

Social Transformation Perspective of National Defence: Case of Sri Lanka.

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the role of national defence in social transformation. Conflicts in a society, affect on individual freedom and socio-economic activities of a country. National security along with social contracts, constitutional and other legal arrangements help the society to minimize such conflicts and can create conditions for social transformation. National defence is the major component of national security. The origin of National defence coincided with “social contract” which is the origin of government. In a society where there are conflicts, the role of national defence becomes crucial in creating necessary and sufficient condition for the society, to get into the process of social transformation. The focus of this study is twofold. Firstly, the construction of a new social transformation model and secondly the explanation of social transformation process of Sri Lanka against the separatist conflict. According to the new model, there are large number stages of conflict cycles in the social transformation process. They are identified as conflict stages and smooth social transformation stages. At conflict stages, national defence becomes dominant as the conflict transforms into militancy. If national defence performs effectively the conflict cycle can be transformed into smooth social transformation where civilian sector become dominant. This can be continued if national defence be effective and efficient. However if national defence is not effective substantially the conflict stage can lead to social disintegration followed by repeated conflict cycles. In the case of Sri Lanka until 2009 it has been observed a scenario in which there had been only the bottom line effectiveness of national defence. According to the analysis, in the post 2009, even though the smooth social transformation stages achieved there is a need of a civilian sector dominant social transformation through effective and efficient national defence.

Key words: national defence, public goods, social transformation, effectiveness and efficiency of national defence

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to identify and assess the contribution of national defence as a public good towards social transformation. Society is subjected to change along with the time factor. The nature of change of a society is always subjected to extremisms and exploitation by different interested parties at national level as well as at international level. National defence as a public good is an arm of democratic government. It needs to ensure national security, sovereignty, integrity of the respective nation and allow the society for social transformation. It also needs to prevent probable future conflicts and struggles that cost the society economically, socially or otherwise and should provide both necessary and sufficient

conditions for society to lead towards its optimum level. This paper attempts to identify this social transformation contribution, taking Sri Lanka as a case.

1.1 Study Problem

Contribution of national defence to an economy as a public good is not theoretically clear when compared with other public and private goods. Even though, each and every country spends a fair amount of resources to national defence, the role played by national defence in an economy is to be justified further by theoretical and empirical studies. The contribution towards social transformation is one of the different contributions that needs to be strengthened theoretically and empirically (Jayawardena, 2011).

1.2 Objectives

- i. Identify a theoretical base for national defence and social transformation.
- ii. Explain the social transformation process of Sri Lanka against the separatist conflict.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What is the rationale of intervention of national defence in a conflicting society?
- ii. How does national defence help in social transformation?
- iii. What is the role of national defence in Sri Lanka towards its social transformation?

1.4 Research Methodology

The methodology used in this study is twofold. Firstly, the methodology used in developing the model and secondly in describing the social transformation process of Sri Lanka by using the model. Thus, this study is based on multiple research method. Giving consideration to the system approach, conflict cycles and the models of social transformation processes are identified. Thereafter, in line with the prescriptions of the developed social transformation model, the separatist conflict in Sri Lanka which has been a threat on national security of the country is analyzed retrospectively and prospectively under discourse analytical method.

1.5 Theoretical Background of the Study

Ontology, epistemology and ethnology related factors are subjected to change along with time. In a dynamic society, these changes need to be accommodated and should integrate them with the society to reshape social entities towards new socio-economic and political cultures with a focus on social stability (Sever, 2012). In this phenomenon, protection of individual freedom and security is a prime requirement. When there is no guarantee of security in a society, there is a tendency for conflicts among different groups that interrupt the stability of the society. The conflicts can be transformed into violence followed by militancy under the condition that there is no adequately effective national defence and proper condition for the social justice.

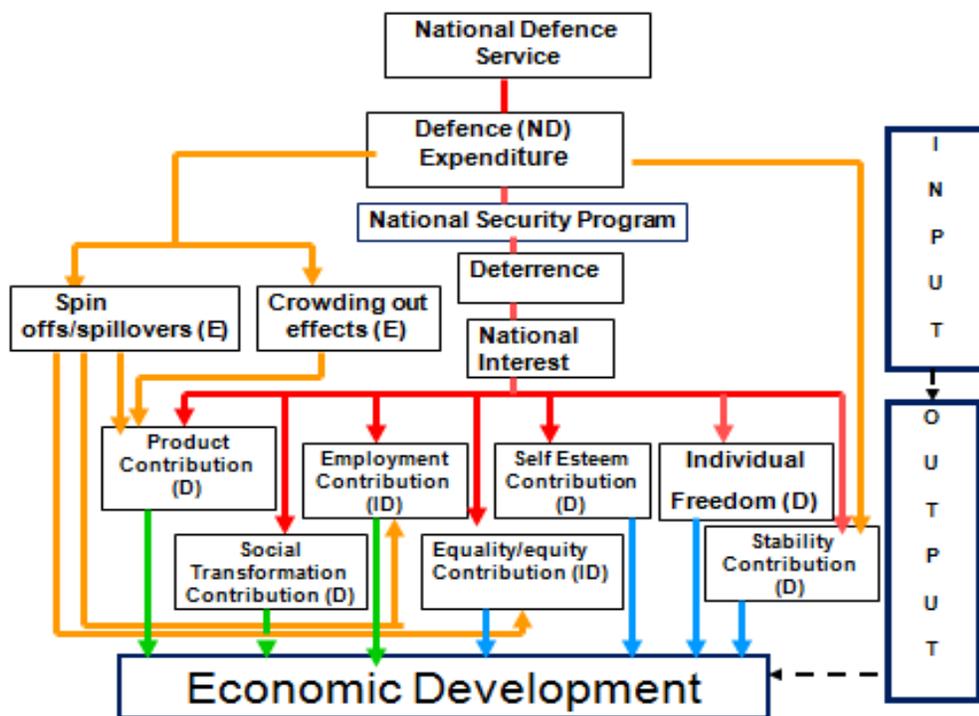
The first scientific analysis of social transformation can be found in Karl Marx writing. According to Karl Marx, the process of social transformation take society from class based society to class less society. Max Weber giving address to interpretivism and interactionism leave such social transformation upon individuals' actions and reactions in the society. According to Max Webber, government is responsible for the individuals in reshaping the society. In the post Karl Marx period, the writings on social transformation have been constructive, critical and contextual unlike Marxist analysis (Pickle, 2002).

In the contemporary world, the conflicts and their complexity have widened both vertically and horizontally and therefore, it is necessary to comprehend them carefully. The situation becomes more critical when there are interventions by other parties at national, regional and global levels. Therefore, dealing with conflict and making necessary conditions for smooth social transformation have become difficult tasks. The existing explanations of social transformation haven't clearly mentioned the role of national defence and its contribution to social transformation. Therefore, the role of government in a dynamic society and its linkage with social transformation need to be further studied.

2. Role of National Defence as a Public Good

National defence is a pure public good. It contains all the characteristics of a public good. When national security is under threat, national defence needs to be given first priority and be allocated substantial amount of resources as the effectiveness and efficiency of other public and private goods are depended on the contribution of national defence against national security threats (Jayawardena, 2011). Economic implications of national defence are given in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Economic implications of national defence as a public good



Source: Author (2011)

3. Conflicts and Social Transformation

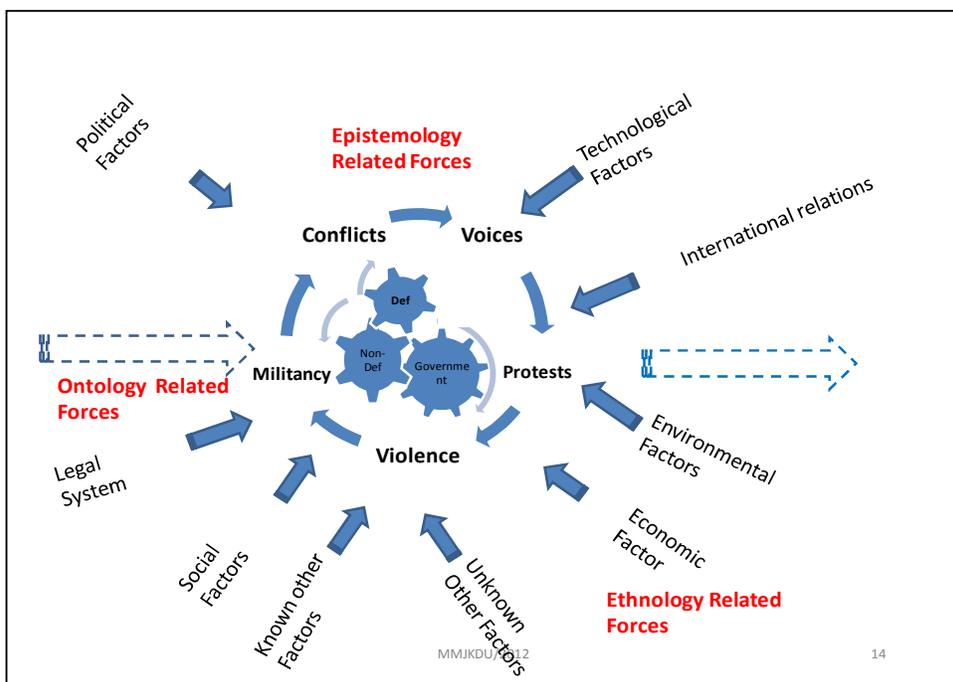
The egoistic and altruistic behavior in a society creates background for conflicts. The conflict tendency is an inherent feature in a society. Therefore, it needs to create necessary conditions for social transformation where society can absorb the conflicts and allow the society to move forward. Social transformation is a fundamental shift from one equilibrium point to another. The conflicts as well as social transformation are affected by economic, social, political and technological factors, strategic relationships, international relationships, legal system, and other known and unknown factors which are influenced by epistemology,

ontology and ethnology related forces (SeeFigure 2). Therefore, the said factors can either increase the intensity of conflicts or can dilute conflicts and lead the society towards a new equilibrium point of social transformation with appropriate social agreements followed by new legal arrangements. In order to control the conflicts and absorb them to the society that help in social transformation, government along with its national defence have to play a vital role in the society until the society become mature in the social transformation process.

3.1 Social Transformation Model

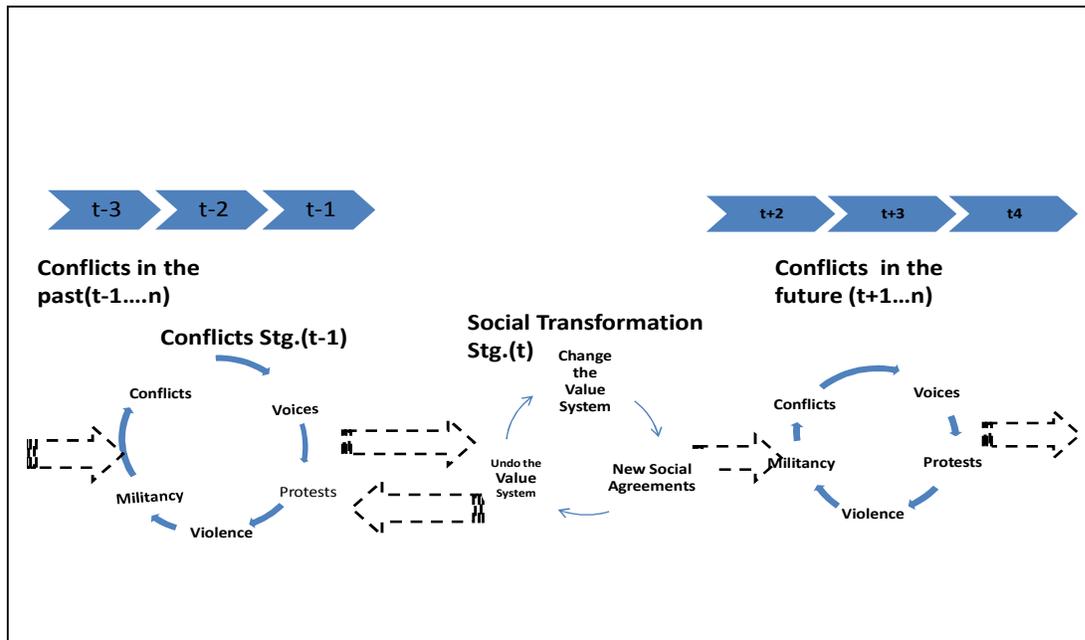
There are two stages of the identified social transformation model in this study. They are conflict stage and smooth social transformation stage.

Figure: 2 Conflict Stage



Source: Author

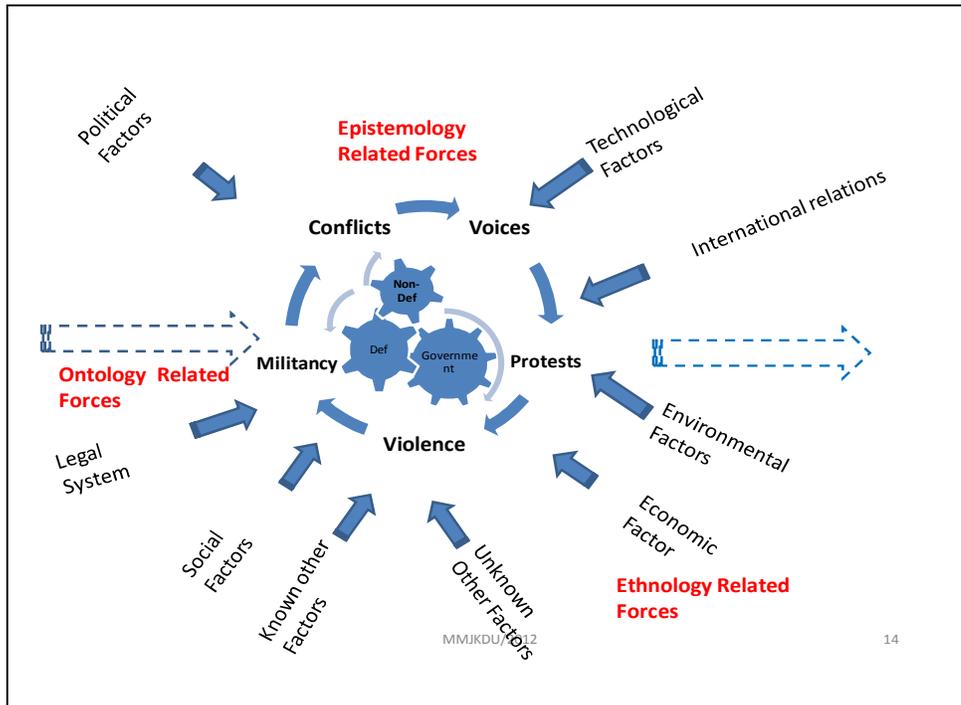
The Figure 2 indicates a conflict cycle in a situation where the national defence is not substantially effective as a public good. In the diagram, the center components represent the government participation (defence and non-defence sector) and the private sector in the economy. The functions of the center mechanisms affected by the conflict cycle in which conflicts, voices, protests, and militancy are cyclically rotated as shown in the figure 2. The conflict cycle as well as the government and private sector affected by the socioeconomic, political and other factors as depicted in the Figure 2. The dotted arrows in the diagram indicate the relationships with the early conflicts and the post conflicts. Here, defence becomes the central element in the economy as the conflict has led to militancy with a threat posing atmosphere in the society as indicated in Figure 2.

Figure 3 : Process of Social Transformation

Source: Author

According to Figure 3, there are large numbers of sets of conflict cycles move backwardly ($t-1\dots n$) and forwardly ($t+1\dots n$). The present conflict scenario is identified under the assumption that national defence is not substantially effective as a public good. The present conflict cycle (stg. (t)) can be continued towards smooth social transformation, if necessary conditions are available¹ for national defence to perform with adequate effectiveness continuously. If not the present conflict cycle can be converted into another conflict cycle just similar to Figure 2. A successful early intervention of government with adequately effective national defence will enable to avoid socio economic and environmental damages to the society as under such conditions national defence contributes the respective society significantly. However in order to transform the conflict led militancy stage (Figure 2) into conflict free smooth social transformation stage as given in Figure 4, national defence needs to function effectively and efficiently. Under such conditions national defence dominant society will be transformed into civilian sector dominant society with appropriate social contracts or agreements that enable to transform the society towards its maturity. This is possible only in a situation where national defence performs continuously with adequate effectiveness depending on the need of society.

¹ Conducive Socioeconomic and political conditions along with effective national defence is the necessary conditions for the conversion of the conflict cycle into social transformation cycle.

Figure 4: Social Transformation Stage²

Note: Note: Def - National defence as a public good

Non-Def - Non defence public goods

Private sector - Private sector in the economy

Source: Author

3.2 Social Transformation and National Defence in Sri Lanka: A Historical Analysis

According to the historical evidence, the *Sinhala* majority and few other minorities have spread over the country with different degree of concentration (Bandarage, 2009). During the Portuguese, Dutch and English periods, transformational development of the society was distorted because of the strategic approach of colonial masters (e.g. divide and rule policy of Portuguese, Dutch and English regimes in Sri Lanka) (Jayawardena, 2008). These distortions in the society can be clearly seen when the changes in the society are compared with the periods under South Indian invasions. Prior to the colonial invasions the social transformation had not been distorted markedly, because the culture and other regional identities in the Indian sub continent are relatively compatible with that of indigenous culture in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the Indian invasions were not primarily culture based invasions. They were based on power or individual interest and limited only for a short time periods. Therefore, there had been no cultural clash or significant structural changes in the society, other than the dynamic changes accepted bilaterally or multilaterally that helped the society in its transformation. During these eras, the ethnic and other disparities in the society were ironed out or settled down through social or ethnic integration which was a necessary condition in the transformation process of a society. On the contrary, during the European invasions, and thereafter, society was not equipped with the necessary conditions for smooth transformation. Instead, there

² The conducive socio economic and political atmosphere along with effective government mechanisms including national defence convert the conflict cycle into social transformation cycle where undoing value system, change in attitudes and value, followed by new social agreements rotate each other take the society towards smooth social transformation. There the transformation cycle linked with the conflict history and the future.

had been cultural, ethnic and religious hassles that lead to clashes in the society (i.e. integration of Hinduism with Buddhism during Indian invasions prior to colonial period and destroying Buddhist temples during the Portuguese, Dutch and English periods (Goonetilake,2009). Therefore, during the colonial period, there were structural changes; firstly, by imposing the western culture into the life of people in the society and then social and ethnic disintegration because of the exploitation of socio-economic and ethnic differences for their easy strategic administration. This was later interpreted as the “British divide and rule policy” (Jayawrdena, 2008). Furthermore, the Europeans imposed their culture directly and indirectly to the society to accomplish their missions. As a consequence, Sri Lankan society has been undergoing the trickled down effects of the European socio-economic and political shaping continuously. In this situation the social transformation process has been interrupted during the colonial period as well as the post-colonial period. Further, in the post independent era, most of the political leaders who were grown within the western culture trapped in the political economy and focused on their political agenda that was originated during under the British rule. Thus even after independence, there has been no conducive socio economic and political vision that could make structural change in the ill developed socio-economic system inherited from the British administration.

As a British colony, in Sri Lanka prior independence, there was no national defence, as the British Royal defence forces in Sri Lanka during this period bound to protect the sovereignty of Britain. In post independent era even though there were some adjustments in the Sri Lanka armed forces the armed forces had not been able to play its role against the prevailing and possible conflicts that threaten on the national security and sovereignty of Sri Lanka due to the failure in the structural change of the society from colonialism to independence.

Under these circumstances, in spite various policy efforts implemented by consecutive governments, Sri Lanka as a developing country has neither been able to achieve development objectives, nor has been able to create necessary conditions for social transformation against the conflicts as discussed in the social transformation models. The failure in maintaining a smooth social transformation has been one of the reasons for the set back of economic growth and development. Under these conditions, there has been a tendency of continuation of conflicts with, fear psychosis; anxiety among different socio-economic and political groups that have become a salient feature in the conflict affected society. According to a medical survey in Sri Lanka, sponsored by WHO (World Health Organization), it has been reported that because of the separatist war, irrespective of race, people are undergoing irritability and suspicion among one another. It is predicted that it can be passed on to the future generation as well.

4. Role of Sri Lanka’s National Defence towards Social Transformation

Paying attention to the theoretical underpinning as explained in Figure1, national security threat under separatism and the role of national defence can be described under two scenarios. Firstly, in a scenario in which it assumes that national defence performs effectively to restore peace with the necessary socio-economic adjustments and secondly, in a scenario in which it assumes that national defence had failed in its duty and as a result social agreements are eroded resulting disintegration in the country with a possibility of repeated conflict cycles.

The analysis under first scenario enables to understand the magnitude of the role of national defence in an optimistic way, where as the second scenario helps us to get an idea of the failure of national defence.

If we consider the first scenario again we can identify three different sub scenarios depending on the level of effectiveness of national defence. 1. Effective national defence with its bottom line contribution 2. Effective national defences only in the short run. 3. A scenario in which there is a continuous effective national defence.

In the case of Sri Lanka until 2009 it has been observed the sub scenario- number 1 in which there is only a bottom line effectiveness of national defence. The period after 2009, it has been witnessed of the sub scenario-number 2 of 1st scenario, where there had been a short run effective national defence. In the case of Sri Lanka, sub scenario-number 3 of 1st scenario is yet to be achieved.

In Sri Lanka, national defence has been gradually expanded since 1983 as the security threat also has gradually been increased. Despite the few failures in certain years (1987, 2001) due to internal and external reasons, there had been the bottom line contribution to the society as far as the integrity is concerned. If the existing national defence had not been present, the social agreements that had been enjoyed by Sri Lanka could also have had collapsed with the disintegration of the country as explained under failed scenario of national defence (second scenario). Therefore, even though there was no social transformation that lead to smooth social cycle as depicted in figure 2, national defence had been able to maintain the conflict trodden society without a collapse in the system.

The empirical experiences of separatism and its defence mechanism against separatist struggle, witnesses that national defence and social transformation in the country until 2006 have been neither optimistic, nor pessimistic, towards the ultimatum due to multiple reasons as explained earlier. In the face of the ethnic conflict, the socio-economic and political equilibrium which is referred as sustainable peace can be achieved through social transformation. The empirical evidence with respect to national defence, especially prior to 2006, the conflict and its expansion, the set back in economic growth and development, witness that the contribution to social transformation by national defence in Sri Lanka had not been achieved because of the less effectiveness of national defence. Thus, in line with the empirical experiences during the last three decades until 2006, the social transformation contribution by national defence could not be achieved as identified in Figure 4. Therefore, the contribution by national defence during the period of 1983-2006 can be ranked as the minimum contribution towards the social transformation. If there had been effective national defence, smooth social transformation could have been observed and as a result the cost of war; the financial losses, loss of lives, environmental losses and other negative impact on society at individual level and society level etc. could have been avoided.

After 2006, the performance of national defence has generated an increasing deterrence against the national security threat. Here, the effort of restructuring of the colonial based national defence with the complementary factors could be one of the reasons for the improvement in the effectiveness. Yet, it has to deliver its contribution in creating the necessary conditions for the society to enjoy the social transformation, followed by a smooth atmosphere in the long run. Under such conditions only, the socio-economic and other impacts of conflicts followed by militancy on the society can be prevented. At this stage together with complementary measures, national defence has to create necessary and sufficient conditions with the focus on new social agreements; firstly, with substantial effectiveness and then with the efficiency of national defence in the long run. In this exercise, national defence needs to perform under a new paradigm in which national defence is going to be a complementary mechanism unlike during the war time where national defence played the major role in the social transformation. At this stage of conflict, an appropriate reconciliation needs to be proceeded to bridge the gaps in the social transformation process. Here, national defence together with government need to create necessary conditions for the society to undo the present mistakes and their outcomes in the face of historical experiences and need to correct them towards the appropriate social transformation while defeating separatist thoughts of the minorities. Here within the Sri Lankan society political economical social and other factors need to be positively reinforced towards a Sri Lankan identity while addressing on the historical realities of the country. In this scenario national defence has to play a crucial role. This is the social transformation role of national defence of Sri Lanka as depicted in Figures 1 and 4. Once such conditions are established, there will be consistent

perpetual social transformation towards the optimum level of its equilibrium where society can enjoy freedom, national security and peace.

Conclusions

National defence as a public good is one of the major component of government. If national security of the country is under threat national defence become the first priority of the government. In such a society the non-defence government sector and the private sector are interlocked with the defence sector. In order to convert such condition in to smooth social transformation, national defence need to perform effectively and should create a threat free society while making it compatible with political, legal, technological, economic, international relation, environmental, known and unknown other factors that aligned with ontological, epistemological and ethnological forces. Here, attitudes and values that created conflicts need to be changed to come to a new social agreement that bridge the gaps in the society and need to settle at a new equilibrium. In the case of North and East issue in Sri Lanka, with the help of defence and non-defence government sector, the value system of both majority community as well as the minority communities need to be changed by undoing the present system against historical events with an alignment to the experiences of North and East conflict. If not the long run social transformation contribution of national defence cannot be observed and thus, there could be either repeated conflict cycle or a collapse of the sovereignty and the integrity of the nation that could cost the society.

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