocent civilians, direct confrontations between armed forces and guerrillas flashed all over the world by international news media have painted a picture of Sri Lanka as a very dangerous and unsafe place. The Tamil ethnonationalist propaganda has further reinforced this negative image by alleging that Sri Lankan government is fighting against an innocent ethnic group because they want to pressurize Sri Lankan government by starving the country of much needed foreign exchange in order to win their demand of a separate state.

Since 1983, the tourist arrivals have steadily declined and it has lightly increased in the 1990s. Tourism lost its place as the largest foreign exchange earner since early 1980s. Sri Lanka is yet to reach the peak of tourist arrivals which was last reached in 1982. As long as the civil war continues, even the best efforts to sell Sri Lanka as an attractive destination will not achieve much.

Sri Lanka regularly became a flash point in the international news because of the ethnic riots and frequent bloody confrontations between the armed forces and guerrillas. Although the operational areas are located far away from Colombo, the economic hub of the country, it too is severely affected. Guerrillas have launched two major attacks on Colombo, both occasions leading to tremendous destructions. It was such guerrilla attacks on Colombo that made most foreign investors think twice of investing in the country. Most of all, the assassinations of political leaders have scared the foreign investors because such events have created doubts in their minds about the ability of the Sri Lankan government to provide security for their investments. It is impossible to estimate in quantitative terms the potential loss of foreign investment as a result of these activities. In spite of the best efforts by the governments to convince the foreign investors on the merit of investing in Sri Lanka, we are not attracting as much investments as we should. Among the factors responsible for this, the civil war is the foremost.

## Loss of Life and Limb

“Youth is the first victim of war. It takes twenty years or more to make a man; it takes only twenty seconds of war to destroy him”

(Aaudouin I of Belgium, Address to joint session of the US Congress, May 12, 1959)

The civil war has killed a large number of people and made even a bigger number physically handicapped/invalid. During the late 1980s, Sri Lanka ranked highest in terms of the number of deaths per hundred thousand caused by civil unrest. According to one estimate, more than 50,000 people have died since the separatist campaign erupted in 1972 (The Australian, 21/6/1996) However, this appears to be a conservative estimate. Although hard data are not available on the number of people who have become physically handicapped as a result of the war, a rough estimate put the number around 75,000.

The largest number of casualties of the civil war are from the productive age group between 18-55 years. What is lost in the war is the future generation. Instead of caring for the future as required by sustainable development future generation is being wasted. With every life lost in the war, a family often loses its means of livelihood as well. With every person becoming physically handicapped, a whole family become dependents. Sustainable development cannot be achieved by a society whose dependents are rising and especially its younger generation is lost in a senseless war.

## Emergence of a War Culture

“As wounded men may limp through life, so our war minds may not regain the balance of their thoughts for decades”

(Frank Moore Colby, “War Minds”, The Colby Essays, 1926, V.2)

“In a civil war the firing line is invisible, it passes through the hearts of men”

(Saint-Expuery, Wind, Sand and Stars, 1939, p.9.1 Tr. Lewis Galantiere)

Sustainable development requires a change in attitude towards being altruistic, long term and socially responsible but the civil war creates a culture that cultivates hatred, short term gains and irresponsibility. The entire Sri Lankan society is divided into two groups; those who instigate fear and uncertainty and those who live in fear and uncertainty. The LTTE constitutes the first group and the innocent civilians fall into the latter. The civil war has made death and brutal violence against human beings such a common occurrence, many Sri Lankans have become indifferent towards death. Children playing with toy guns and imitating the war, and looking up to the armed military men or guerrillas as role models, and elders settling their petty disagreements by killing each other has risen phenomenally in this decade. A war culture and its practice is visible not only on the war fronts but also on the social front as well.

While the impact of war culture is generally felt by the society at large, its impact in Jaffna is almost total. Jaffna society has transformed in a way that it will take decades to normalize it. Parents of children in Jaffna schools found themselves helpless when the LTTE rebels were forcibly conscripting the young pupils into their cadre. Many of the boys joining LTTE are about twelve years old (UTHRJ No 5P.39) The attempts by parents to prevent the young joining LTTE could bring disastrous consequences to the child and the parents. Jaffna society is subdued, muted and totally suppressed without allowing any room for free thinking. The society has been controlled by LTTE rebels as totalitarians. As G.L. Peiris once pointed out "in their (LTTE) courts, boys of 21 and 23 years of age functioned as judges. People were sentenced to death. Those sentences were carried out" ("The Rising Price of War", Daily News 01/07/1996). This is one example of how dangerous the Jaffna society has become.

Most families in Jaffna are in disarray with sons and daughters being forcefully inducted into the LTTE guerrilla force. In addition, over 2000 persons are detained in LTTE camps (UTHRJ. No. 5,p.38). Some families found their relations and friends have fled to refugee camps in India where the number of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees is over 200,000. Jaffna society is bleeding metaphorically and literally as well. According to UTHRJ. "... the workings of the civil society have ceased to exist

in a large category of instances". A generation is growing up without knowing that there used to be such things as post-mortems, magistrate's inquiries and accountability before law and the humanity in this country has been devalued ..." (UTHRJ, No.6, p.5).

### **Non-availability of a Large Part of Sri Lanka for Development**

One of the biggest impediments of the civil war to sustainable development is to make almost all of the Northern Province and a fairly large part of the Eastern Province non-available to the national development efforts of the country since mid 1980s. Together these two provinces constitute about 20 per cent of the land area and about 65% of the coastal belt. Some of the major minerals deposits (i.e. limestones, clay, ilmenite) that were extracted for industrial purposes are also located in these two provinces.

Northern Province contributed about 4 per cent of the national GDP while the Eastern Province contributed about 7 per cent in the late 1980s. Together these two provinces were responsible for almost 11 per cent of the GDP in the country. However, since late 1980s, most of the resources and production of the Northern Province were not available to the national economy because the LTTE rebels virtually controlled this area and isolated it from the rest of the country. Although the Eastern Province did not come under rebels control in its entirety, many parts of the province was simply too dangerous to launch any development activity. The Right Bank of Maduru Oya could not be developed because of the guerrilla war fare.

Northern and Eastern Provinces possess some of the finest beaches in the country which has a tremendous potential for tourism. However, these beautiful beaches remain unutilized and ruins of a few partially constructed hotels remain as grim reminders of the impact of the civil war. All these are living testimony to the inability of the government to develop land and other resources in LTTE held territory.

## **Severance of the Link between North and Other Parts of the Island**

Prior to the civil war, the economies of the northern and eastern parts of the island were linked to the economy of rest of the island in numerous ways. Various industrial products (e.g. cement, chemicals, slat, paper) agricultural produce (paddy, chillie, tobacco, onions) and fish (fresh fish, dry fish, canned fish) was supplied by these two provinces to other areas. The severance of the link between Northern Province and the rest of the country has stopped the interregional trade and the Jaffna producers and traders have lost their lucrative source of income. Northern Province for example at one point supplied over 50% of all the locally produced cement and chemicals and about 40% of all fish. About 15% of all vegetables and 20% of other crops such as chillie and onions also came from Jaffna. After the rebels delinked Jaffna from the rest of the island, all these economic interactions stopped. Amal Jayasinghe pointed out that the region has not contributed to the country's economy in the five years under rebel control ("Jaffna's Long Road to Rebirth" *Lanka Guardian*, Vol. 19 (7).p.2.) One of the reasons why Sri Lanka failed to be self sufficient in rice and had to import a sizable part of its fish, vegetable and even fruit is severance of economic relations between Northern Province and parts of Eastern provinces and other parts of the island.

## **Increasing Spatial Unevenness in the Economy**

Delinking Jaffna from the rest of the island for over a decade and the inability of the government to function there prevented the government from maintaining its services i.e. education, health, and infrastructural facilities such as telecommunication, transportation and electricity. To make matters worse, the LTTE rebels have destroyed most of the infrastructure facilities in most of the areas held by them. Because the LTTE prevented the government coming into the areas held by them, the government could not initiate any new development activities in the rebel held Jaffna. The lack of infrastructural facilities, the totalitarian control of Jaffna by LTTE and specially heavy extortion of money from the businessmen in Jaffna by them, prevented any new investment being made in Jaffna by the private entrepreneurs. The destruction of

what was there and the inability to start any new development in this area have increased the disparity between the LTTE held parts and the rest of the country. In fact, what has been happening in Jaffna peninsula is not simply underdevelopment but literally de-development of what it used to be. The net result of all these is that “people are already starving, infants are dying for want of milk powder, medicine is in short supply and medical aid is very minimum” (UTHRJ No. P. 53) Jaffna economy and the standard of life today experience its lowest since independence.

**Table 2: Regional Distribution of Industries**

District	Industries under IDB	Total
Colombo	1211	1607
Gampaha	171	490
Kalutara	45	87
Galle	26	68
Kandy	30	65
Puttlam	17	55
Kurunegala	9	39
Matara	22	29
Hambantota	18	27
Rathnapura	1	24
Nuwara Eliya	3	23
Badulla	9	22
Anuradapura	5	21
Kegalle	2	13
Matale	4	11
Ampara	4	7
Moneragala	1	7
Polonnaruwa		5
Vavunia		2
Trincomalee		2
Batticaloa		1
Total	1578	2605

*Source: Central Bank Annual Report, 1996)*

As illustrated by the above table, the share of the industries in Jaffna peninsula is nil in 1996 while the share of the Northern Province and Eastern Province taken together is also almost negligible. This is the result of LTTE preventing the government and the private sector from investing in industries in areas held by them. The rebel strategy of holding territory for the sake of it has completely retarded the once vibrant economy of Jaffna and pushed it to the lowest level in the country. All these have led to severe economic problems in Jaffna. Because the trade between Jaffna and the rest of the country has virtually stopped, many of the consumer services and goods are not simply available to Jaffna residents. To curb the guerrilla activities the government had to ban a number of goods such as batteries, petroleum products, agricultural chemicals etc. Naturally a black market emerged and together these two factors skyrocketed the inflation in Jaffna as can be seen from the following table.

**Table 3: Inflation in Jaffna (1996)**

Item	Price in Jaffna	Price in the Rest of the Country
Bicycle tyre	1300	130
Red rice	100	20
Cabbage 1kg	120	18
Potatoes	250	50
Kerosene Oil (bottle)	200	25

*Source: Compiled information from news papers*

Jaffna's standard of living which was one of the highest in the country in 1983 has deteriorated to one of the lowest by 1994. The ordinary people in Jaffna found life and living becoming very difficult with everyday the civil war continues. This is certainly not the way towards development, let alone sustainable development.

## **Direct Impact on Environment**

The civil war has created several impacts on the natural environment. The war has led to some clearance of the forest areas in the Kilinochchi and Mullativu. A rough estimate indicates that over 1500 ha of forest have been destroyed during the last 15 years of war. However, as the war has not yet intensified into chemical warfare, Sri Lanka has been fortunately spared of impacts of chemical warfare. However, health hazards due to breakdown of the health delivery systems has been a major problem in the rebel held areas. Frequent exposure of civilians to land-mines continues to be another major health hazard in Jaffna.

The war has prevented development in LTTE held areas, the natural environment in these areas remain untouched and underutilised. For example fishing has completely stopped in waters off Jaffna peninsula and it has provided enough time for the fish stocks to replenish. As new land development too has been virtually stopped in the LTTE held areas, forests that would otherwise have been cleared remains untouched. Thus purely from an natural environmental point of view, the civil war may have created a positive impact, but it is at the cost of development.

## **Solutions**

It is clear that Sri Lanka, or for that matter any country in the world cannot conceivably think of sustainable development while engaging in a protracted civil wars consuming a large part of its natural, human and financial resources. It is quite evident that, if we are thinking of sustainable development, we must end the civil war. Ending the war cannot be done by one party alone; it has to be negotiated between the two major parties involved, the government and the LTTE. Such negotiations may not be fruitful without a serious proposal towards devolution of power to Tamil regions, especially the Jaffna peninsula and the immediate vicinity and a government committed to rehabilitate the war torn areas and to implement the devolution in its true spirit. LTTE at the same time should assure that they will not further sabotage

the development efforts by the government. If Sri Lanka is truly concerned and interested in sustainable development, then we need to build the appropriate politico-social context within which it can be implemented. Thus creating and maintaining political stability is an urgent need. In the long run, this can be achieved only if we all Sri Lankans commit ourselves to build a Sri Lankan nation which can rise above the ethnically defined nations.

### **Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank Prof. S T Hettige, Dr. Nimal Sandaratne, Dr. H Kotagama and other participants who commented on the first draft of this paper at the Seminar on Socio Economic factors Impeding Sustainable Development in Sri Lanka held at NARESA on 28th September, 1996 and Dr. Nalani Hennayake for reading the manuscript.

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