Chapter 4

Evolution of Sri Lankan Security Discourse: Changing Issues, References and Emphasis

During the last fifty years many changes have taken place in the perceptions of security on the part of policy makers as well as of the people of Sri Lanka. These changes relate not only to threat perceptions and the security environment but also to references to security and its different dimensions. At the time of Independence, policy making related to security was just a privileged prerogative of the rulers. It is not the case today and, with the broadening of the concept of security, people at large directly enter into the policy-making process in one way or the other. Security was not a main concern for the state and the people in 1948. After 57 years, security has become day-to-day concern, a factor that decides many other elements of socio-political development. These changes in the whole phenomenon of security correspond to the crisis of the post-colonial state of Sri Lanka. During the first two decades after Independence, at a time when Sri Lanka's internal socio-political crisis did not threaten the political stability of the state, defense and security thinking of policy makers were conditioned by mainstream conceptualisation of security. Security was defined mainly as protection of territorial integrity of the state vis-à-vis military and political threats emanating from outside/external sources. It was considered as something exclusively within the domain of the state and solely its prerogative. With the collapse of the earlier perspective on political and social stability, the many limitations of the mainstream national security paradigm has become obvious. A deepening socio-political crisis has emphasised the need to bring other aspects of security, particularly collective ethnic identities and the individual in the discourse of security. In this context, security can no longer be confined only to the military security of the state and its territory. The non-military dimensions of security and non-state references of security have been thrust into the picture, giving credential to alternative security construction based on human security.
Any analysis of the evolution of Sri Lankan security discourse in the last fifty years reveals how the issues and perceptions have developed with the changes in the concept of human security and how these have gradually shaped the present security discourse in Sri Lanka. The evolution can be seen in three phases. In the first phase, covering the period 1948-56, very narrow state-centred security perspectives dominated security discourse. During the second phase of evolution (from 1956 to 1977), security was perceived in a broader framework. Economic and political dimensions of security were then brought into the conceptualisation of security. But security was still a state-centred phenomenon. The economic dimension of security was perceived from the state perspective in the context of a north-south dialogue. Parallel to the emergence of armed challenges to the authority of the state domestically, in the third phase after 1977, a new security discourse gradually took shape challenging the foundations and validity of the heuristic constructs employed earlier to understand insecurity problem Sri Lanka.

4.1 GEO-POLITICAL CONCERNS IN A REALIST PERSPECTIVE IN THE FIRST PHASE: 1948–56

Between 1948 to 1956, the parameters of defence and security discourse of the country was determined by the very narrow realist approach to security held by the ruling UNP and its Leftist critics who were less state-centred in their approach to security. During this period the discourse on security did not go beyond the corridors of power and governance. The security perceptions of the first UNP regime under the leadership of D.S. Senanayake, more or less were conditioned by the perception of an international environment that the classical Realists have portrayed as 'international anarchy.' The defence of the country was considered the primary obligation of the state. It was understood as a protection of territorial integrity and as a way of safeguarding the people from external threats. Hence, the main reference point of security was the state. When a new cabinet portfolio was established in 1947 for defense, it was termed 'State Defence.' The military strategic security of the state took precedence over economic and social security. In relation to economic security, the focus was only on the protection of the economic lifelines of the state from external threats and subversions. D.S. Senanakaye summarised this perception lucidly when he said in 1947 that, "(T)he defence of its country is one of the primary obligations of an independent state, and this is not the sort of
world in which small nations can be secured without large and expensive armed forces. We are in a special dangerous position, because we are in one of the strategic highways of the world. The country that captures Ceylon would dominate the Indian Ocean. Nor is it only a question of protecting ourselves against invasion and air attack. If we had no imports for three months, we have to starve, and we have, therefore, to protect our sea and air communications.”1 In the absence of any fundamental internal challenge to the authority of the state, aspects of internal security were only seen as a law and order problem.

As a newly independent state, the security discourse of the country was confined to the formulation of the defence policy of the state. The formulation of defence policy involves a complex process in which values, attitudes and images mediate perception of reality. As K.J. Holsti explains, “the resulting images or definitions of the situation form the reality and expectations upon which decisions are formulated.”2 The political ideology of the rulers and their economic interests contributed to form their images and perception of political reality. The social background and class interests were reflected in attitudes towards issues relating to security.

Between 1948 to 1956, four main elements of Sri Lankan defence policy were discernible. First, the continuation of the defence relationship with the United Kingdom—Sri Lanka’s former colonial master—formed the cornerstone of the defence polity of the new regime. This relationship was formalised in the form of a mutual defence agreement. Second, the perception of threat emanating from India, Sri Lanka’s big brother in South Asia, was widely aired by the leaders, seemed to have guided their policy. Third, the Sri Lankan government was inclined to identify itself ideologically with the Western camp in the Cold War context although the country did not join the bloc alliances sponsored by the United States. Fourth, the political leadership of the UNP expressed openly its antipathy towards the Soviet Union and actively participated in the campaign against what was viewed as an international Communist conspiracy.

The main issue of the security discourse in the period 1948-56, perhaps, was the rationale and utility of the Defence Agreement with the United Kingdom signed on the eve of Independence which gave the British the right to continue using the air base at Katunayake and the

1 Ceylon House of Representatives, Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates, Vol.-1, 1 December 1949, c.444.
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naval base at Trincomalee. The Left opposition was very critical of the renewed defence link with the former colonial master and, particularly, of the Defence Agreement signed with the United Kingdom. The UNP leadership rationalised this agreement by highlighting the perceived threat from India. They were vocal in expressing the fear that British withdrawal from South Asia would create a power vacuum in the region which India would attempt to fill. S.U. Kodikara, in his widely acclaimed study on India-Sri Lanka relations since Independence, has pointed out that the leadership perception of 'Indian threat' was a major factor influencing the defence policy of Sri Lanka in the period 1948-56.

The Defence Agreement was a part of the Independence settlement negotiated by D.S. Senanayake and other leaders of the Ceylon National Congress. The need to have a defence agreement was emphasised by the British. At the conclusion of the Second World War, a constitutional revision effect to the transfer of power in Sri Lanka was considered in order. In the light of the continuation of the British east-of-Suez strategic plan even after 1945, the importance of Sri Lanka in relation to the British defence network in the Indian Ocean remained. The British needed the Sri Lankan air and naval bases and had no doubt about D.S. Senanayake's loyalty to Britain. Sir Charles Jeffries, then Deputy Permanent Under-Secretary who represented the British in independence negotiations, noted "(F)rom the point of view of the British Government, the question was not quite simple as all that. There were, to begin with, defence interests of Britain and its allies. Ceylon is a vital point. If independence were once granted, there could be no going back. Every one was prepared to trust Mr. Senanayake, but he had yet to be elected, and even if he were, an independent Ceylon might well at some future time come under the control of a government which was not friendly to Britain."³ In view of the growing discontent within the Ceylon National Congress and, more importantly the severe criticism of the Left parties of the strategy adopted by D.S. Senanayake, he had to deliver the goods before long. In order to induce the British to expedite the process, D.S. Senanayake "repeated his offer of agreement of defence and external affairs and urged that the draft of such agreement should be ready for consideration by the Ceylon Cabinet as soon as it came to office."⁴ In this context, the UNP leadership had to justify and rationalise their move to offer continuous

⁴ Ibid., p. 117.
use of defence facilities to the former colonial master through a formal defence link. They readily utilised the perception of threat from India to rationalise the Defence Agreement.

Some of the traditional threat perceptions of the Sri Lankan psyche as a small island close to a giant neighbour appeared to have been revived at the time of independence. Historical memories of the invasions from India in the past influenced in part this threat perception but it cannot be attributed solely to this source. It was basically a construct of contemporary politics. Some statements of Indian political leaders and strategists rekindled Sri Lankan fear. Pattabhi Sitaramay’s suggestion, to cite an example, that India and Sri Lanka should have common defence strength, resources and strategy engendered a hostile response in Sri Lanka. Another Indian strategist, K.B. Vaidya argued that “(T)he first and primary consideration is that both Burma and Ceylon must form with India the basic federation for mutual defence whether they will like or not.” These statements fueled the sensitivity of Sri Lanka. The general attitude of Sri Lanka towards India was elucidated by Ivor Jennings thus: “India thus appears as a friendly but potentially dangerous neighbour to whom one must be polite but a little distant....It is not that India and Indians are unpopular, but that the Ceylonese, while admiring much that is Indian, and feeling themselves racially akin to Indian have a sensation of living under a mountain which might send down destructive avalanches.” The UNP leadership more or less subscribed to the threat perception from India to justify the party’s defence policy.

The security discourse of Sri Lanka evolved as the left opposition questioned the basis of close defense links with Britain, the utility of the Defence Agreement, and the rationale presented by the UNP leadership to justify their moves. The Left opposition argued that the Defence Agreement was detrimental to the newly declared status of Independence and the sovereignty of the country. They viewed the Independence settlement in which the Defence Agreement was an integral part “as a shady transaction which was nothing less than bartering away of the country.” The Left opposition suspected that there could be some secret annexure to the Agreement. They feared that the close defence link with Britain would link Sri Lanka to

5 Times of Ceylon, 27 April 1949.
Western military plans and would unnecessarily involve Sri Lanka in Cold War politics. Colvin R. de Silva, then deputy leader of the main left party, declared in the Parliament that “we are being planned not only as the cannon fodder of the next war but also as the military bases for I do not know what contemplated attack.”

Further, there was a sharp division of opinion between the government and the opposition over the Indian threat perception and the anti-Indian sentiment underlying the government defense perspective. The opposition emphasised the importance of having good neighbourly relations with India. The Leader of the Opposition, Dr. N.M. Perera, pointed out that “there is a feeling among sections of the government and the UNP that we have to safeguard ourselves against India that we have to fight against India, therefore, it is necessary that we must lean upon Britain for the purpose...I say that this is political myopia of the worst type...and it is important that we live in amity and amicable relations with India, and not to create Sudetenland problem for Ceylon by leaving so much hatred and bitterness among a large section of Indians with connections in Ceylon.” The opposition claimed that the Prime Minister was suffering from two diseases—“one is Indophobia and other is Anglomania.”

It is also important to note that a significant legislative initiative that had serious implications for a section of population was the Citizenship Act of 1948. The Act disfranchised a large number of workers of Indian origin who were brought to Sri Lanka to work in the plantations. The Left opposition opposed this move and fought against it in parliament. However, its opposition was not framed in the context of human security.

Another issue that came up in the state-centred security discourse's military strategic bias was Sri Lanka's approach to the defence alliances associated with the United States in the context of the Cold War of the early 1950s. In this case too, the government and opposition views were highly polarised. As the Cold War developed, the Sri Lanka Government showed a decidedly pro-American tilt. This was evident in some policy statements made by the Prime Minister and others in the Cabinet. J.R. Jayewardene, Minister of Finance, was vocal in this matter and stated “(I)n this world today there are really two powerful

10 Ibid., Vol. 4, 19 August 1948, c. 1696.
11 Ibid., c. 1695.
factors, the United States of America and the USSR. We have to follow either one or the other. There can be no halfway house in the matter. We have decided, and we intend as long as we are in power to follow the United States of America and its democratic principles.” The pro-US tilt of the Government manifested itself in a number of instances. During the Korean War, Sri Lanka provided harbour facilities to the US flotilla engaged in the US war effort. During the later stages of the battle of Dien Bien Phu in the Vietnam War, Sri Lanka allowed the United States to use Sri Lanka for American military aircrafts carrying French troops to the Indo-China war front. In all these instances, the Left Opposition registered its opposition loudly inside and outside the Parliament. These moves were projected as alliances against the de-colonisation process in Asia.

The Government faced a dilemma when the US offered it the collective defence alliances network that encompassed Asia as a part of its ‘containment policy.’ In 1954, Sri Lanka was invited to join the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO). It appeared to be an attractive option for the Prime Minister J.L. Kotelawela who assumed office in 1953 since he saw himself as a staunch crusader against communism. After a period when he seemed to be veering towards acceptance, the Premier finally decided not to participate in SEATO. Apparently, India’s unequivocal rejection of SEATO restricted the Sri Lankan Premier’s room for maneuver. Further, a powerful section of the ruling UNP opposed Sri Lanka’s joining the SEATO. This section included a senior Cabinet Minister (R.G. Senanayake) and the former Prime Minister (Dudley Senanayake).

The opposition was united against any move on the part of the Government to enter into a collective defence alliance with the United States. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, now in opposition, argued against joining SEATO on three grounds. First, entering into a military pact such as SEATO would violate the government’s declared policy of the ‘middle way.’ Second, it would adversely affect the Rubber-for-rice Agreement with China as SEATO was meant to contain China. Third, SEATO, he argued, was dominated by non-Asian powers.

The protection of “human freedom” and “democracy” from the threat of communism was the political cry of the ruling UNP. However, “human freedom” was defined very narrowly and “democracy” was nothing but the political arrangement forged under the Independence Settlement. Peace and stability was understood simply as the preservation of the

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12 Ibid., Vol.8, 4 July, 1950, c. 293.
status quo. The anti-Communist stance of the UNP was in part a reaction to its internal political contenders—the Marxist Left. The protection of national values and heritage from the atheist Communists was presented by the UNP as a main security concern and it attempted to develop an internal political discourse along this line. At the same time, the ruling UNP was very sensitive to the armed Insurrections taking place in India and South-East Asia. They observed the Communist-led uprisings in Telengana, West Bengal and Travancore-Cochin in India with much concern. The UNP leadership showed no hesitation in extending its support to the British military campaign to suppress the Malayan insurgency. British Beau fighters used Sri Lankan air fields in the military campaign against Malayan guerrillas. This, in turn, strengthened the state-centred conceptualisation of security.

4.2 BROADENING THE SECURITY DISCOURSE AFTER 1956

A new phase in the evolution of the security discourse evolved after 1956. The changed political orientation and the social make-up of the new ruling block of 1956, as well as the changed international environment, were reflected in the new discourse of security in many ways. Views on geo-political parameters changed after 1956. In addition to South Asian factors, broader security concerns perceived in the context of the Indian Ocean region as a whole enter into decision-making. According to S.U. Kodikara, “(T)he defence and security perceptions of Sri Lanka’s foreign policy decision-makers in the post-colonial era have been formulated, and must be understood, within three sets of parameters: first, developments in the general international system; second, changes in the geo-strategic environment appertaining to the South Asian region, and third, to the specific context of Indo-Lanka relations, including the factor of regime change both in India and Sri Lanka.”

First of all, the new regime did not subscribe to the notion of a threat from India. One of the foundations of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike’s foreign policy was close and amicable relations with India. Dispelling the fear of India, the Premier stated to The Hindu, an Indian daily, that “I have no duty cast upon me to meet the unreasonable fear of the people and I do hope the present cordial and friendly relations between India and

Ceylon will be preserved and maintained."\textsuperscript{14} This changed attitude towards India influenced Sri Lanka's security perceptions in connection with threats and vulnerabilities. Even in broader foreign policy issues, Sri Lanka under Bandaranaike realised the importance of consulting New Delhi. In this context, \textit{Ceylon Daily News} remarked that "New Delhi, rather than London or Washington thus becomes the new centre of Ceylon's future diplomatic activity."\textsuperscript{15}

The removal of British bases from the Sri Lankan soil figured largely in the anti-colonial political discourse that gained wide currency before the general elections of 1956. The 1956 regime wanted to remodel the earlier defence arrangement with the United Kingdom. In its very first policy statement, the MEP government declared that it would not align itself with any power blocs. The position of the bases at Katunayake and Trincomalee would be reviewed."\textsuperscript{16} The Sri Lankan Premier raised the issue with his British counterpart at the Commonwealth Summit in 1956. It was clear by then that there was no secret annexure attached to the Defence Agreement as suspected by the opposition. Hence, the need did not arise to abrogate the Agreement. One of the striking features of the handing over of the bases was the cordiality and friendliness with which both parties behaved during the whole process. Following the exchange of letters in July 1957, the bases were formally handed over in October. Subject to the general control of the Sri Lankan government, the United Kingdom was allowed to use certain facilities for a limited time.

Another important development in the changed security discourse was the changed attitude towards the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc. Instead of a threat, the Soviet Union was considered as a power whom Sri Lanka could rely on for security and national development. In his approach Bandaranaike differentiated Communism, a political doctrine, from the Soviet Union, a member of the international system. At a meeting to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, she raised this issue: "(S)hould not we admire the Russian System whether we like it or not? Since Ceylon has so many lessons to learn from Russia, cannot we follow Russia without going Communist."\textsuperscript{17} The economic assistance extended by the Soviet Union was considered very important for reducing the economic vulnerability of the country.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{The Hindu}, 12 July, 1956.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ceylon Daily News}, 23 April, 1956.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ceylon Daily News}, 23 April, 1956.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ceylon Daily News}, 7 November, 1957.
In February 1958, a credit agreement was signed with the Soviet Union in which Sri Lanka received a long-term credit of $30 million repayable in 12 years at 2% interest for a tire and tube factory (Kelaniya), an iron and steel plant (Oruwela) and a flour mill (Colombo).

The broadened security discourse after 1956 had captured the issues in a wider spectrum as relevant to the minimisation of threats and the reduction of vulnerabilities. However, security was still perceived from a state-centred perspective. Hence the only reference point of security concerns was the state. However, such concerns were not narrowly confined to military strategic security. For a small country with meagre power capability, neutrality was considered the bulwark of security. Economic security had also entered to discourse. The state itself was considered a tool to be used to change the character of the state and to restructure the economy. The changes that took place in the security discourse after 1956 could be attributed to a number of factors. First of all, the impact of the new social groups that came to grips with the 1956 political changes was an important factor. Unlike the earlier rulers, they did not have embedded interests that would lead them to maintain the economic arrangement associated with the old plantation order. The political domination of the plantocracy was alternated by a multi-class social coalition that had a strong petty-bourgeoisie presence. Secondly, the economic strategy of the new regime, especially its state-centred industrialisation policy compelled Sri Lanka to develop cordial relations with the Soviet bloc. It was perceived that Sri Lanka’s dependent position in the international economic order was a historical product of colonial development. Hence, an attempt to have more economic autonomy vis-à-vis world economic centres accorded priority to moves which were anti-colonial in form and content. Politically, the MEP was a Left-of Centre political coalition with a few Marxists in the Cabinet. There was no internal compulsion, therefore, to wage an anti-Communist crusade and the Ceylon Communist Party thus extended its conditional support to the new government. Finally, and more importantly, the changed strategy of the Soviet Union after Nikita Khrushchev came to power contributed to facilitate the change. In abandoning the dogmatic two-camp theory pursued under Stalin, the new Soviet leadership extended its hand to ‘progressive’ regimes in the Third World to breakdown the cordon sanitaire imposed by the U.S.A. on the soft under-belly of Soviet Union’s southern flank. In his report to the 20th Congress of the CPSU held in 1956, Khrushchev rejected the two-camp theory and the inevitability of war with the imperial west. He further argued that
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peaceful coexistence of different social systems was a policy that could be pursued permanently. Hence, the neutrality of ‘Afro-Asian nations’ was recognised by the Soviet Union. In the context of the stabilisation of the Cold War, when the Soviet Union entered the diplomatic market in the Third world, countries like Sri Lanka were offered a wider range of options in pursuing security goals and objectives.

The internal dimensions of security gradually entered into the discourse in the early 1960s. The fact that security and stability of the state could be threatened by internal developments was brought home to Colombo first by the deterioration of ethnic relations in the country. The tension that developed between the state and the political leadership of the Tamils over the declaration of Sinhala as the official language subsided after the agreement between the Prime Minister and the leadership of the Federal Party (Bandaranaike-Chevanayagam Pact). The abrogation of the agreement set off a chain reaction of events that paved the way for island-wide ethnic riots in 1958. The entire country was kept under the Emergency Laws. Even in the 1960s the Emergency Laws were used to suppress the Sathyagraha campaigns of the Tamil leadership against the implementation of the Official Language Laws.

The second threat came from a different direction. In January 1962, some right-wing elements in the high rungs of the armed services, the police and civil service, almost all of them Christians, planned a coup ‘to save the nation from the government’s nationalisation programmes, left trade unionism and religious and communal troubles.’ The government was able to discover the coup and arrested the plotters before they could seize state power. This episode contributed to widen the parameters of security discourse where internal threats to the political institutions of the state also acquired importance.

The economic pressure exerted by the United States over the issue of nationalisation of importation and distribution of oil highlighted the economic vulnerability of Sri Lanka. One aspect of security is the reduction of vulnerabilities. Importation and distribution of oil in Sri Lanka remained a monopoly of three foreign companies—CALTEX (US), ESSO (US) and SHELL (UK and Holland). Patrol station facilities belonging to US and British companies were acquired by the Government in April and May 1962 under the provisions of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation Act (28 of 1961). There was disagreement over the compensation for the acquired properties of the oil companies. The Government offered Rs. 12 million while the companies demanded Rs. 42 million. At this juncture, the US government warned under the
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Hickenlooper Amendment to the Foreign Aid Act that aid to Sri Lanka would be cut off unless steps were taken to compensate the US oil companies. Officials of both parties met in early January 1963 to resolve the problem and the next round of talks were scheduled for mid-January 1063. Before the second round of talks the US government conveyed its decision to cut off aid to Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka government called off negotiations. A wide spectrum of political parties condemned the hasty decision of the US government to suspend aid. Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike stated that “(T)hough we are a poor nation we cannot permit any intrusion in our internal affairs because we are bound to maintain and indicate our self respect as a free and a proud nation.”

The China factor in Sri Lankan security discourse acquired more importance in the 1960s, especially after 1962. During the India-China war Sri Lanka played a role as a peace broker. In the light of geopolitical imperatives of Sri Lanka’s location in South Asia Sri Lanka had to maintain a delicate balance between the two powers. At the same time, the China factor had a special value to Sri Lanka as a counterweight to India. In January 1963, Sirimavo Bandaranaike visited China and at a banquet in her honour in Beijing ventilated her disenchantment with the West more openly when she said “(T)he nations that have newly emerged in Asia and Africa must stand together in their struggle or must run the risk of succumbing once more to the rapacious designs of the West.” The US ban of aid to Sri Lanka over the oil company issue was no doubt in the back of her mind when she said these words. However, the use of the term ‘rapacious designs of the West’ generated a controversy in Sri Lanka and abroad. The rumour was in wide circulation that China expressed its desire to acquire a naval base in Sri Lanka in return for long term economic assistance. This became an issue in the general elections held in 1965.

In the 1960s and 1970s Sri Lanka identified itself with the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) in world politics. Originating as a counterforce in Cold War polarisation, NAM was in the forefront in promoting decolonisation and national liberation struggles in the Third World in the 1960s and 1970s. During Sirimavo Bandaranaike’s premiership (1960-65 and 1970-77), Sri Lanka was a leading member of NAM. The NAM framework influenced the Sri Lankan approach to world politics as well as its security perceptions. According to Sirimavo Bandaranaike,

"(T)he principles of Non-Alignment will guide us [Sri Lanka] and act as the pillars of our policy, particularly in its opposition to imperialism, colonialism and racial discrimination and its defence of national independence. The NAM has had many successes in the past and in recent times it can take credit for a number of developments, including the attempt to eliminate the old economic order and replace it with the New International Economic Order, and to replace the old law of the sea with a more just law for the common benefit of all mankind."²⁰ However, in the absence of clearly defined norms, i.e. standard of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations and principles, NAM provided only a very broad set of standards of international behaviour. It was a gathering of Third World states and a state-centred perspective prevailed in every aspect of its approach—political and economic. The issues relating to internal peace and order were considered to be the prerogative of the state. The protection of high political norms aired in the NAM Summit meetings was perceived in such a way that threats seemed to emanate only from external sources. Among the concepts highlighted in every NAM Summit were peaceful co-existence, respect for sovereignty of states and their territorial integrity and demilitarisation. The manner in which these norms were presented and perceived contributed to strengthen the statist approach to security. This is clearly evident in the NAM declaration on peaceful coexistence which affirmed that "(S)tates must abstain all use of threat or force directed against the territorial integrity and political independence of other states; a situation brought about by threat or use of force shall not be recognised, and in particular the established frontiers of states shall be inviolable. Accordingly, every state must abstain from interfering in the affairs of other states, whether openly or insidiously or by means of subversion and the various forms of political, economic and military pressure."²¹

The initiatives relating to the Indian Ocean Peace Zone (IOPZ) proposal in the 1970s highlighted certain limitations and contradictions inherent in the NAM framework. One of the key themes in the security discourse as evolved in Sri Lanka during the 1970s was the IOPZ Proposal. Analysis of its evolution and contradictions and of ways in which to interpret the concept and its implementation reveals the issues involved in the security discourse of the day. Sri Lanka was

naturally concerned with the naval buildup of external powers that were taking place with the British withdrawal from the east-of-Suez. These concerns led to adoption of a concrete action plan in 1971 when Sri Lanka co-sponsored the IOPZ proposals at the United Nations. The original proposal presented by Sri Lanka in 1971 was a comprehensive one covering the naval activities of littoral states as well as those of outside powers. But some Indian Ocean littoral states worked behind the scene to modify the resolution so as to direct it only against the outside powers. As such, Shirly Amerasinghe, Sri Lankan representative to the UN, commented that “in the course of our consultations it became apparent that members of the committee were not ready for a comprehensive scheme for the de-militarisation of the Indian Ocean... our proposal and our approach have therefore undergone a radical change”. The differences between Sri Lanka and India came to the forefront with the progress of IOPZ deliberations. The clash of interests between both countries centred around three main issues—defining the concept of peace zone; assigning of reciprocal responsibilities of the regional states in the implementation of the IOPZ, and the spatial scope of the IOPZ.

The conceptual ambiguity became more apparent when discussion of its implementation ensued. The concept of peace and superpower naval rivalry had been defined in a very restricted manner. The underlying perception of the IOPZ Proposal was that the Indian Ocean would become a peace zone once external powers withdrew their naval forces from the Indian Ocean and refrained from competition in the Indian Ocean. Such an explanation totally overlooked the regional and internal dynamics of the conflicts. In the light of different patterns of conflicts and their regional and outside linkages, unless the regional and internal conflicts were addressed, the concept of peace in the Indian Ocean would not be practicable. In order to make a real breakthrough in the concept of peace, hence, a new approach to security became imperative.

It was the JVP Insurrection of 1971 and the growing Tamil youth militancy in the North after 1975 that brought many aspects of internal dimension to the focus. The youth Insurrection in 1971, led by the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) in 1971, was the first fundamental challenge to the state since independence. The rosy picture of peace and security that all the post-independence rulers portrayed was shattered overnight on April 5th, 1971. On that day, 93 police stations were simultaneously attacked and five fell into the hands of rebels. In the
face of the unprecedented armed challenge, the authority of the state in 35 police areas was nullified. However, the JVP could not sustain the resistance long. In the face of the counter-offensive of the state with the military assistance from Western, Eastern and NAM countries, the insurrection collapsed in a few weeks’ time. Nevertheless, the impact of the April Insurrection on the security discourse is profound. For the first time, security had become a day to day concern of the people. The importance of the individual as a reference of security entered security discourse. Further, the April Insurrection added the internal aspect to the threat perception of the state. The authority of the state had collapsed not from an external threat but from internal armed challenge of a section of its own population. With the outbreak of the uprising, all the districts of the country were kept under military coordinating officers. Excesses on the part of law enforcement officers in establishing law and order became a main security concern of the people. On the one hand, the state became a source of security. On the other, it acted as a agent of threat and a source of insecurity. The April Insurrection highlighted the limitations of the earlier security discourse. Further, by bringing new references and aspects of security to the focus, it set the ground for wider discourse on security beyond the confines of narrowly defined security of the state.

The issues brought forward by the 1971 JVP Insurrection relating to the hitherto neglected internal dimensions in the Sri Lankan security discourse was further highlighted by the actions of the Tamil militants in the mid 1970s. The protest campaigns carried out by the Tamil youth in the North against the district quota system and standardisation of university admissions took a more political turn with the assassination of the Jaffna Mayor, Alfred Dureappa, who was identified as a collaborator of the government. The political unrest in the North highlighted the importance of taking ethnic collective identities within the state as a reference of security in its own right in the security discourse. These developments in the domestic scene compelled policy-makers to reconfigure the concept of security in a wider political and social terrain.

4.3 CRISIS OF THE STATE AND THE NEW SECURITY DISCOURSE AFTER 1977

A new phase in the evolution of Sri Lankan security discourse was set in motion by the traumatic developments that took place after 1977. Simultaneously, a new phase in the crisis of the post-Independence
state was visible. The scale and intensity of political violence, a manifestation of the crisis of the state, was unprecedented in modern Sri Lankan history. The crisis of the state was manifested on many fronts and encompassed every aspect of civil and political life. The continuous emergency rule, the manipulation of the election process using overt and covert state power, ethnic riots, secessionist armed challenges in the North and East and military responses to it on the part of the state, urban guerrilla warfare against the state, mass protests and defiance of the authority of the law enforcing authorities of the state in the South, counter-violence of vigilante groups, and military intervention by the neighbour contributed to the gloomy political climate of the country in the second half of the 1980s. The naked brutality of anti-state violence during the JVP Insurrection of 1987-99 and the violent response of the state undermined almost all norms of civilised life, reducing the country virtually to a Hobbesian 'state of nature.'

The deepening crisis of the state brought forward the limitations of the conventional state-centred paradigm of security compellingly. Security was no longer an abstract phenomenon or an exclusive prerogative of the state. The situation was such that security became an essential requirement for day-to-day activities. The crux of the problem seemed to be the crisis in governance reflected in the rapid breakdown of the hegemony and legitimacy of the state. The security of the individual, the groups, social and political institutions became integral parts of the security problematic. In this context, three developments in the 1980s set the parameters for a new and broad security discourse: (1) the foreign policy crisis and Indian military intervention (IPKF operations) in Sri Lanka; (2) the intensification of the armed secessionist challenge of the LTTE and the war in the North and East; (3) the outbreak of the second JVP Insurrection in the South and the methods used by the government to suppress it.

The UNP regime in 1977 chartered a new course with high hopes for economic development and democracy with the introduction of the 'open economy'. Along with changed economic priorities, foreign policy priorities were also changed. The foreign policy of the previous regime was criticised for being extravagantly hyper-active in a way that a small country could not afford. The new regime wanted to be pragmatic in foreign policy and so its priorities were different. Instead of taking ideological-oriented political positions on international issues, economic considerations were given priority and these considerations
decided foreign policy. The success of the entire economic strategy depended on the government’s ability to obtain foreign aids and loans. The terms of trade deteriorated by more than 30 percent between 1977 and 1981 and IMF grants to finance the balance of payment deficit created by liberalisation of imports amounted to Rs. 8657.4 million. Further, the success of the main development projects solely depended on the inflow of foreign capital.

In the new orientation of Sri Lankan foreign policy, to quote the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Shaul Hameed, ‘with strong economic overtones’, a subtle pro-western tilt was discernible. As far as IOPZ is concerned, Sri Lanka continued to support the proposal in principle but its earlier enthusiasm declined sharply after 1977. In the light of the general pro-western tilt of the UNP government under the Presidency of J.R. Jayewardene there was a speculation that Sri Lanka was moving towards an alliance with the U.S. At a time when the United States was developing a base strategy in the western part of the Indian Ocean linked with the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force, it was suspected that Sri Lanka was eager to offer military-logistic facilities in exchange for military assistance to suppress the growing Tamil militancy. The debate over the direction of Sri Lankan foreign policy was centred on three issues: the offer of base facilities to the US Navy at Trincomalee, the grant of oil storage contract in Trincomalee to the U.S. Coastal Corporation and the new Voice of America Agreement.

There was a noticeable increase of port-calls of the US Navy to Trincomalee for ‘Rest and Recreation’ after 1980. This led Indian apprehensions that Trincomalee would become an US naval staging post. When questioned by the opposition, President Jayewardene explained that “we are doing nothing of that kind [base facilities]. Of course, we are allowing warships of all countries, not necessarily the United States, to call at our ports.” However, leaking of a secret document in which Gen. David Jones, then Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff referred to such a possibility fueled Indian fears. In no time it was declared that the reference was an error; the US also followed the suit. However, the way the tender for recondition and leasing out of 99 oil storage tanks in Trincomalee was handled revealed the failure of the Jayewardene government to grasp the geo-political realities of the South Asian security framework. The tender involved not only reconditioned oil tanks used during the World War II but also

23 Sun, 1 June 1980.
modernisation of jetty and mooring facilities. Sri Lanka selected the tender offered by the Coastal Corporation of Bermuda which was closely linked to the US navy, overlooking the tender presented by the Indian Natural Gas and Oil Corporation. In the face of Indian protests, Sri Lanka called fresh tenders and the contract was offered this time to the newly formed Oreleum (P) Ltd of Singapore. It was now revealed that it was a front for US Coastal Corporation. However, Sri Lanka could not proceed with the tender against Indian protests. The Indian apprehension that its southern neighbour was behaving against Indian strategic interests was increased by the renewal of the VOA Agreement. According to the renewal agreement, a site of 180 acres at Ekala (north of Colombo) was granted for the installation of a more powerful 600 kilowatts transmitter for VOA. Mohan Ram illustrates Indian concerns in this regard as follows: “India alleged that the renewed VOA agreement provided for facilities beyond normal relaying and covered electronic monitoring and the directing of nuclear missiles to their targets. It is alleged that now the USA, besides normal military communications in the Indian Ocean region, would be able to monitor all vital communications within India because the facility had an effective range of 3300 kilometers and covered even submarine communication.”

India always viewed South Asia as its strategic terrain and it has a legitimate right to be concerned about the activities of outside powers here. In the early 1980s, the Sri Lankan government secured the service of a private British security agency, Keeny Meeny Services Ltd, on a commercial basis ‘to combat terrorism’. The personnel that the Sri Lankan government hired were the Special Air Service (SAS) veterans of the Rhodesian war. The strategies adopted by the Sri Lankan government to get out of the predicament created by the internal ethnic conflict brought Sri Lanka into a conflict with India. The Indian decision-makers viewed the Sri Lankan ethnic problem as its Achilles’ heel, something which could be used to check moves that India considered adverse. India allowed Sri Lankan Tamil militants to maintain bases and guerrilla training camps in the Indian soil. It is now well-documented how India sustained Sri Lankan Tamil militants with financial and military support at the beginning of the armed conflict. “Indian instructors were channelled through RAW to train TELO recruits at a place about 40 kilometers from the Madras airport.... Raja, a retired army soldier, is said to have trained PLOTE recruits from May 1983 at Sengalapattu, Presarakkam and Sekar.

TELO had a training camp which could train 300 recruits at any given time, at Valchenai and another at a place called Thenikramam. This was run by retired Indian Police and Army officers hired by RAW. The outcome of all these developments was that the very measures taken in the military-strategic paradigm to strengthen security aggravated the security problem by begetting pervasive insecurity at different levels.

A higher degree of insecurity enveloped the state and society in Sri Lanka after 1977 in part as a consequence of the collapse of the legitimacy of the institutional agencies of the state. The legitimacy of the institutions of power and governance of the state was undermined by the administration itself. The referendum in 1982 to extend the life of Parliament elected in 1977 for another six years changed the political atmosphere of the country drastically. The manner in which the referendum was held belied any hope for free and fair elections. This suspicion about the referendum was further strengthened by the by-elections held after. Mass scale and systematic intimidation and the use of extra-judicial force by elements of the underworld were employed by the ruling party with the approbation of the institutions of law and order to get the desired election outcome. This strategy not only ruined the credibility of the institutions of power and governance but also created a serious dent in people's faith in democratic political institutions and processes. The ultimate outcome of the direct use of force to attain political stability in the regime was the increase of insecurity in the entire political system.

After the referendum of 1982, the Sri Lankan administration's intentions became more evident. Addressing a party convention after the referendum, President Jayewardene stated that the country needed one strong individual who feared neither judiciary, nor the legislature, nor the party, and that he had now secured the power to do anything for six more years. The undated resignation letters obtained from the M.Ps. of the ruling party and the practice of appointing M.Ps (chit M.Ps.) by the party leader in effect destroyed the legitimacy of the legislative branch of the state.

The manipulation of the constitution for short-term political advantage contributed in no small measure to political insecurity. For a democratic system to be credible, the constitution should be the ultimate source of political security. In utilising the two-thirds majority in the parliament, the constitution was amended sixteen times over a period of just ten years. This created the impression that the
constitution of the country had become a play-thing at the hands of the executive president, albeit backed by a two-thirds majority in the parliament. Indeed, this exercise was carried out at the expense of the credibility and legitimacy of the constitution.

The collapse of the legitimacy and authority of the institutional expressions of the state heightened the issue of the security of political institutions vis-à-vis the manipulation of the regime in power. It highlighted the extent of the internal dimension of insecurity and the need to take wider range of units into consideration in the construction of security. In a situation where the state itself become a source of insecurity and threat, a new discourse which goes beyond state-centred security to address many other aspects relating to human security became the need of the day. The intensification of the secessionist war and the second JVP insurrection further underscored the validity of conceptual constructions of human security.

The ethnic conflict of the country took a qualitatively different new turn after 1983. The intensification of the armed struggle by the LTTE to establish Tamil Eelam in the 1980s became the catalyst for a new discourse on security. In 1977, Tamil militant youth groups who believed in the armed struggle and in a separate state for Tamil people as a solution to their nationality problem proved to be a marginal element in Jaffna mainstream politics. Between 1977 and 1983 the clandestine activities of Tamil militant groups and their power and influence increased rapidly. The turning point was the ethnic riots in 1983. A new phase in the armed struggle against the Sri Lankan state began in January 1984 with the open attack carried out on a police patrol in Point Pedro. Serious clashes erupted between Tamil militant groups and Government forces in the Jaffna peninsula at the end of March and continued till April. By the end of the year, the clashes developed into a full scale war between government forces and Tamil militants that soon enveloped the entire Northern Province. Government soldiers were engaged in a difficult battle in an unfriendly terrain without clear frontiers. Armed offensive of the Tamil militants grew in sophistication and intensity with Indian backing. In March 1984, *India Today* gave a wide coverage to the activities of Tamil militant groups operating in Tamil Nadu. Marguerite Johnson reported that in the mid-1980s Tamil Nadu harboured 39 militant training camps in which 3,000 guerrillas were undergoing training.26

At the same time, in the diplomatic sphere India entered the picture as a mediator. The first initiative in this direction was the G. Parthasarathy mission in 1984. It paved the way for the All Party Conference (APC). Parthasarathy's proposal to devolve power to regional councils was presented to it as 'Annexure C'. In March 1985, the Indian Foreign Secretary Romesh Bhandari, as the special envoy of the Indian Prime Minister, visited Sri Lanka to renew the Indian diplomatic initiative. The Bhandari mission paved the way for the Thimpu discussions. The Thimpu talks were the first direct talks between the Tamil militant and the Government. However, the Thimpu discussions also collapsed as it failed to find a common ground for parties who talked in two different political languages. At the SAARC Summit in Bangalore, Rajiv Gandhi and Jayewardene discussed the situation in Sri Lanka and the Indian diplomatic involvement. Based on the understanding reached in Bangalore, Indian Ministers Natwar Singh and P. Chidambaram visited Sri Lanka in December 1986 and formulated a new proposal identified as the 'December 19 Proposals'.

Despite the Natwar Singh-Chidambaram initiative, the Sri Lankan government intensified the military campaign against the Tamil militants. After the bomb explosion in Colombo in April 1987 which claimed 200 deaths, government forces launched 'Operation Liberation' in May to liberate Wadamarachchi area. At this point, India warned Sri Lanka of the long-term dangers of the military offensive. In spite of Indian warnings, Sri Lanka completed Operation Liberation, bringing the entire Wadamarachchi area under Government control. On June 1st, India informed Sri Lanka of its decision to send relief supplies to Jaffna by Sea. The Sri Lankan Navy intercepted the Indian flotilla carrying relief supplies in its territorial waters and the Indian Navy ceased its operations. On 4 June 1987, five Indian Air Force AN-32 transport aircraft, escorted by four Mirage 2000 fighter planes, violated Sri Lankan air space and para-dropped food supplies to the Jaffna peninsula. This marked the culmination of India's coercive diplomatic tactics against Sri Lanka. On 29 July 1987, the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord was signed by leaders of both countries in Colombo. Within 24 hours of the signing of the Peace Accord, the Indian Peace Keeping forces landed in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan forces were withdrawn to be deployed in the South to curb the Southern Insurrection led by the JVP.

27 The APC ended in failure as the unit of devolution proposed by the government was not acceptable to the TULF.

The cessation of hostilities lasted for only ten weeks. By October 1987, the war between the IPKF and the LTTE flared up in the North and East. Eventually, the IPKF was pushed into a situation of fighting a war without frontiers on an unfriendly soil. The IPKF not only failed to put down the fire in the north but also ignited the south. The cost that India had to pay for its involvement in Sri Lanka was very high. In its military offensive, the IPKF lost over 1,200 soldiers while over 2,000 were wounded. It was estimated that about Rs.2 crores were spent a day at the height of Indian military involvement. R. Premadasa became the second Executive President after a violence ridden election in 1988. To appease the JVP, Premadasa promised to send IPKF back during the election campaign. The first attempt of the Sri Lankan Government to talk to the LTTE directly was during the Premadasa administration in the last phase of IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force) operations in May 1989. These talks trailed until June 1990 but collapsed miserably after the IPKF left Sri Lanka. The armed confrontations began again in June 1990, following the short spell of truce during the talks. The ferocity and intensity of the renewed fighting surpassed the violence of the period that preceded the truce.

The Tamil secessionist war in Sri Lanka and Indian involvement reveal many aspects of the security problematic in South Asia. The failure of the post-colonial Sri Lankan state to integrate Tamils into the processes and structures of power and governance had created a serious fissure in the entire polity. The inability of successive ruling blocs to maintain a hegemonic state, in the Gramscian sense, by winning the consent of the Tamil nationality transformed the ethnic conflict into a ferocious internal war. The spill-over effects and the linkages of issues brought India into the conflict. India's attempt to use the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis to attain its strategic interests backfired. These developments set the direction for a new security discourse for the new millennium.

The security implications of the second JVP insurrection were also of great importance in bringing the internal and human security to the forefront. One of the striking features of the second JVP insurrection, when it is compared with the first one was the very high degree of terror and violence associated with it. Furthermore, unlike the first one, the second JVP insurrection continued for over two and half years from mid-1987 to the end of 1989. A close examination of the political anatomy of the Southern militancy manifested in the JVP insurrection can identify four interrelated revolts embodied under the JVP leadership: first, the student revolts associated with problems in the
education system; second, the burst of anger against state violence and manipulation of the democratic political process; third, youth revolt against increasing marginalisation and other socio-economic problems; and last but not least, the nationalist revolt spurred by Indian military intervention and the subsequent presence of the IPKF in Sri Lanka.

Having been pushed to the jungle after the 1983 riots, the JVP had been readying itself for an armed struggle after 1986. The first military action of the JVP after the 1971 episode was the raid of an army camp in Pallekele, near Kandy. When Sri Lankan forces were engaged in Liberation Operation in Wadamarachi in Jaffna under the commandship of General Kobbekaduwa, the JVP carried out attacks simultaneously on Katunayake Air Force base and on Ratmalana Defence Academy, signaling its readiness for armed confrontation with the government. However, the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord provided the take-off the JVP had been long awaiting. The first phase in the evolution of the insurrection was from the Peace Accord in July 1997 to the Presidential Elections in December 1988. The second phase stretched from the Presidential Elections in December 1998 to the assassination of Rohana Wijeweera and other leaders of the JVP in November-December 1989.

The many constituent elements of the internal security dimension in a structurally weak state like Sri Lanka were brought to the forefront by the second JVP uprising very dramatically. In the face of the massive challenge posed by the insurrection, not only the existence of the regime but also the security of the society at large, social institutions and unarmed individuals in the civil society were threatened severely. It was in the face of the internal challenge that the state was on the verge of collapse in the late 1988 and early 1889, and not because of external threats. The state which is supposed to be the ultimate source of security was so insecure that it relinquished its fundamental responsibilities in the domain of civil defense. At one point, the State Minister of Defense was reported to have stated that 'one's own security must be taken care of by the person himself. As a result, the state lost its reason d'etre. At the height of the uprising, the entire island except the North and the East came to a standstill and the people, the society, and the individual were gripped with terror and fear. Insecurity pervaded every aspect of social life. The insurrection exposed the vulnerability of the system. The measures taken by the 1977 regime to ensure political stability and security backfired. Instead, the measures adopted destabilised the state, society and political institutions.

The insurrection marked another step towards the further militarisation of the state, society and political order. It proved to be a
multi-dimensional process going beyond the mere growth of the armed forces. It encompassed the spread of martial values in society, the increasing role of the forces in conflict resolution and the enhanced role of the military in the decision-making process, directly or indirectly. During the period of insurrection, military coordinating officers took charge of civil administration in district units. With direct and indirect sponsorship of the state, vigilante groups and death-squads came into operation in association with state counter-insurgency forces—PRAA, Ukussa, Black-Cats, to name a few. It was estimated that about 60,000 youths in the South ‘disappeared’ during the insurrection.

After a decade of continuous political and social turmoil and unprecedented degree of violence that engulfed the entire society, Sri Lanka was weary and truly in need of a breakthrough in 1994. The Peoples’ Alliance (PA) government that came to power in 1994 under the leadership of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga kindled the hope for a new political order. The PA promised a new approach to the ethnic problem and emphasised the need for a negotiated political settlement. It assured the continuation of the open economy but with a human face and good governance with transparency. Its emphasis on human rights and human resources development encouraged the development of an alternative security discourse.

Peace remained the highest priority of the PA government. However, the initial hope for a quick peace based on a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict was shattered after the collapse of direct talks with the LTTE in April 1995. The renewed armed conflict surpassed the violence that preceded the talks. After a fierce battle, the government forces were able to liberate Jaffna from LTTE control in October 1995. This military operation, code-named 'Riviresa', was carried out at a heavy price—600-700 soldiers were killed and 3000 wounded. The LTTE reacted to the loss of Jaffna by bringing the war into Colombo and the main installation in Sapugaskanda near Colombo was attacked in the same month. After Riviresa, the LTTE was able to block government military advances successfully. In late 1998 the Government tried to open up a land route to Jaffna but failed, accruing severe human and material cost. In late 1998 Kilinochchi, Muleitive, and Elephant Pass camps collapsed in the face of LTTE military maneuvers. The military stalemate and assassinations and attacks on selected targets in the South resulted in a very gloomy atmosphere once again.

The strategy of the PA government in its search of a political solution to the ethnic problem appeared to be a multi-faceted one. In July 1995 the concept paper on constitutional reforms which was
identified as the devolution package was published. One the one hand, the Government launched a public awareness programme to make the ground situation conducive for a negotiated political settlement to the protracted conflict. The Sudu Nelum movement, National Integration Programme Unit and the Peace Education programmes launched various programmes with the help of various NGOs and CBOs to promote a peace and the devolution package. On the other hand, the government initiated a dialogue with the main opposition party on the devolution package and started the legislative process to acquire a new constitution to give political expression to multi-ethnicity. The new constitution initiative of the PA government came to a dismal end when 'A Bill to repeal and replace the Constitution' was finally rejected by the opposition in August 2000.

In the international arena, the PA government endeavoured to mobilise international opinion against the LTTE and use it to force the LTTE to come to the negotiating table. In the propaganda war in the international arena, both the government and the LTTE brought the issues relating to the violation of human rights by each other. In order to build international opinion against the LTTE, the government highlighted its intentions to devolve power as well as acts of terrorism on the part of LTTE. These acts of terrorism, including the assassinations of Jaffna Mayoress Sarojini Yogeswaram (May 1998), and Neelam Thiruchelvam (July 1999), helped the government to build international opinion against LTTE. Furthermore, internationally sensitive issues such as the recruitment of child soldiers and the suppression of dissent views worked against the LTTE and many countries came forward to ban the activities of the LTTE. The issues relating to human rights that were raised by both the parties against each other contributed further to develop a new security discourse centred on the concept of human security.

Even after the unilateral withdrawal of the LTTE from the negotiating table in April 1995, the PA government did not abandon its effort to forge a negotiated settlement with the LTTE. In October 1998, President Kumaratunga indicated the willingness of the government to sit for conditional talks. She asserted that the Government believed in a negotiated settlement but would not rush to talks with the LTTE. In late November 1998, Prabakaran publicly called for peace talks with the help of a foreign mediator in his Mahaveer speech. The President invited the Norwegian government to mediate to bring the two parties to conduct peace talks. Indirect talks with the LTTE, through Norwegian mediation were commenced in early 1999. The Norwegians,
continued subtle diplomacy throughout 1999 and 2000 despite vicissitudes in the battle front. While the Norwegian mediation was in motion, the LTTE declared its unilateral ceasefire on December 25. The Government did not respond to it formally and concentrated on a formal agreement with the LTTE. A draft Ceasefire Agreement (CF) was ready by April 2001 but in the last minute the LTTE refused to sign the Agreement.

The faltered peace process appeared to have received a new lease of life after the UNF government came to office in December 2001. Soon after the UNF assumed power, the LTTE unilaterally declared a ceasefire and the new government responded positively. The removal of street check points and cancellation of cumbersome authorisation permits for the movement of people and goods created an optimistic mood throughout the country. The agreement on a Ceasefire between the government and the LTTE was signed on 22 February 2002. As a part of the Agreement, a team of International Monitors came to the island to monitor the ceasefire agreement. The Ceasefire Agreement marked the slow beginning of the transformation of the conflict. Direct talks between the two parties began in September 2002. After six rounds of peace talks, the LTTE unilaterally decided to suspend its participation in negotiations for the time being in April 2003. However, the LTTE reiterated its continuous commitment to the ceasefire with the government. As such, the ceasefire situation has stabilised the present conflict relationship between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. The current developments in the security discourse should be understood against this backdrop.

The ethnic conflict which is really a manifestation of the failures of national integration and post-colonial state-building processes provided a catalyst for a new security discourse in the country. The impact of the ethnic conflict and the secessionist war has been profound in the security thinking of the political elites, the defence community and the people at large. It has increasingly been felt that security is no longer just the military strategic security of the state vis-à-vis the threat emanating from external sources. It now covers a broader terrain with multiple references. The ground realities have forced the government to redefine the security of the state so as to include the internal dimension of security. Redefinition of the security of the state brought the organisational principles of the state, its institutional apparatus and the human and physical foundation to the forefront as key objects in the security of the state. More importantly, when non-state references are included, many issues which had remained outside the security discourse directly entered into the security orbit.
In the theoretical reconstruction of security in the light of the socio-political developments, ethnicity has entered directly into the centre of discourse. In the context of the ethnic crisis, the ethnic identity has now become a main cause of insecurity depending on the geographical location. Hence, in search of a high degree of security, it has become imperative to ensure security of the attributes of one's ethnic identity. It is not simply a question of the recognition of multi-culturalism in the social and cultural space. Fundamental to the security of ethnic groups is their inclusion in the political decision-making process, not as individuals but as ethnic groups. The devolution debate brought forward the issue of how to incorporate ethnicity in the exercise of power and governance.

In the present security discourse, finding a sustainable solution to the ethnic problem while meeting political and military exigencies constitutes the key element of the security predicament. The LTTE challenges almost all the elements of the state. Primarily, the territorial integrity, the main component of the conventional concept of security of the state is challenged by advocating secessionism. More importantly, the challenge of ethno-secessionism was directed against the very idea of the state and its ideological base. It is important to note that the state exists on the socio-political rather than simply the physical plain. The state is in essence a politico-legal abstract. In reality, the existence of the state manifests itself in the form of the institutional expression of the state. The LTTE challenges the validity of the institutional expressions and manifestations of the organisational ideology of the state from the constitution to school curricula. Last not the least, the military challenge of the LTTE has forced the Sri Lankan state to practically compromise its monopoly of organised violence, at least in certain parts of its territory.

It is important to note that ethnic crisis has not been construed simply as a conflict between ethnic groups. It is more a political crisis of the state in a multiethnic social context and political syntax, brewed and brought forward by a number of factors and historical conditions. At the same time, the ethnic conflict that has been ravaging Sri Lanka for two decades is not unique in the sense that it manifests a common predicament that many multi-ethnic states encounter in the context of the world-wide trend of ethnic resurgence—the assertion of ethnicity in social and political space. In order to broaden the political space to accommodate the political expressions of ethnic identities, the existing state structure based on a unitary constitution needs to be changed. Accordingly, the need for a new constitution to promote devolution of
power to regions becomes a part of the political discourse on finding a solution to the ethnic problem. In contrast to the conventional interpretation, restructuring the state becomes a *sine qua non* for the security of the state.

In the abstract form security means the pursuit of freedom from threats. Therefore, redefining the perception of threat remains a key aspect of the changed security discourse. A wide range of threats and vulnerabilities have been identified which included state as well as non-state actors who have challenged the authority of the state. The reaction on the part of the state to the separatist military challenge of the LTTE has exacerbated insecurity in Tamils, both as individuals as well as an ethnic group. It is not simply a one-dimensional process. The violation of the individual security and human rights of Tamils and non-Tamils by the LTTE and other militant groups has become a matter of grave concern. The assassinations of the leaders and followers of the ‘other’ militant groups of the same ethnic group highlighted this scenario. Attacks on ‘outsiders in the homeland’ have been taking place in both sides of the ethnic divide. An extreme case in this regard is the instances of flushing out villagers to demarcate and purify the traditional homeland. The self-righteousness associated with ethnic cleansing sets no limit to violence. Hence, threats emanating from non-state actors constitutes main element of threat perceptions in the present context.

As a result of all these developments, the individual and his/her collective identity have come to the centre of security analysis. When the phenomenon of security is reconstructed from the human-centred point of view, the focal theme of the security discourse becomes how to ensure the freedom from threats from the point of view of the individual. Due to the fact that the individual is a constituent unit of the ‘political society,’ the political security is a pre-condition for the security of other areas. However, from the point of view of the individual, the security of other areas, such as, economic and societal, is very crucial for his/her wellbeing. The presence of internally displaced persons (IDP) who have been living in temporary dwellings for years now and the condition of the Sri Lankan refugees in the south Indian soil highlight the gravity of the human security problem. The strategies relating to how to alleviate poverty and other issues relating to economic well-being emerged as human security issues in this analytical and practical context.

The trajectory of security discourse in Sri Lanka in the last half century thus reveals two main things: first, the shift in emphasis from
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Military strategic security of territorial integrity and narrow state-centred economic security to the diverse aspects of internal security with multiple references and the functional dimensions of security. Second; the fact that this shift corresponds to the crisis of the Sri Lankan state which is manifested in the collapse of the authority of the state and the legitimacy of its institutions. This shift of emphasis of security thinking is further reinforced by the emerging theoretical discourse on human security. The importance of the issues raised by the discourse on human security as key elements of a human-centric security approach is practically realised by the Sri Lankan polity in its day-to-day life. When the individual and his or her collective identities have become the focus of the security configuration, diverse sources of threats and vulnerabilities are to be taken into account. The symbiotic relationship between other references of security and human security highlights the need to locate the human security problem in the context of the crisis of the post-colonial Sri Lankan state.