



THE DILEMMA OF MILITARY EXPENDITURE AND PEACEBUILDING IN POST WAR SRI LANKA (2009 – 2019)

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INTRODUCTION

Defense spending has been a key component of the government budget in both developed and developing nations. Each country's defence spending as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is influenced by the economic, social, and political dimensions of both internal and external contexts. Most of the developed nations have allocated a high proportion of resource budget. The United States (US) has the highest military expenditure, which was \$778 billion in 2020. (SIPRI, 2021)

In the Sri Lankan context, according to the Appropriation Bill (2019), the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defense (MoD) is allocated Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR) 356.4 billion for 'recurrent' and LKR 36.7 billion for 'capital' expenditures. The former is thought to be for operations, maintenance, and salaries, whereas the latter is likely for procurement. The total defense allocation for 2019 is also LKR 102.3 billion higher than in the 2018 Appropriation Bill. According to a report by Strategic Defence Intelligence (SDI), Sri Lanka's defense spending is expected to reach \$2 billion by 2023, with a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 1.71% over the next five years. The defense budget is \$1.9 billion in 2018, with a CARG of -1.35% over the previous year. (Army Technology, 2018)

Military spending during the period was driven by post-war rehabilitation, the threat of re-emergence of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) affiliates, and a strained relationship with India. Sri Lanka's missile spending is expected to average 1.8% of GDP over the next five years, compared to 2.4% on average in the previous period. Consequently, every country strives to enhance its military power as much as possible. Invasion from another country can only be avoided if one's own country's security is maximized. It is prudent to be prepared for this. The government should prioritize national security while also focusing on peacebuilding. It is impossible to conclude that that country is at peace solely because of its security. As a result, peacebuilding is also important for a country. (Army Technology, 2018)

Research Objective

Major Objective

- To examine the relationship between military expenditure and peacebuilding in the post-war period, in Sri Lanka.

Specific Objectives

- To investigate the contribution of the Sri Lankan government to peacebuilding
- To study the allocation of military expenditures during the post-war period (2009-2019)
- To make effective recommendations to promote peacebuilding

Research Question

- What is the relationship between military expenditure and peacebuilding?
- How does the Government of Sri Lanka contribute to the peacebuilding process?
- What are the reasons behind the increase in military spending? What measures can be taken to promote peacebuilding?



METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interviews were used as the research method for this study, which took a qualitative approach. As primary data, the researcher used the purposive sampling method and interviewed four different types of groups; five military officials from three forces (Sri Lanka Army, Sri Lanka Air Force, and Sri Lanka Navy); five officials from MoD; five project managers from National Peace Council (NPC); five peacebuilding activists. The participants remain anonymous in this paper. Qualitative secondary data is derived from reputed books, online journals, media reports, existing literature, academic research, journals, and websites. A review of the literature was presented corresponding to the research topic on the theoretical study of military expenditure and peacebuilding. The researcher uses websites and economic reports to identify military expenditure. Furthermore, with the help of journals, books, articles, and research papers the researcher was able to find comprehensive information regarding peacebuilding and the post-war era in Sri Lanka. The semi-structured interviews allowed for more in-depth insight into the personal thoughts on military expenditure and peacebuilding to be discussed in an open candid manner, which made the interpretation and analysis of the findings more meaningful. In the analysis, the thematic method was used to provide deep insights. From the military/security official the researcher was able to get details regarding post-war Sri Lanka, military expenditure, and its process. From the project officers/peace activists, information on themes such as peacebuilding, and the situation in post-war Sri Lanka was obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Link between Government Contribution and Building Peace

In the post-war period, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) played a huge role in peacebuilding. It is significant that every program implemented by the GoSL not only focused on the North and East but the whole Sri Lankan population. It has also taken steps to do justice to not only Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims who have been affected by the war but also to the LTTE's war victims as well. In May 2010, the President of Sri Lanka appointed the Lessons Learnt & Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) to address the human right violations occurring at the top of the conflict. In November 2011, the LLRC produced a report arguing that Sri Lankan security forces didn't deliberately target civilians and took proportional actions, whereas the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) committed grave violations of international humanitarian law (LLRC, 2011). On the other hand, according to the project officers of NPC, the GoSL did not make any contribution to building peace. The Office of National Unity & Reconciliation (ONUR) has carried out many projects but none of them related to peacebuilding. According to these project officers, the government has a questionable policy on peace. On further examination, the government has established an Office of Missing Persons (OMP) to play a major role in the disappearance. The government has allocated 130 million for this, but the OMP spends only 100 million, and there is 120 million remaining. That 100 million is spent only to pay for the workers who work there. According to military officials, GoSL initiated many plans for peacebuilding such as assistance to ex-combatants to overcome their difficulties and community assistance to people who were settling down.

Security Sector Reforms (SSR) Aftermath of the War

The researcher found that the GoSL increased the defense expenditure year after year in the post-war period to increase the security of the country. The estimated amount for 2019 is higher than the other years. This is evident from the views of the respondents. As they stated, GoSL spends too much money on the country's security. National security is a necessity for a country like Sri Lanka. GoSL should spend the same amount on peacebuilding as it does on national security. Vladimir Lenin once said, "if a soldier's salary is higher than the teacher's salary, that state will never develop." (Quote expressed by one of the respondents) After the war is over, the cost of security must be reduced to some extent. As a developing country, Sri Lanka has more things to spend rather than war. The conclusion is that an equal amount of money should



be allocated for the security of the country as well as for peacebuilding. The security of the country, as well as the peace in the country, are factors that affect the development of the country.

Enhancement of National Security through Peacebuilding

All Sri Lankans suffered for three decades because of the armed conflict. The LTTE's military defeat in May 2009 was a pivotal event in Sri Lankan history. It lifted the veil of fear that hung over daily life and impacted every Sri Lankan for a generation. Furthermore, there is a reorganization of LTTE in the international arena. There are ex-LTTE cadres, pro-LTTE activists, and LTTE sympathizers still operating in various guises through various groups in many countries around the world. It is important to note that many of these LTTE-linked groups claim that they no longer have any interest in terrorism. Most of them say that they engage in political activism and not violence. GoSL has done a good amount of work. The government has resettled 294,000 Internally Displaced People (IDP) who had been the LTTE's human shield during the last stage of the war. Moreover, the government was able to rehabilitate 11,000 LTTE carders (595 child soldiers among them) under a program supported by UNICEF and reunited them with their families within one year. Through these kinds of implications, the GoSL enhances the peace, harmony, and national security of the country. Lieutenant General Mahesh Senanayake spoke to the BBC about Easter Attack and said, "Too much of freedom, too much of peace for the last 10 years. People forgot what happened for 30 years. People are enjoying the peace and they neglected the security." According to officials of MoD and military officials, Sri Lanka is not just the land. It consists of airspace and sea also. If there is a secure background on land, sea, and air, it is impossible to threaten the country. For that, it costs a lot. Therefore, to build peace in the country, national security must be enhanced. Moreover, according to further discussion national security needs to be increased to face the current global threats such as nuclear, and biological weapons, cyber-attacks, environmental and climate changes, natural disasters, and transitional crimes. Furthermore, leaders should become more aware of the need to integrate security and development programs into policy interventions. Strengthening the alliance with the local community is important to integrate national security and the peacebuilding process collectively.

Another necessary development is the resource allocated for intelligence operations. After the war, the number of military intelligence units has increased and each security forces headquarters currently has its intelligence personnel who are being afforded added training to enhance their capabilities and capacities. As Sri Lanka moves forward, it is hoped that intelligence agencies are going to be able to keep track of and contain the domestic national security issue.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The study mainly focuses on the relationship between military expenditure and peacebuilding after the war, from 2009 to 2019. In other words, in the post-war situation, more money should be spent on peacebuilding, or on furthering national security by increasing military expenditure. All these factors made it clear that there is a connection between these two extremes. That is, the support of national security is an essential obstacle to building sustainable peace. Even though there are different views on national security, long-lasting peace cannot be built without national security. even so, that peace is difficult to sustain.

Recommendations for sustainable peacebuilding

- **More focus on the Office of Missing Person (OMP) and Office for Reparation (OR).**

Although the government has already taken various initiatives to promote peace, some of its risks have diminished, particularly concerning the OMP and OR. The government needs to investigate and act appropriately. As a result, the nation will be able to produce better outcomes.

- **Allocation of separate money for peacebuilding.**



Sri Lanka is still far behind in the peacebuilding process. Despite the end of 30 years of war, the people in the North are still suffering. Billions of dollars are flowing from foreign countries to build peace especially from, US, Norway, Germany, and Netherland. That money comes in three ways, intergovernmental (UN), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Multinational Cooperations. However, it is unclear whether that money is spent as intended. Further, GoSL does not allocate a separate amount of expenditure for peacebuilding. It is important to pay attention to this issue.

- **Empower youth in North and Eastern provinces.**

According to the Census and Statistics Department, youth comprise 23.2% of the total population. As a growing economy, Sri Lanka needs to focus more on the service sector will enable the economy to improve in every factor. For the growth of the Sri Lankan economy, reconciliation, decent work, etc. the youth of the country need to contribute and involve highly. To implement it there are plenty of online/remote jobs available at the global level that could generate sufficient income. Since the younger generation of the provinces with a plethora of digital and online skills, has potential, it is imperative to open remote/virtual job markets for them. GoSL can implement awareness programs related to online jobs, vocational training, and entrepreneurship to give an effective clarification about how youth can contribute to society through remote/virtual or online job markets.

- **Provide transparency about government expenditure.**

Financial corruption is one of the main topics in Sri Lanka. To prevent that there should be transparency in government expenditure. Even though there is a Right to Information (RTI) Act No: 12 of 2016, it is doubtful whether people have access to all the information. It will be better if there is a monitoring group for this matter to check how this government expenditure happens. Apart from this, media, NGOs, and youth groups also can actively participate in this and force the government to reveal the expenses they incur.

- **Provide correct guidance on the peacebuilding process.**

Since the end of the war in 2009, many have taken measures to bring about lost peace in Sri Lanka. Although many groups contributed to peacebuilding, most of them were not aware of the process of peacebuilding and its approaches. For example, the concept of “reconciliation” became mainstream in Sri Lanka’s political discourse. It seemed that most of the ordinary people were unaware of this concept, which was considered only a political slogan. Occasionally wrong connotations of reconciliation created great skepticism among the public. For instance, one Sinhala respondent described reconciliation as nothing but an agenda by the international community to divide the country. One Tamil respondent explained reconciliation as a set of bogus promises which was promised in the post-war period in Sri Lanka. The majority of people are unaware of the concept of reconciliation. There could be other concepts that need clarification. With the collaboration of the Ministry of Education, GoSL can add peacebuilding-related content/peace studies to the school curriculum. Moreover, to expand the knowledge regarding peace studies GoSL can engage with national and international level experts. Therefore, providing a proper pathway to learn about peace will be an effective initiative.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all the academicians who supported me to do this research.

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