CHAPTER V

INDIA'S ROLE IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: THE SRI LANKAN CASE

India assumed the role of being the agent of conflict management in Sri Lanka, which was the scene of a protracted social conflict with ethnicity as its nucleus.\textsuperscript{1} It was an unusually difficult role for India in particular for the following reasons:

(a) In Sri Lanka, the ruling party, was unwilling to settle the conflict through any third party mediation which could have been so because of their confidence in their overwhelming majority.

(b) Of all the possible parties in a mediatory role, India was the least acceptable because of ethnic and other affinities between Sri Lankan Tamils and Tamil Nadu. This consideration was further aggravated by physical proximity of Sri Lanka as a whole and Jaffna peninsula in particular to Tamil Nadu.

(c) The support that Sri Lankan Tamils had received from Tamil Nadu together with a consideration of New Delhi's domestic compulsions in this regard made Sri Lanka perceive India as a champion of the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils. This

impression was so strong that even an unequivocal commitment of India to Sri Lanka's sovereignty, unity and integrity, propounded since the days of Mrs. Indira Gandhi did not make any impact on Sri Lanka's perception. As a consequence Sri Lanka failed to read the deeper implication of what has been termed as India's domestic compulsion in this matter. This deeper implication was that secession of Tamil regions from the rest of Sri Lanka would have set the worst possible example for India vis-a-vis the sensitive state of Tamil Nadu. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that India has had no compulsions for going beyond supporting Sri Lankan Tamils in their protest against discrimination, and it was exactly this policy that India followed to its logical end.

(d) India by then had acquired a big brother, hegemonistic image in the region. This was a consequence of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's annexation of Sikkim and her diplomatic style in conducting international relations. Sikkim was not a solitary case. Right from India's intervention in Nepal, her liberating of Goa by military means to Indian role in the erstwhile East Pakistan, had made her neighbours somewhat apprehensive of her designs and aspirations. These actions of India were accompanied by what appeared as excessive arming of itself both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The Indian programme of naval expansion
had caused discomfort as far as Australia. It is also pertinent to mention that India did not have the non-partisan status as that of the UN.

**SRI LANKAN ACCEPTANCE OF INDIAN MEDIATION**

Eventually Sri Lanka had to accept and even depend upon India's mediatory role in some phases because of three factors:

(a) Sri Lanka's inability to either control or defeat the guerrilla warfare launched by Tamil militant groups which was further compounded by the activities of (JVP). The realization dawned on the government that it could not afford to fight on two fronts.

(b) The geo-political realities of India's natural endowments and its proximity to the island with the absence of any significant help and aid sought by Sri Lanka from other countries and powers placed Sri Lanka in a vulnerable position. Her helplessness was further compounded by India's increasingly interventionist role even in its diplomatic conduct like the sending of G.Parthasarathy in the face of Sri Lankan opposition.

(c) India's unambiguous commitment to the unity of Sri Lanka and opposition to any idea of partitioning the country helped or made it possible for Sri Lankan government to accept India in a mediatory role.

**CONSEQUENCES**
As a result, India was entrusted with a complex and difficult conflict management undertaking for which it was rather ill-equipped or handicapped. This has been made obvious by a consideration of facts and the nature of conflict situation given in the preceding two sub-sections. The character and prospect of the self-appointed task for India would have been different i.e., easier if both the adversaries were equally interested in having India as a mediator and if both of them were equally and genuinely committed to the goal of a peaceful and reasonable settlement of the conflict issues.

**INDO-SRI LANKA AGREEMENT**

The agreement reached between India and Sri Lanka on 29 July 1987 received general approbation, but it also had its due share of criticism which unfortunately proved prophetic. At a seminar held at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, it was pointed out that "Doubts about its viability and wisdom had been expressed when the Accord came into being." Any censure of the agreement can be made at this point of time


with the advantage of hindsight, but on 29 July 1987 the signing of the Agreement was a great relief in view of what had been going on in Sri Lanka since July 1983, almost without any respite. The agreement is both comprehensive and ambitious in its scope. It sought to remove the long term causes of the conflict, while at the same time providing for its successful implementation in the short term. It is appropriate to look at the Agreement as the instrument of conflict management and conflict resolution here.

In the introductory part of the Agreement itself the target beneficiaries are mentioned as "people belonging to all communities in Sri Lanka". Thus the agreement at the very outset seeks to abolish all privileges and preferences based upon considerations of community. Technically, the objective of the agreement as enshrined is one, but it has five "faces" i.e., sub-clauses 1.1 to 1.5. An analysis of their inter-relationship reveals important facts. Sub-clause 1.1 is the master or commanding objective which establishes the primary importance of preserving "the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka". The three sub clauses from 1.2 to 1.4 are aimed eliminating the monopoly of the majority community which had been the root

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4 See Appendix, Text of India Sri Lanka Agreement.
cause or the source of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.
1.2 acknowledges the country as "a multi-ethnic and a multi-
lingual plural society", and it further specifies all the
communities that inhabit and form the population of Sri
Lanka - "Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims (Moors) and Burghers"
and 1.3 not only accorded recognition to distinct cultural
and linguistic identity of each ethnic group but also stated
that this identity had to be protected and nurtured by the
state. Finally, sub clause 1.4 conceded the recognition of
the Northern provinces as "areas of historical habitation of
Sri Lankan Tamil speaking peoples" and at the same time
acknowledged the presence of other groups living
togetherness there. This was done in consonance with "all
communities in Sri Lanka in the introductory second
paragraph of the agreement. 1.5, the final sub clause,
reiterates all the earlier points contained in 1.2 to 1.4,
and links the entire set to 1.1 - the "unity, sovereignty
and integrity of Sri Lanka, which has been designated here
as master or command objective of the agreement. In
essence, the agreement brought into being a new political
ideology which was an attempt to radically reverse the trend
indicated by the 1972 Constitution and still continuing
Constitution of 1978. It is not difficult to perceive that
these provisions of the agreement together form an
internally consistent and closely cohering group/set of its
constituents. Its comprehensiveness, is also striking. It would however be seen later that the inconsistency in respect of the agreement surfaced during its implementation due to the conflict between its political ideology and the external realities surrounding it.

The second clause of the agreement pertained to specific steps required to be taken in its implementation and execution. Clause 2 contained 18 specific proposals. This clause was of paramount importance from the practical point of view. Here it is going to be examined selectively to highlight its more important aspects and to this end sub clauses 2.1, 2.5, 2.6, 2.8, 2.9, and 2.13 to 2.16 are discussed. Sub clause 2.1 relates to the establishment of a single administrative unit comprising the Northern and Eastern provinces, dependent upon ratification by the people in the Eastern province through a referendum, sub clauses 2.5 and 2.6 were related to the referendum and reflected the seriousness with which the referendum was taken by both the parties. This is borne out by the composition of the committee required to be formed for monitoring it, and the provision that a simple majority would decide its outcome. It is obvious that the latter provision catered to the Tamil

5 The referendum was mandated to be held on or before 31 December 1988 but the President could exercise his discretion to postpone it vide sub clause 2.3.
interest. Sub clause 2.8 imposed a time frame/limit for the holding of elections to the provincial council. They were to be held within three months and before 31 December 1987. The element of despatch in this time frame was important for conflict management by attempting through this measure to seek protection against a recrudescence/relapse of hostilities over some issue, even if minor, within the practicability of holding the elections as early as possible. Sub clause 2.9 related to four important things in the management of conflict. They were: cessation of hostilities within 48 hours of the signing of the agreement, lifting of emergency before 15 August 1987, surrender of arms by the Tamil militants to officers of Sri Lanka and confining of the Sri Lankan Army and other security personnel to barracks as on 25 May 1987. The latter two processes were required to be completed within 72 hours of the cessation of hostilities. It meant that all the four measures were to be completed in 120 hours, i.e., five days. This despatch could have been ideal if both the adversaries were equally sincere in their commitment to the settlement envisaged in the agreement. Sub clause 2.13 is akin to 2.9 as it provided for the forthwith implementation of the agreement subject to acceptance of its framework by the Sri Lankan government. Sub clauses 2.14 to 2.16 imposed crucial obligations on the Government of India in the matter of
implementation and made it almost exclusively dependent on it. A look at the text of the entire agreement reveals that the agreement 'expects the parties concerned to accept and abide by it but there were no compulsions about the initial act of acceptance. It was here that absence of any confidence building measures for creating and assuring the background for the implementation of four clauses of the agreement is or can be actually detected in a review of the agreement. Confidence building measures (CBMs) over a reasonable period of time could have induced the necessary change of mind that was essential for an honest acceptance of the agreement which represented a radical departure from their respective and hardened positions. One could say it was simply a question of the situation or the 'ripe' and waiting for the moment of 'ripeness' that has often meant prolonged suffering and casualties which perhaps is an inherent feature of human situations. However it is obvious that in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict India was not merely an instrument of conflict management similar to the role played by UN mediators operating in a conflict situation. It had become the prime source of the entire conflict management with commitment for providing resources for it, to the extent of underwriting them, and going beyond that of evolving the resolution package with responsibility for effective realization of it. This meant a qualitative
change in India's role from being one of mediation to that of participation. It was as if India had come to be the full fledged third party in the conflict process. Sri Lankan government and militant Tamils both saw India essentially in this light. As far as Sri Lankan government was concerned it is this perception which was the basis of its grouse and grievance against India and therefore once the agreement was put in place, its efforts were directed at neutralizing what it saw as India's bias and using India's commitment to the proposals of the agreement to serve its own purposes and goals, as far as possible. In a sense it succeeded in its design and was helped by LTTE's intransigence as well. The net result was a sabotage and blowing up of the agreement - a handiwork of both Sri Lanka and LTTE in which they even cooperated in the post Jaywardene period to force the withdrawal of Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKP). The LTTE's grouse against India was India's refusal to serve as an instrument for furthering the goals of LTTE and thereby be used by it.

Most of the sub-clauses of the agreement omitted in the preceding discussion pertain to main elements in the conflict resolution package contained in the agreement. Sub-clauses 2.1 to 2.4 and 2.17-18 were conflict resolving proposals which were intended to reconcile the adversaries. Since the focus of this study is conflict management as
distinct from conflict resolution they have not been given a detailed treatment. But some comments are warranted in order to reflect the nature and the scope of the agreement. In an editorial comment made in the wake of the agreement it was observed:

An agreement on such a sensitive and persistent issue could not have been negotiated and signed unless it met, at least partly the demands and aspirations of all the concerned parties, namely the Sinhalese majority population in the Government of Sri Lanka, the Tamils of North-East, fighting for years for a 'Homeland'-or-Eelam, and the Government and people of India, who bore the brunt of the refugee problem and otherwise too felt greatly concerned about growing conditions of instability in a country so close to their shores.6

From this point of view the agreement cannot be faulted and, if it failed to work, that was because of its deficiencies in terms of realpolitik. This aspect has been taken up in the conclusion.

Annexure and Letters

Annexure and letters exchanged between the Indian Prime Minister and the Sri Lankan President are important documents constituting important parts of the agreement. The annexure sketched the modalities of how the proposals contained in the agreement would be given effect and proposed to take care of Sri Lankan susceptibilities and at


189
the same time they balanced this of what was of concern to the Tamil militants and India's own status in this process. Clause 1 provided for the presence of an observer of the Election Commission of India who was to be invited by the President of Sri Lanka, and was not something which had to happen of its own in terms of the agreement. There are other similar provisions in it. Tamil interest was secured by the provision that the home guards would be disbanded and paramilitary personnel would be withdrawn from the Eastern and Northern provinces, and it has been rationalized as a measure conducive to free elections to the Council. Clause 6 was the cardinal element. It provided for the Sri Lankan President to invite an Indian Peace Keeping contingent in terms of sub-clauses 2.14 and 2.16(c) "to guarantee and enforce the cessation of hostilities, if so required". It is obvious that the entire peace process was going to be dependent on the presence of an Indian contingent in Sri Lanka right from the early days, but the language of the enabling provision is such that it completely respected the sensitivities of Sri Lanka as a sovereign state. But what is most striking and important about clause 6 is the use of terms 'guarantee' and 'enforce' and its link up with sub-clause 2.14 of the main text. This meant that the Indian contingent, irrespective of its christening as "Indian Peace Keeping Force" was meant to be a peace enforcing and
guaranteeing instrument. It was a total departure from the character of peacekeeping as generally understood and accepted. In fact there was hardly any role transformation for the IPKF because whatever it was doing had its clear basis and mandate in the Agreement itself. Much confusion or controversy in the critique of the Agreement and its application could have been avoided if the semantics of the text were kept in mind. Therefore any assessment must be made on the basis of and by the criteria of peace-enforcing and not peacekeeping. Since Sri Lankan government through the Agreement had invested India with the necessary authority it calls for a comparison with the UN Charter which conferred the authority to enforce peace between the belligerents. However because of superpower rivalry UN was unable (except in the solitary Korean case) to use it until the dark shadow of veto disappeared in the last days of President Gorbachev era. The idea may sound far-fetched but a consideration of its implication do not yield any reasons to the contrary. And it is by this criterion that India proved intrinsically deficient for the tasks and responsibilities it had assumed for itself in the challenging circumstances. The two letters exchanged between Rajiv Gandhi and Jayawardene are the concluding parts of the total agreement package. They relate to India's security concerns and Sri Lankan apprehensions about
the Tamil militants. They form a evidence of sorts for India's 'Labours'.

**LTTE and the Agreement**

LTTE, the most important and powerful militant Tamil group which simultaneously fought against IPKF and worked to eliminate other Tamil militant groups to ensure the monopoly of power for itself, rationalised its unexpected course of action primarily on two grounds. They were:

(i) It was not associated with the negotiation process through which the Agreement was arrived at which was delivered to them as *fait accompli* by New Delhi. In fact, Prabhakaran expressed his real feelings when he addressed a Tamil meeting on coming back from New Delhi on August 1987. The audience was a lac strong. He said:

> This Agreement did not concern only the problems of Tamils. This is primarily concerned with Indo-Sri Lankan relations.... That is why we firmly objected to the conclusion of this Agreement without consultations with the people and without the seeking of our views. However, there is no point in our objecting to this. When a great power has decided to determine our political fate that is essentially beyond our control, what are we to do?

He further added:

> I pointed out to the Indian Prime Minister the fact that I did not repose the slightest faith in the Sinhala racist government and did not believe that they were going to fulfill the implementation of this Agreement....

My beloved people, we have no way other than co-operation with this Indian endeavour. Let us
offer them this opportunity. However, I do not think that as a result of this Agreement there will be a permanent solution to the problems of Tamils. The time is not very far off when the monster of Sinhala racism will devour this Agreement. I have unrelenting faith in the proposition that only a separate state of Tamil Eelam can offer a permanent solution to the problem of Tamil Eelam. Let me make it clear to you here, beyond the shadow of the doubt, that I will continue to fight for the objective of attaining Tamil Eelam.

In this important speech Prabhakaran made an explicit and unambiguous statement of his political goals and his future course of action, but what was going to be his immediate conduct he left ambiguous and uncertain. His assertion that he would co-operate with India simply could not be seen to relate to his political goal of trying to attain Tamil Eelam. A great deal has been written about the absence of signatures of any Tamil militant group on the agreement. There could have been a number of reasons for this and speculations in this regard has not led to any conclusive body of thought. The three facts are important in this context. First, other militant groups abided by the agreement. Second, the LTTE began by abiding the agreement when it made a token surrender of arms. Third, subsequent


8 First surrender of Tamil arms (5 August 1987), Keesing's Record of World Events, vol.34, November 1988, p.36282.
to his August 4, speech the representative of LTTE, K. Mahendra Raja, who was deputy leader of LTTE signed a formal agreement with the High Commission of India on 28 September 1987 at Colombo. A consideration of these facts lend credence to the Government of India claim that it had obtained the consent of LTTE and others, though if India could be faulted for misplacing its faith and acting without warranted care and caution in a delicate mission it was going to undertake.

**IPKF: OPERATIONS**

Notwithstanding, the scope of the Indian operation under the Agreement, India expected to receive the required degree of co-operation from both LTTE and Sri Lankan government. The first batch of the Indian military contingent arrived at the Jaffna peninsula on 30 July 1987, having sailed from Madras on the evening of 29 July itself, i.e., as soon as the Agreement was signed in Colombo. The strength of the contingent was 3000 and it was expected, first of all, to ensure under its supervision the completion

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9 S.D. Muni, appendix v, p.217.

of the process of disarming the Tamil militants. The task was well begun but came to a grinding halt when LTTE after making an initial surrender of arms refused to continue with the process for reasons already stated. It was the end of the peacekeeping role and turned into a peace-enforcing operation as if the words in the annexure to the Agreement were IPKF, its given name, its pre-ordained destiny. That change in the role was reflected by the accelerating change in the strength of IPKF, which rose from 3,000 on 30 July 1987 to 12,000 on 23 September, 20,000 in October and 70,000 in February 1988. The most dramatic turn occurred on 5 October when 15 LTTE cadres committed suicide while they

11 Ibid; International Herald Tribune (Paris), 31 July 1987; Times of India (New Delhi), 31 July 1987. Even prior to this, "Indian aircraft also transported 600 Sri Lankan troops from the Jaffna Peninsula to Colombo, where they assisted police in controlling Sinhalese demonstrators. The Guardian of July 31, reported that 6000 Indian troops were stationed on standby in Southern India. (Keesings Record of World Events, vol. 34, p.36283). Further Rohan Gunaratna reports that two Indian Naval Frigates were stationed of Colombo from 31 July 1987 and had been on red alert to respond to any emergency because violent protests against the accord were expected. Thus the overall circumstances can be seen to be uncongenial. p.224.


13 Keesings Record of World Events, vol.34, November 1988, p.36284. These are Sri Lankan government figures but unofficial figures put the ultimate strength of IPKF at 100,000. Rohan Gunaratna, n.7, p.269. Also see Bhaduri, Shanker and Asfir Karim, The Sri Lankan Crisis (New Delhi, 1990), pp.58-59.
were being taken to Colombo as prisoners. That was a point of no return for the LTTE and they used the unfortunate incident to justify their renewal of militancy. On 10 October IPKF launched a major offensive and thus started a war of attrition against LTTE guerrillas. Their first target was Jaffna Fort and it proved a very difficult target sitting behind networks of minefield and protected actively by LTTE guerrillas. Causalities kept rising. After the Jaffna Fort was taken by IPKF, its operations spread to Batticaloa, Amparai, Trincomalee and Vavunyia and other places. This meant that the entire Northern and the Eastern provinces were engulfed by the war raging there. Simultaneously with the conflict between IPKF and LTTE, throughout August in particular, internecine conflicts were going on among Tamil militant groups. The IPKF was forced to use heavy arms and helicopters in its bid to obtain military mastery over the situation and in order to contain LTTE. But LTTE showed extraordinary resilience, skill and resolve. There commitment to their cause was total and they cared less than a fig for their lives. The terrain helped them which was thickly wooded where they could take shelter,

14 Keesing's Record of World Events, vol.34, p.36283.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
re-group and launch fresh offensives. But their real strength lay in the spontaneous support they received from the people, which helped them extremely in their fight against the IPKF in the urban and other built-up areas. This proved to be the greatest disadvantage for the IPKF. Any operation against guerrillas in built-up areas was a new experience. Difficulties of this kind might have been overcome if they had operated with the requisite degree of ruthlessness which would have led to very heavy civilian causalities and destruction of property. The task assigned to them, by now was not a purely military exercise but a politico-military one. Thus they were bound by strict policy instructions. As a consequence they were unable to bring the situation under control militarily or in restoring the normal conditions. In the prevailing circumstances while there were major successes against LTTE but no success was conclusive enough.

At the same time Sinhalese opposition to the continuation of the Agreement and presence of the IPKF was gaining in intensity. The IPKF operated in a totally hostile environment in which it received neither understanding nor sympathy. It was a rather humiliating situation for the IPKF especially because in a formal sense it was present in Sri Lanka at the invitation of the Sri Lankan President himself. President Jayawardene dissolved
parliament on 20 December 1988. He had already announced in September that he would not be a candidate in the Presidential elections. Premdasa, the Prime Minister was sworn in as the President on 2 January 1989.\textsuperscript{17} He had been the most vocal critic of both India and the Agreement. It may be recalled here that Premdasa, along with six other ministers, had been conspicuous by his absence at the Agreement signing ceremony.\textsuperscript{18} Now that he was the President he lost no time in demanding the withdrawal of the IPKF. Since India was not willing to oblige Premdasa so easily, especially when one of its goals and self appointed task in a true sense had been achieved, he opened a dialogue with LTTE as a pressure tactic. Both Premdasa and LTTE wanted to get rid of the Indian presence in Sri Lanka because it was a major and inseparable obstacle in the way of their undeclared and hidden designs of achieving their respective goals by the use of main force. Therefore they strove to create an impression that they were close to reaching an understanding and thus India's military presence in the Island was superfluous, unwarranted and unwelcome.

In the meantime there was a new government in New Delhi headed by V.P. Singh who agreed to the phased withdrawal of


\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Times of India}, 30 July 1987.
IPKF which was completed on 24 March 1990, a week ahead of schedule.\(^{19}\) Thus IPKF had come to the end of its career, a victim of circumstances neither of its choosing nor under its control - a disciplined instrument of Indian state. Many adverse comments were subsequently made about its performance and its conduct.\(^{20}\) The military aspects of its operations is not the subject of this study, but it can be pointed out that it is not difficult to see that it was essentially a handicapped force, that had perforce to act on incomplete intelligence which often proved valueless and was therefore untrustworthy. This had cost it rather dearly. It hardly needs any emphasizing how a minimum amount of intelligence is essential for military operations.\(^{21}\) It would be no exaggeration to say that it was made to undertake, especially its later operations, with its eyes unopened. It also appears obvious that it was hardly given


\(^{20}\) When the IPKF in Sri Lanka returned home without accomplishing or to be more fair to the soldiers without being allowed to accomplish the tasks it was supposed to perform not many people reacted favourably to the occasion, let alone cheering the returning soldiers. The then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Karunanidhi's absence on the scene was truly symbolic of the attitude which certainly the IPKF did not deserve. K.Subramanyam, "IPKF: A Failed Mission", Link, 15 December 1991, p.28.

any time for preparing itself for its specified and potential tasks, and right there in the Tamil areas where it was stationed and where it operated, it could not have succeeded in gathering any worthwhile intelligence for planning its operations. Even if other aspects are ignored, its greatest handicap was the lack of a specific time frame in the Agreement or in the action taken under the annexure, i.e., the Sri Lankan invitation for it to go there, whereas there was a very narrow time frame for crucial initial task such as surrender of arms. 22 Yet the balance sheet of the IPKF is not entirely negative as would be seen here. In the circumstances detailed above, it can be safely asserted that over a long period of time if the morale was weakened and there were lapses of conduct, it was not entirely unnatural. It should be remembered that they were essentially fighting against invisible enemies and participating in an unconventional war. Therefore, in the context of an overall understanding of the circumstances and atmosphere in Sri Lanka, it would be appropriate and just for all - the IPKF and its masters and the controlling agency, to share the blame for such lapses, not unknown in military history under similar circumstances.

Among the positive achievements of the IPKF were what

22 India-Sri Lanka Agreement, sub-clause 2.9.
it did for restoring a semblance of civil administration which had entirely broken down, as well as restoration of civil amenities such as electricity, water and health services, even if it is contested that the quantum of such services was very small. Whatever they facilitated for the Tamil people by way of these services was achieved under trying circumstances while a military operation was undergoing and this too for people who were openly hostile, a hostility which often meant death for the Indian military personnel. In order to render these services, the IPFK created the institution of "Town Commandant Jaffna", which was creditably innovative as well as effective. It functioned as "the nucleus for undertaking initial economic and physical reconstruction and rehabilitation work." There was hardly any sphere of economic or administrative activity that it was not called upon to tackle. Another imaginative innovation was the creation of Citizen's Volunteer Force (CVF) to monitor law and order situation in Jaffna at the instance of COAS General V.N.Sharma. Under all circumstances some semblance of law and order is a primary need of any society. This service was provided through the CVF as a confidence building measure between the

23 Lt.Gen. Sardeshpande, n.20, pp.6-7, 77. It requires to be pointed out that the General was a Divisional commander and he in his account of IPKF has not spred it what he judged to be fair criticism.
IPKF and Tamil population might have been more effective in a relatively more congenial environment.

In the context of the Agreement, the two tasks that the IPKF was able to complete were the holding of elections to the provincial council and the formation of a government for the newly merged administrative unit comprising the northern and the eastern provinces. Obviously it was a difficult and gigantic task in the prevailing situation in the Tamil areas. The necessary legislation for this was passed by Colombo through an amendment to the constitution which brought into existence the North-Eastern Provincial Council (NEPC). According to Sardeshpande, "It was the military hierarchy that suggested that the situation was ripe enough to hold elections to the NEPC." 24 At the same time he maintains that "Indian bureaucracy was hesitant. 25 The holding of elections involved the most difficult security arrangements and a process of complex co-ordination among IPKF, Colombo and concerned institutions in India. It also involved the finding of officials for employment on election duties. Notwithstanding these constraints, the election was held successfully. The extent of success can be gauged from the figures of votes eligible and votes cast as given by

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24 Ibid, p.78.
25 Ibid.
Rohan Guna Ratna. There were 534,306 eligible voters, out of which 399,066 cast their votes,26 which meant a high percentage of voting i.e., 70 percent of the total votes were cast. As far as participation by political parties is concerned, it is true that only three mustered the courage to enter the fray. They were Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), Eelam National Democratic Liberation Party (ENDLF), and a little later the TELO.

Others boycotted the elections. The fact remains that the scale of participation by the voters is much more important than the extent of participation by the political parties. By this criterion alone the elections were preeminently successful. This conclusion is based on the figures that Gunaratna has used though he has stated though he has stated that "According to reliable information elections were rigged". This study cannot undertake to judge the veracity of what happened for obvious reasons. There might have been rigging but success of an election is judged by its totality because there is hardly any election in new democracies where rigging to more or less extent is not known to have taken place or is not alleged to have taken place. Moreover, there is a world of difference between rigging and the scale of participation by the people

26 Rohan Gunaratna, n.7, p.278.
in the election process. At the same time it would be reasonable to wonder that when most of the political parties are not participating in the elections and at that too in the most important one, why and how the rigging in the prevailing situation could have been of any significant magnitude.

The elections in their logical course were followed by the formation of government in NEPC. This government lasted as long as IPKF was there and no sooner IPKF withdrew from Sri Lanka the Chief Minister Animanalai Varadarajah Perumal found shelter in India. But ultimately the LTTE threat materialised, and he was assassinated like many a Tamil leader in whom LTTE saw an unacceptable rival or a potential rallying point.

Assessment: Success and Failure

The account of the IPKF's operations in selectively broad strokes highlighting implicit or explicit conflict management aspects amply reflects its success and failure. It has also been shown that IPKF's role right from the outset was not conceived as a purely peacekeeping role but it was hoped that a peacekeeping operation would be all that

27 Any objective assessment about the IPKF's role in Sri Lanka is hampered by lack of critical and sensitive information due to official secrecy and the reluctance of the in-service and retired civil servants and military officers.
the IPKF will be required to undertake for the sake of executing the Agreement reached between India and Sri Lanka, with India assuming and taking for granted the consent of Tamil militant groups including the LTTE. More than anything else this assumption proved wrong with the result that its peacekeeping role was soon transformed into peace-enforcement as a part of its ultimate goal of implementing the provisions of the Agreement. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to make an assessment of its success and failure by the criterion meant for judging a peacekeeping operation. As far as peacekeeping operation is concerned IPKF operation did not have one indispensable or fundamental requirement, the consent and cooperation of one of both the parties and as the situation grew worse, its composition changed. It became the largest ever peacekeeping force anywhere in the world and also became as fully and as heavily armed as any regular fighting force on a fighting mission.

Peacekeeping has been treated in this study as a component of conflict management. Ordinarily the larger concept i.e., conflict management too depends on the cooperation of the adversaries unless it is undertaken by the UN which the UN is empowered to do by its charter. This is the de jure position, but de facto reality is such that the UN too has undertaken the entire spectrum of conflict management, peacekeeping and conflict resolution always with
the consent of parties to the conflict except in a few cases such as Congo, Kuwait and Bosnia. In the latter two, it were the other agencies who acted or were authorised to act on behalf of the UN. These operations have enjoyed international authority to do what they were doing or gained sanction from the resolution of the Security Council. The basis of the Indian operation in Sri Lanka however was a bilateral agreement. But it would be more appropriate to say that its basis was a tripartite understanding in which the third party, which was one of the two adversaries, was associated with the agreement or understanding in an informal way without being a signatory to the formal document of the Agreement. Thus a very important component of the basis of the operation was eroded completely. Therefore, it is difficult to categorise the Indian Peacekeeping operation in Sri Lanka.

In this context it would be pertinent to mention that the IPKF operation cannot be compared with UN peacekeeping since its mission was inordinately unusual and complex. Added to this complexity was India's image in the South-Asia region, because most of the conflicts arising around South-Asia region are considered Indo-centric in their origin. The experience of peacekeeping role which Indian Army had gained in Indo-China, Korea, the Suez Canal and the Congo crisis was of different kind since in all these operations
India was operating under the banner of the UN and thus deriving its mandate from the Security Council resolutions. Whereas the experience of Sri Lanka was bilateral in nature and the peacekeeping endeavour was the result of the bilateral agreement between the two countries. It is interesting to quote India's High Commissioner to Colombo J.N. Dixit's impression about the IPKF:

...I don't know, how many of us are conscious of the type of role which the IPKF is playing in Sri Lanka. Our armed forces in our history of post-independence India have been abroad several times. We have been to Congo and we have been to Gaza; we have been to Lebanon; we have been to Cyprus; we have been to Korea; we have been to Bangladesh. But what the IPKF is involved in Sri Lanka is much more multi-dimensional and complex. Our previous external projections of our armed forces were either a straightforward military projection or we were invited to project ourselves in classic terms of reference of a peace-keeping force. But this is the first time that, I think, the IPKF is several things in Sri Lanka.28

The main criterion now for assessing the Indian operation can be the tasks and goals mandated for the IPKF in the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. By this criterion the IPKF operations proved inconclusive except for the minor achievements detailed in the preceding section. In real terms those minor achievements were set at naught by the non-fulfilment of larger and ultimate goals. These achievements collapsed like a house of cards. But this

conclusion, though correct from the viewpoint of peace-keeping as it has come to be established and understood, would be a narrow conclusion. In this study, peace-keeping, has been considered as a component, albeit an important one, of conflict management. And from the viewpoint of conflict management, the Indian initiative, and the eventful process of managing the conflict in Sri Lanka certainly had positive overtones. In a realistic assessment of what India tried to do and actually did, allowances need to be made for two important factors about which India could have done little. They were:

(a) India's own geo political situation in the overall context of South Asia;

(b) The intrinsic nature of the conflict of the type besieging Sri Lanka, and raging there.

The best that can be expected of a country in its international relations, especially those involving mediatory efforts, is pursuit of enlightened self-interest.29 An individual may go to any extent in pursuit of altruism, but not a nation. In a conflict situation between two, a nation's policies and actions cannot escape

29 The U.N. is expected to be the most non-partisan organization with nearly universal subscription. But hardly a single instance from among its decision and actions can be cited, which would not bear the trace, strong or weak, of super power's interest.
the influence of its own worries. Therefore the criticism made explicitly or implicitly that India was seeking to grind its own axe in Sri Lanka is not, on a deeper and objective consideration, justifiable. Nothing shows, this better than a comparison of India's own conduct in respect of East Pakistan in 1970-71. India, if not right from the beginning, at least from the time that it was directly involved, could be seen to work for the goal of securing the separation of erstwhile East Pakistan from Pakistan as a whole. India never had any such goal in Sri Lanka. It committed itself firmly and unambiguously to the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka at all the stages. Both Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were unswerving on this. It went to the extent of alienating LTTE in its pursuit of this policy, and fought a war with it.

The intrinsic nature of the conflict in Sri Lanka is such that it is not likely to admit of or carry solution or management. Fundamentally, propensity to conflict in certain given situations is such, in general that even solutions that have worked for a considerable time, breakdown and the conflict re-erupts. Yemen's

reconciliation and peace was brokered by the UN\textsuperscript{31} and now after a lapse of thirty years an intense civil war is raging again. It would not be wise to be complacent about inherent potentialities for conflict in human nature and human institutions. Similar considerations have to be made with regard to the post Palestinians-Israelis Accord, which after an initial setback, has begun to work and the end of apartheid in South Africa. In the first place, it need to be pointed out that in spite of its seeming intractability and intransigence, the divergence in Israel, by its very constitution, historical, geopolitical and economic, admitted of reconciliation and solution at the appropriate time. Likewise, the logic, demographic and international could be seen to lead to a reconciliation and convergence there. At the same time, one has to keep one's fingers crossed for quite some time before the reconciliations could be taken as meaningfully durable. Now in Sri Lanka, a small island country, with a population of just 17,829,200,\textsuperscript{32} the divergence at the source of the conflict could be seen as a little more intractable. There the overwhelmingly dominant Sinhalese majority has proved itself incapable of either

\textsuperscript{31} The Security Council adopted on 11 June 1963, resolution 179 (1963) to establish UN Yeman Observation Mission.

accommodating the Tamil minority or forcing it into the slot that it designed for them. This has imparted a special complexion to the conflict, even though India did not come to play the role that Turkey has played in Cyprus. The sense of grievance and resultant alienation of Tamils has further been compounded by medieval the orientation of Sinhalese chauvinism rooted in myths and legends which has distorted even the core-ethos of their religion, Buddhism. The attrition of conflict and the cost of keeping the blacks down and out, wore down even the white obstinacy in South Africa.

Such prospects are not visible in Sri Lanka and it was on this score that India miscalculated its options. In purely theoretical terms, India, through its accord with Sri Lanka, attempted a manifestly viable solution of the conflict meeting the claims of both the sides. In the matter of conflict management, India, at its own cost, undertook peace-keeping and the allied operations to put the solution in place. India's inability to fulfill its self-chosen task is unmistakable but too harsh a judgment on this is unwarranted, especially in the light of the experiences of history. It also needs to be pointed out that with the outbreak of new conflicts of greater intensity in the post--

33 Turkey gave direct and full support to Turkish Cypriots.
cold war era, it would be far more realistic for the UN to encourage and help regional endeavours in the direction of conflict management. The constraints of UN's own resources make it a desirable policy, and in the light of this consideration, the Indian endeavour in Sri Lanka could be seen as a source of important lessons about conflict management. India's failure could be seen also as a do-gooder's failure.

In summation, it could be said that a truly lasting solution of conflicts, like the one in Sri Lanka, lies in the success of a society's, transformation into a modern progressive society which has altogether new and different focal points to engage the loyalty of its people, which Hanson designates as 'the shifting' of men's loyalties from decisively local and familiar commitments to the governing institutions.34 This means or demands working out of a strategy of socio-economic development which may transform the acerbity of ethnic differences into political co-operation and harmony, like the one which was attained during the freedom struggle between the Sinhalese and the Tamils.

34 D.W.Hanson, From Kingdom to Commonwealth (Cambridge, 1970), p.5.