

Role of National Defence as a Public Good in Social Transformation Perspective: Case of Sri Lanka.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to identify and assess the contribution of national defence as a public good for social transformation. Society has a dynamic nature and is subject to change along with the time factor. The nature of change of society is always subject to extremisms, and exploitation by different interested parties at national level as well as at international level. In such a case, national defence as a public good, as an arm of government needs to intervene in the protection of national security, sovereignty, integrity of the nation and allow the society to transform while preventing probable future conflicts and struggles that cost the society economically, socially and otherwise.

1.1 Study Problem

Contributions of national defence to an economy as a public good are not theoretically clear when compared with other public and private goods. Even though, each and every country spends a fair amount of resources for 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 made by national defence that need to be strengthened theoretically and empirically.

1.2 Objective

Explain the contribution of national defence towards social transformation

1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the rationale for intervention of national defence in a conflicting society?
2. How does national defence help in social transformation?
3. What is the role of national defence in social transformation against possible future conflicts?

1.4 Research Methodology

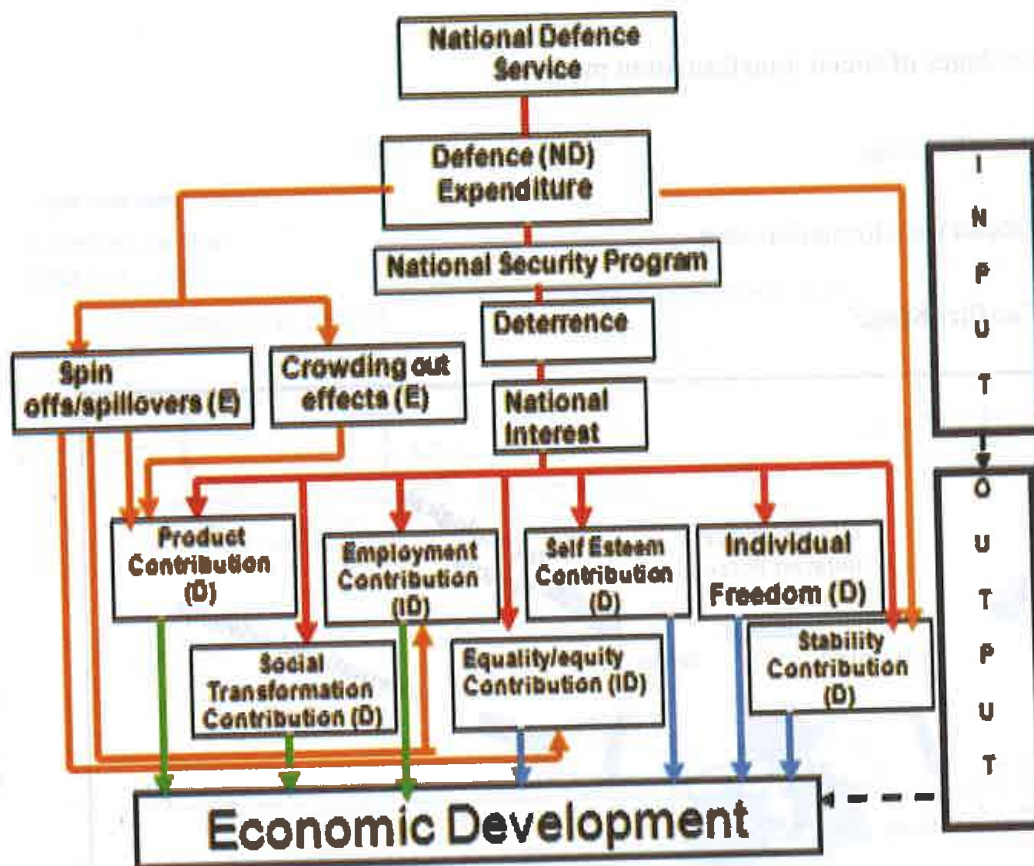
The methodology used in this study is two folds. Firstly, the methodology used in developing the model and secondly in describing the social transformation process of Sri Lanka by using the model. Giving consideration to the system approach, the models of social transformation process, conflict cycle and the social transformation models are developed. Thereafter, in explaining the social transformation process against north and east conflict, retrospective and prospective analyses based on qualitative techniques were used.

1.5 Theoretical Background of the Study

Ontology, epistemology and ethnography related factors are subjected to change along with time. In a dynamic society, these changes need to accommodate and reshape its social entities towards a new socio-economic and political equilibrium (Sever, 2012). In this phenomenon, protection of individual freedom and security is a prime requirement. Sometimes, we call this equilibrium a paradigm. When there is no guarantee of security in a dynamic society, there is a tendency for conflicts among different interested group/s leading towards an interruption within the equilibrium of the society. The conflicts can be transformed into violence, if there is no mechanism to create proper conditions for the society to bridge such differences. 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. In the post Karl Marx period, the writings on social transformation have been constructive, critical, contextual unlike Marxist analysis (Pickle, 2002).

In the contemporary world, the conflicts and their complexity have widen 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. In this situation, analysis of conflicts and the social transformation are important.

2. Role of National Defence as a public Good



Source: Author

3. What is Social Transformation

“Social transformation is a fundamental shift in the way society is organized” It’s a continuous process that is determined by economic, social, political and technological factors, strategic relationship, international relationships, legal system, other known and un known factors. These factors are reinforced negatively and positively by epistemology, ontology ethnography related forces that emerge within the society at national and international level.

According to the Marxist analysis the society transforms from classed society to classless society. The post Marxian analyses with respect to social transformation are critical, constructive and contextual. Therefore, these analyses are generally and loosely formulated. Yet these analyses are empirically important in understanding and explaining the social transformation (Pickle (2002). Under these circumstances, new

knowledge on social transformation is useful in social progress at country level, regional level and global level.

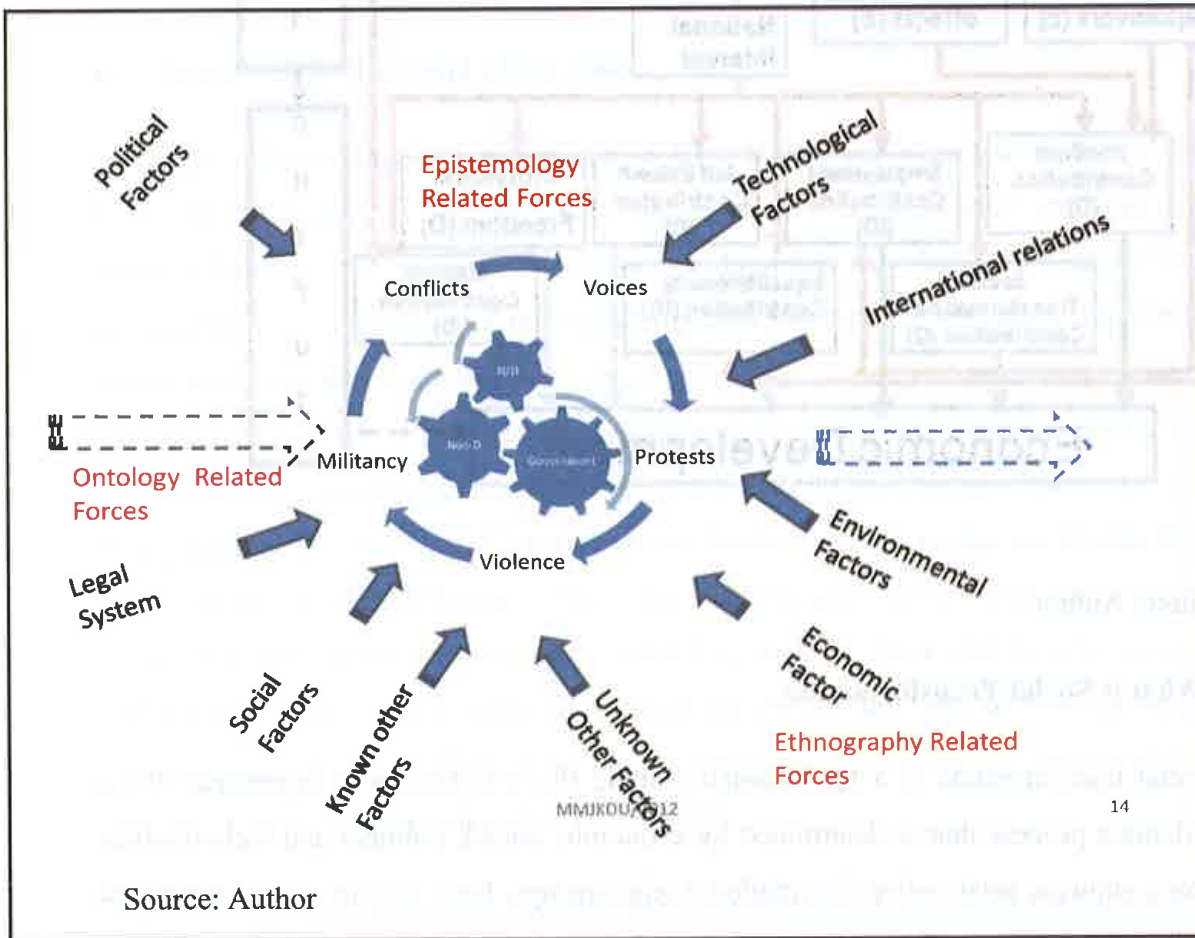
3.1 Social Transformation Model

There are two stages of social transformation model

Conflict stage

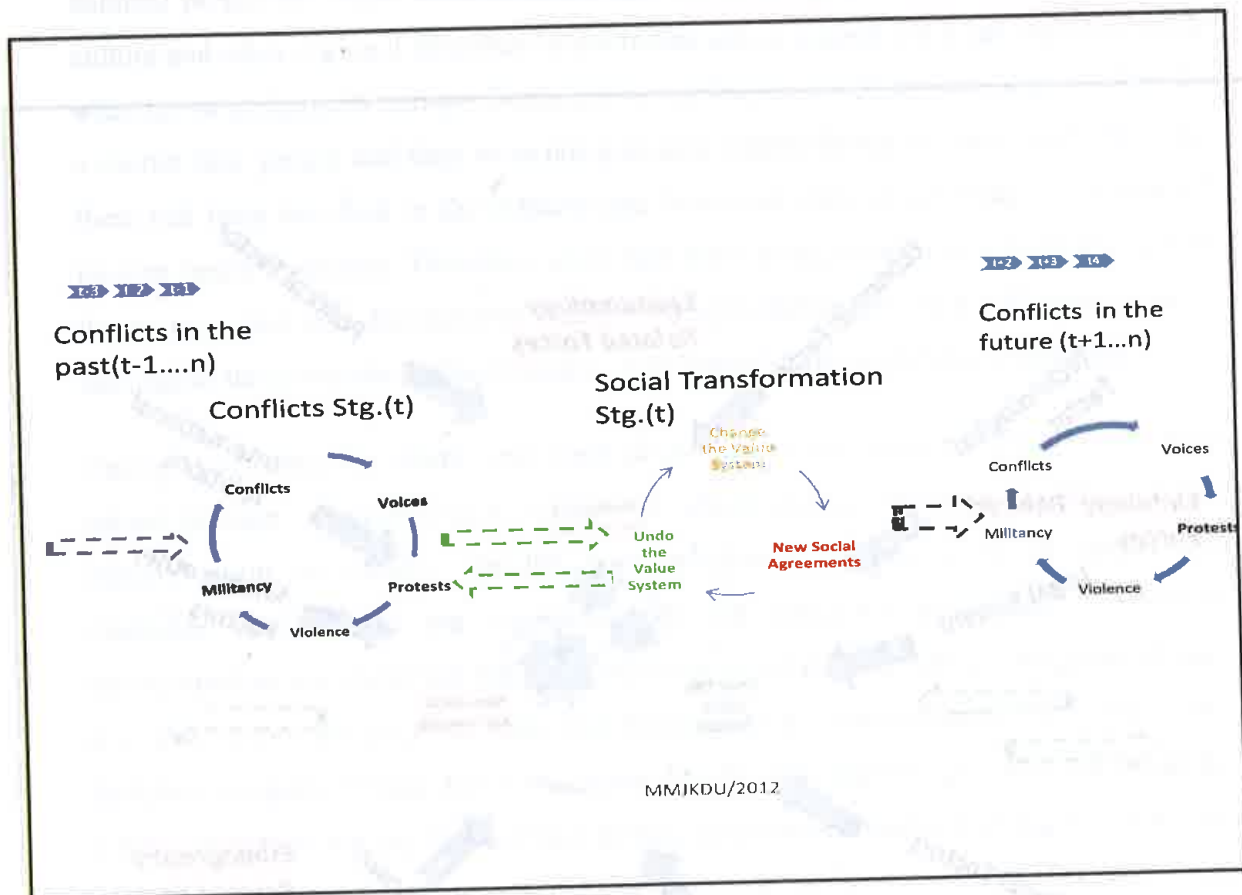
Social transformation stag

Figure: 2 Conflict Stage¹



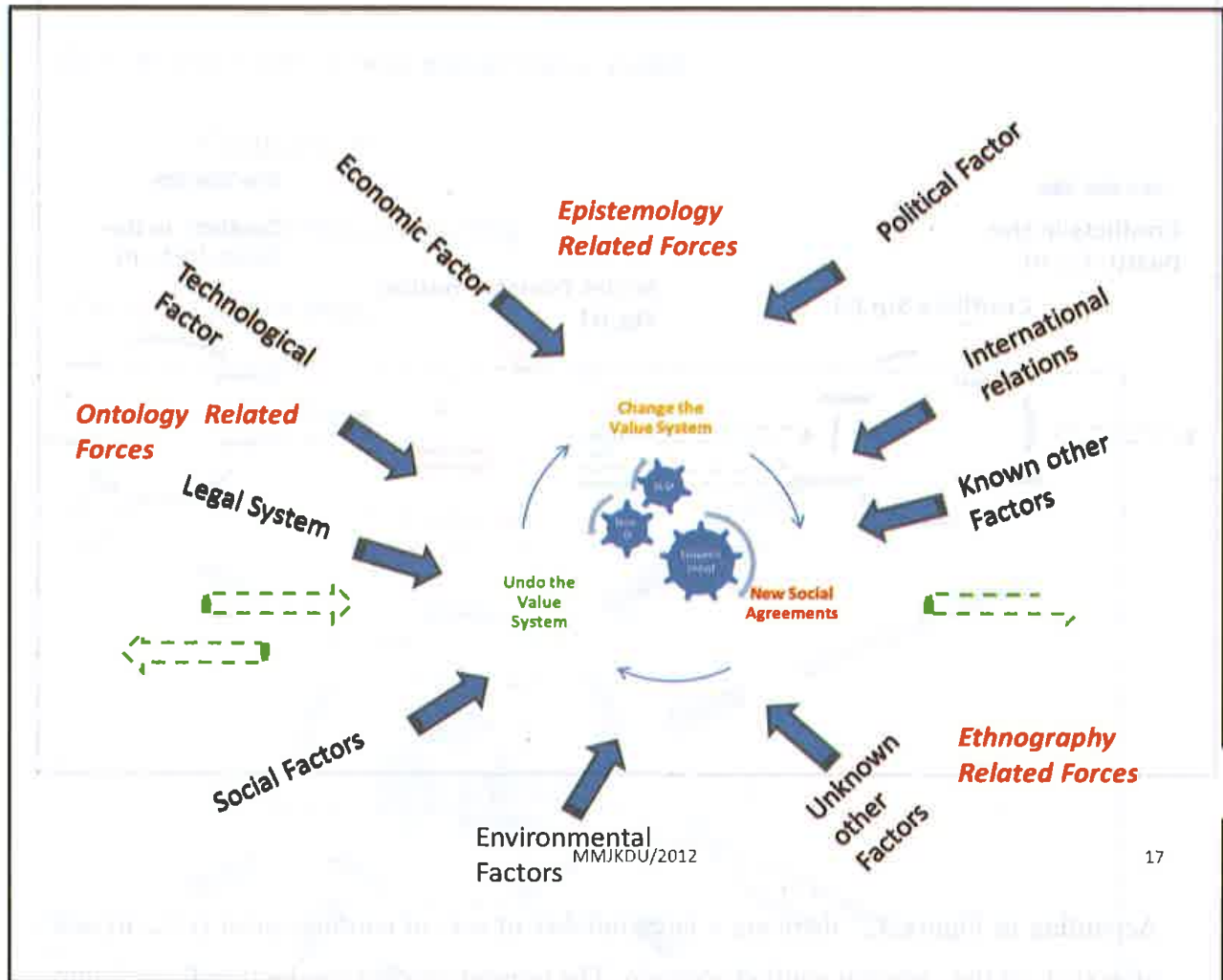
¹ In the Figure 2, inter locked centre mechanisms represent the government sector participation as defence and non- defence sector. The cycle of conflicts, voices, protests, and militancy are rotated as shown in the figure. The conflict cycle as well as the government affected by the socioeconomic, political and technological factors including known and unknown factors that are negatively and positively reinforced by ontology, epistemology and ethnography related forces. The arrows given in the diagram connect the present conflict that with the early conflicts and the post conflicts.

Figure 3 : Conflicts and their Relationships



According to Figure 3; there are a large number of sets of conflicts prior (t-1...n) and after (t+1..n) the present conflict scenario. The present conflict can be transformed into social transformation system if necessary conditions are available². If not the present conflict can be converted into another conflict. In the process of social transformation, national defence can intervene at any of the stage of the conflict. A successful early intervention enables to avoid socio economic and environmental damages to the society.

² 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 Stage³

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

In Sri Lanka, throughout history, the *Sinhala* majority and few other minority identities have spread over the country with different degree of concentration (Bandarage, 2009). As discussed in chapter 4, the periods like Portuguese, Dutch and English 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

³ 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.

be clearly seen when they are compared with the period of Indian invasions. Prior to the colonial period 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. Furthermore, the Indian invasions were limited only for a shorter time period and they were not primarily culture based invasions and therefore, there had been no clash in the cultures and there was only power based or individual interest based invasions. Therefore, there had been no significant structural changes in the society other than the dynamic changes accepted bilaterally or multilaterally during the time of the particular Indian invasions that helped-in the social transformation.

During these eras, the ethnic and other disparities in the society were ironed out or settled through social or ethnic integration which was a necessary condition in the transformation of society. On the contrary, during the European invasions, and thereafter, society was not equipped with the necessary conditions for smooth transformation but there had been an imposing of seeds of ethnic or religious clashes (i.e. integration of Hinduism with Buddhism 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 "divide and rule policy" by the British (Jayawrdena, 2008). Furthermore, the Europeans imposed their culture directly and indirectly on the society with its calculated strategic forward approaches. The Sri Lankan society also had to undergo the trickled down effects of the European socio-economic and political shaping that had been introduced during the time of colonial administration. As a result, the gradual transformation of the society that was continued prior to the colonial period was interrupted significantly. Under these circumstances society has been trapped in ill socio-economic and ethnic perceptions that led to ethnic conflicts in the later stages. In this situation, the socio-economic and the ethnic problems that have accumulated throughout the period of European administration, especially during British period, have gradually created problems during the post independent era of Sri Lanka.

The socio-economic and political standards were below the level of development. The independent governments have not been able to achieve their socio-economic and political targets due to conflicts and other socio-economic crises. Under these circumstances, Sri Lanka as a developing country has not been able to achieve

development objectives, despite various policy efforts implemented by consecutive governments. 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 circumstances, the society has been undergoing various conflicts, fear psychosis; anxiety among different socio-economic and political groups that have become a salient feature in the society. According to a medical survey in Sri Lanka, sponsored by WHO, 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. The “frictional syndrome⁴” which is another trickledown effect has been nurtured during and after colonial rule (Jayawardena 2008).

In this situation, the continuous conflicts and violence have become the outcomes of the mismatching of the existing social agreements and the exploitation by third parties within or outside the socio-economic system. Therefore, there is a need for changes in the social agreements or to introduce new agreements with appropriate check and balance that allow for smooth social transformation. Such social transformations should not be an injustice for any party of the conflict in the long run. With respect to the N&E conflict, the involved communities, specifically the Sinhala majority and the minority Tamils and the Muslims should be accommodated a justice for their grievances within the limits of their entitlement, without allowing for exploitation or becoming a victim of another class or race. The responsibility of such justice depends upon the government and the institutional arrangements that are strengthened by national defence as a public good. Here, national defence has to play its role to make necessary conducive conditions for the dynamic changes for social transformation in line with the existing socio-economic and political realities abide with the constitutional arrangements. If a social element exceeds beyond the limit of their entitlement, it can be an injustice to the other section of the people. Therefore, it is the duty of national defence as a public good that come under the umbrella of public service, to deliver its service towards peace in line with the values of the democratic society allowing for the changes towards the moderation. Yet, national defence need to off its hands in the socio-economic and political dynamics of the civil society once the militancy is under control. However, still it is the duty of national defence to convert its program into a sustainable peace in line with democracy, with check and balance of the human rights of the people within its limits. Under such conditions, national defence’s contribution will lead to the protection

⁴The opposite of the like-mindedness that prevents the productivity.

of the collective heritage and other identical features that have accumulated in the society.

The ethnic problem that has been developed upto chronic problem with trickled down effects as different socioeconomic syndromes (i.e. minority syndrome), Sri Lanka has not been able to manage the ethnic issue that interrupted the socio-economic and political system in Sri Lanka for generations. In this situation, the conflicts were transformed into a guerilla war at the beginning and thereafter, to a conventional war that demanded an expansion of national defence. The delay in returning to the social equilibrium with appropriate social transformation has cost the economy in terms of loss of lives, properties, other resources and in terms of trade off between the increment of national defence and other economically productive activities.

By paying attention to the theoretical underpinning, the immediate outcomes of the conflict and military expansion in Sri Lanka can be analyzed under two scenarios. Firstly, in a scenario in which it assumes that national defence performed effectively to restore peace with the necessary socio-economic adjustments and secondly, in a scenario in which it assumes that national defence had to fail in its duty and as a result social agreements were eroded resulting in the disintegration of the country trapped with more and more conflicts.

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 impact in a pessimistic way.

If we consider the first scenario and assumed that national defence had been effective it could be defeated in the early stage and saved the resources, lives of civilian, government forces, rival forces and the socio-economic opportunities that were lost by the country. The successful *Wadamarachchi Operation* is one of the indicators that signaled the outcome of effectiveness of national defence. In this particular scenario, it also witnesses that the effective national defence is subjected to the availability of necessary conditions that are complementarily linked with the performance of national defence.

If the existing national defence had not been present, the social agreements that had been enjoyed by the society could also have collapsed with the disintegration of the country. National defence has gradually expanded since 1983 as the security threat has gradually been increasing. Despite the few failures in certain years (1987, 2001) due to

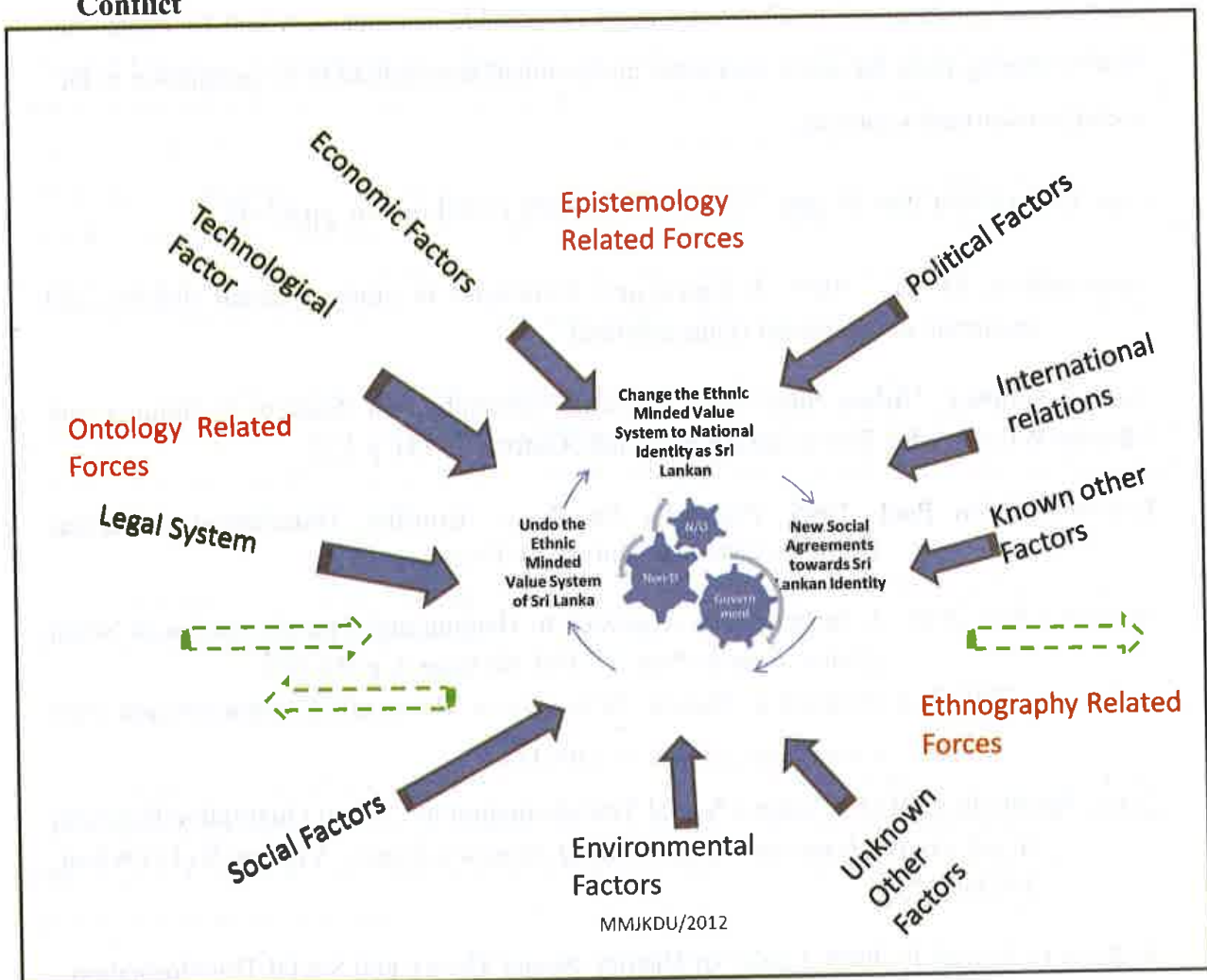
internal and external reasons, there had been the bottom line contribution to the society as far as the integrity is concerned. In 2006, along with the drastic changes in the ground conditions, the armed forces were able to deliver its services to strengthen national security. Thus, sustaining the socio-economic and political system without a collapse itself is a contribution by national defence. Here, it can be considered as the bottom line contribution. If there was no such contribution, national defence could not have established peace by defeating terrorism militarily during the post 2006 period. Therefore, the bottom line contribution by national defence can be important when one looks at the retrospective and prospective dynamism of the changing point of 2006 with respect to the separatist struggle.

The empirical experiences of separatism of the government 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. 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 of social transformation by national defence has not been achieved because of the less effectiveness of national defence. However, national defence has been able to maintain the socio-economic system without a collapse which helps the society to find a longstanding solution once the necessary conditions are available. 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, yet, national defence was maintained without the collapse of its sovereignty. In this situation, it can be ranked as the minimum contribution towards the optimistic social equilibrium. If there had been effective national defence, social transformation could have been observed and as a result the cost of war; the financial losses, loss of lives, environmental losses, the negative impact on society at individual level and society level etc. could have been avoided. Furthermore, if peace is restored through effective national defence, it will ensure the smooth social transformation with the necessary conditions. Therefore, the failure in economic growth and development cannot be interpreted as an outcome of the ethnic war and taken it as an excuse, but addresses challenges in economic policy.

After 2006, the performance of national defence has generated a sufficient deterrence against the national security threat, which is an extremism that interrupts the social

transformation 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 circumstances, the socio-economic and other impacts on the society could have been enormous. Therefore, national defence has to focus on social agreements; firstly, with substantial effectiveness and then with the efficiency 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. Consequently, there will be consistent perpetual social transformation towards the optimum level of equilibrium where freedom, national security and peace can be enjoyed. Such social transformation is yet to be achieved. In this regard, appropriate reconciliation needs to be proceeded to bridge the gaps in the social transformation process. Here, undoing the present outcome against the historical changes and need to correct them towards the appropriate social transformation.

Figure 5: Social Transformation Process of Sri Lanka against the North and East Conflict



Source: Author

4. Conclusions

National defence as a public good is the main government mechanism in an economy. The non defence government sector interlocked with the defence sector and government. 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 settled at a new equilibrium. In the case of North and East issue, with the help of defence and non defence government sector, the value system can be changed by undoing the present system against historical events in the early experiences of North and East conflict that led the issues towards militancy. It is true that the social, , political, legal, technological, economic, international relation, environmental, known other factors and unknown other factors that are negatively and positively reinforced by ontology, epistemology and ethnography related forces affect on both conflicts as well as social transformation process. In the case of North and East, issue, ontology, epistemology and ethnography related forces have affected on the transformation process against the North and East conflict. The failures in the conflict transformation and social transformation are a result of such negative reinforcements coming from the socio economic and political environment. Therefore, government mechanisms need to provide counter services to make the factors coming from the socio economic and political atmosphere to be conducive in the social transformation process.

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