CONCLUSION

Nation-Building, though difficult without state-building, is viewed by some as a cultural or psychological component of political development. It is also described as a process through which people transfer their petty commitments and loyalties from groups, tribes, villages, regions or petty principalities to a larger single national system. Nation-building therefore refers to both conscious ideological propaganda and political policy as well as the more general efforts at economic and political development which are expected to create conditions facilitating the expansion of equal opportunities to all citizens. Both types of processes, however proceed in the context of existing class structure, internal power distribution, and external linkages of the various groups. This means that allocation of resources, employment opportunities, and influence over the state will hardly be even and just for all groups, classes and people on the whole, it can be said that though state and nation-building are two different processes they are complementary to each other. In order to achieve the objective of both, a careful balance is needed. Therefore, the developing countries like Srilanka should be aware of this bitter fact and try to maintain this rather delicate and difficult balance. Unless carefully balanced, they work at cross purposes and undermine each other.

Underlying the ethnic identities, in multi-ethnic societies is the perennial factor of ethnic cleavages as much as ethnic tension, rivalry and conflict which may be latent, but when turned overt, leads to ethnicity. Ethnicity thus is a manifestation of social conflicts taking ethnic forms. The state in principle, being an organisation which society has itself established to manage its affairs is bound to devise all such conditions to create a structure of loyalty joining it with society. Ethnicity plays an
important role in the nation-building process of the developing states in the third world. These states with a weak socio-political structure strive to consolidate by forging a domestic political and social consensus to create a nation so that the state and nation become co-terminus. But in multi-ethnic societies, the state uses ethnicity to maintain political order by exploiting ethnic divisions to its advantage. This undermines the stability of the state and in the process retards the Nation-building process.

It is a strange state of affairs that politics and society are at daggers drawn with each other in Sri Lanka. The painful confrontation is pervasive. Few other states in recent times has alienated itself so alarmingly from a section of its people by outright killing of its own people and repression of their participation in the national political process as has the Sri Lankan state. Successive governments in Sri Lanka were responsible for giving the ethnic question the dimensions of a Civil War through systematic resort to suppression and state terrorism. The lack of solution to their grievances have made the Sri Lankan Tamils support a movement for the creation of a separate Tamil Eelam. The subversion of democratic channels resulted inevitably in the rise of militancy jeopardising the Nation-building process.

The process whereby an ethnic group attains the consciousness of a distinct, historically constituted nation is a gradual, evolutionary and open ended one; and the motives imperatives, policies and actions of those at the helm of the state-building enterprise are of fundamental and decisive importance to understanding and explaining the unfolding of that process. Sinhalese-Tamil polarisation, far from being the continuation of an ancient conflict rooted in 'primordial' ties, is actually a development peculiar to the second half of the twentieth century - earlier patterns of conflict followed different social boundaries. In Ceylon, historically speaking, numerous identities have been the basis for political mobilisation. It therefore
becomes necessary to explain why one particular identity such as Tamil is chosen, in preference to several possible alternatives, as the basis for popular mobilisation and struggle at a certain point in time. This project as a whole has posited the 'state' as a central explanatory variable in explaining the identity formation and nationality formation, and the rise of mass Tamil nationalism as a process occupying within a complex historical dialectic of the Sinhalese - Buddhist state and Tamil society - a dialectic which in equally one of domination and resistance.

It is indeed surprising that such an apparent polarisation between the overarching identities of the 'Sinhalese' and 'Tamil' has come about in the late twentieth Century. The purpose of this project was to trace the origins and evolution of this process. The present analysis supports Stanley Tambiah's broad conclusion that 'Sinhalese-Tamil' tensions and conflicts in the form known to us today are of relatively recent origin - a truly twentieth century phenomenon, though of course, the post independence phase in Sri Lanka is necessarily a continuation and transformation of processes set in motion during the critical period of the British Raj.

In Sri Lanka, there existed till the seventeenth century, at least three regional sovereignties, one of which was an independent Tamil Kingdom Centred around Jaffna, in the north of the country. These medieval states often had diffused boundaries, marked by zones of intermittent influence. All that had become history by the Nineteenth century. The logic of colonial rule entailed administrative expansion and unification and soon, the colonial state, backed by formidable coercive power, had extended its regulatory apparatus even to the most outlying regions of the territory under its control. Competing regional and local sovereignties were replaced (in the case of Sri Lanka, for the first time in over 2,500 years of its recorded history), by a single monolithic, impersonal, indivisible and alien sovereignty. In Sri Lanka, though there had historically existed multiple sovereignties and at least two main
cultures (Sinhalese and Tamil), the island as a whole defined the territorial parameters of the newly independent state. As the triumphant 'nationalist' elite consolidated its authority, there began the effort to transform the historically arbitrary and artificial territorial domain bequeathed by colonialism into a 'nation'.

Unlike the vast majority of colonies, Ceylon had almost lacked a mass movement against Colonial subjugation. When the British transferred power in 1948, they did so to a political and administrative elite (mainly Simhales, but also including Tamils) who were creatures of the colonial state-individuals who had loyally functioned as stooges of imperialism. When the nationalist backlash against this bastion of inherited privilege came, in the year 1956, it was in the form of an aggressive assertion of Sinhalese majoritarianism.

The party system in Srilanka since 1956 broadly has been a two major party system under which the SLKP and the UNP, along with their allies, have succeeded in maintaining a more or less evenly balanced support base; and with the minor parties - whether rightist, leftist or regional - allying with one of the two major parties or remaining in the political wilderness. In such an electoral context, both the SLFP and the UNP needed to pursue calculated moves which necessitated, amongst other things, competition with each other in manipulating similar symbols of the Sinhalese-Buddhist Community. Thus, there were many occasions when both the parties vied with each other to appear more Buddhist than the other.

The post-colonial Srilankan state advanced the idea of a monolithic unitary sovereignty, but without a corresponding development of equal citizenship over the exclusive rights of the 'majority community'. There lies the root of the Srilankan tragedy. Those who went about the task of building the Srilankan 'nation' ended up by creating not one, but two nations. For all that, Srilankan Tamils have been
reluctant secessionists. As the Sinhalese historian K.M. Desilva testifies, "the striking feature of the emergence of Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka... is its late development. The transition from expression of separatist sentiment to a full fledged separatist movement took over 25 years and separatist agitation went through several phases. Indeed, we see, it was to take the cumulative provocation of reams of Sinhalese-supremacist and discriminatory legislation in the fields of language, education, state employment and religion; recurrent anti-Tamil programmes; the dishonouring by the state of successive compacts promising the Tamils regional autonomy, the degeneration of a formally democratic electoral system into a farcical arena for the "Competitive (Sinhalese) Chauvinism" of the islands two main (Sinhalese) political parties; and finally, severe military repression in all of which the post-colonial Sri Lankan state played an infamous role—before the broad mass of Sri Lankan Tamils were to become convinced that there was no prospect of living with dignity and security within an united Sri Lanka, and would commit themselves to the bifurcation of the island as the only decisive solution to their predicament.

Over the decades, an acute competition for political resources and scarce economic opportunities has been the major cause of the exacerbation of inter-ethnic group conflicts in the politics of Sri Lanka. In such a competition, the political leadership of both the Sinhalese and the Tamils manipulated ethnic symbols to underline the political identity of the respective groups and thereby mobilize community consciousness. It was only from the mid 1970s onwards that Sri Lankan Tamils began to consciously define themselves as a notion "entitled to an independent state", and their political organisations actively sought a clean break from the Sri Lankan state only from the 1980s on'.

Sri Lanka, a small island nation has had four constitutions since independence of which two have been in the seventies only. Despite a two party dominant system
alternating in the classical parliamentary democratic manner, an increasing tendency towards centralisation of powers, has been observed since seventies. Periods of emergency rule have been the order of the day with increasing frequency during these decades. The frequent modulation of constitution for the unrestricted use of emergency powers whether in the short or longer run, dramatically revealed how a limited combination of the ruling elite which strategically dominated the state apparently could readily overwhelm the obviously more numerous agents of political action who remained outside the orbit of the formal centre of concentrated authority. This situation lay in the fact that such a concentration of power concealed a remarkably weak support structure. In the process, the most vital task of building political institutions which play an unquestionably crucial role in nation-building in any democratic polity, like that of Srilanka, received a setback, thereby rendering the goal of laying a stable political order in the island nation more difficult to reach.

The nature of the ethnic strike in Srilanka, as in other parts of the world, is a part of the same world phenomenon of the desire of the ethnic groups to achieve either supremacy or equality. The problem in Srilanka, therefore, is to make the state a nation as the former now consists of segmental polities with different loyalties. The aim of the study was to seek an investigation into competing demands and responses in order to disentangle the issues with a view to finding a durable solution to the ethnic conflict. The central problem, which arose as a result of this process, was the need to bring about a compromise between the increased level of political participation and the requirements of state consolidation. This can not be achieved without ethnic unity, and at the same time, needs to be realised that the changes of Sinhalese ethnic domination brought against the Srilankan state needs to be eliminated.

The basic emphasis of the ethnic dialogue in Srilanka is all about its search for a lasting political solution that will ultimately establish harmony and parity amongst
the multiple ethnic communities, religions, languages and regions. The present confrontation can not be overcome through any policy of appeasement or coercion. The prevailing conflict is due to the basic fact that the political process in the island nation has been determined exclusively in the interests of the majority community because of its numerical strength. Any successful experience of democracy in a plural society is not solely dependent on the capacity of the majority community to determine the course of the political process but essentially on its capacity for accommodation of the interests of the minorities. Otherwise, it would only mean the tyranny of the majority and will have no relevance beyond its titular significance.

Rajnikothari writes that equality is not the same thing as justice. He emphasises that every social order seeks for justice but seeks it through the conception of equality. Any serious evaluation of the response of the leading political parties in Srilanka would explain that they are still revolving around the concept of devaluation of power to settle the ethnic grievances. It is argued therefore that, the principle of devolution of power can not be a lasting solution unless the basic issues such as freedom, equality and justice amongst the ethnic Communities, languages, religions and regions are rightfully advocated and guaranteed in the constitution of Srilanka. It is difficult to envisage the growth of a healthy nation-building process in a plural society unless these rights are ensured in the constitution and protected as well. No concrete steps have sofar been implemented in this direction either. Any pursuit of democracy in a multiethnic society without social justice and equality in both fallacious and a conscious sustenance of political inequality.