CHAPTER I
ETHNIC CONFLICT AND REFUGEE GENERATION: 
AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic conflict is one of the most common terms used in social science parlance to explain group antagonism in plural societies. Despite the wide usage of the term, a serious discussion on ethnic conflict shows that it is beset with theoretical and empirical difficulties. The problem gets further accentuated if refugee generation has to be studied in this framework. The main task of this theoretical exercise is to understand refugee generation in a conflict situation. A plausible starting point, could therefore, be a conceptual clarification of terms that are used in the analysis. For the sake of continuity in this framework, the chapter deviates from the usual way of conceptualising issues one by one. Thus the first section defines refugees. The section discusses ethnic conflict and the third section presents a framework for the present study.

DEFINING REFUGEES

Forced migration on a permanent or temporary basis has always been an important survival strategy adopted by people in the wake of natural or man-made disasters. Though the term 'refugee' was first used in the late
seventeenth century, the problem dates back to time immemorial. Even the Bible speaks of the exodus of the Israelites to the 'promised land'.

However, it was only in the twentieth century that the refugee phenomenon came to the fore. It was also referred to as the "century of the homeless man." The reason behind this upsurge could be identified in the emergence of the nation-state, which made national borders impermeable. The issue reached enormous magnitude in the aftermath of the World Wars. The problem gained also legal, political and academic attention. Despite the fact that the issue has been studied from the legal, humanitarian, sociological and psychological perspectives, an exact definition of the term remains confounded. It is due to this reason that a suitable definition applicable for all fields is difficult to come by. From the legal standpoint, an international border is the discerning factor. For sociologists, being uprooted from one's 'home' renders the person a refugee. In psychological terms, a person could be a refugee even without crossing the threshold, if s/he feels uprooted.

1 The expulsion of Jews from the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th century to the Muslim countries, then to Italian city states and later Netherlands is one of the earliest cases of refugees recorded in history. Later the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 by Louis XIV forced the persecuted Calvinists to flee from France to England. Voltaire, Marx, Bolivar, Trotsky were some political refugees. For historical details, See Michael R. Marrus, "Introduction," in Anna C. Bramwell (ed.), Refugees in the Age of Total War (London: Unwin/Hyman, 1986), pp.2-3 and Aristide Zolberg et.al., Escape From Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Third World (New York/Oxford: OUP, 1989), pp.4-5.

Even though the definition of the term 'refugee' is a contentious one, scholars and legal experts have by and large adhered to the 1951 Convention of the United Nations relating refugee as any to the status of refugees. Adopted on July 28 1951 at Geneva, Article I clause 2 of the Convention defines a person who:

as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or owing to such fear is unwilling to return to it.

The Convention defines refugees primarily in a response to and within the parameters of the post war realities in Europe. It mandates protection only on grounds of violation of civil and political rights without taking into consideration the socio-economic rights. Since it was formulated to address the problem of dissidents fleeing communist states, it was also a political instrument to discredit those countries. In fact, James C. Hathaway has described it as "the lop-sided and politically biased human rights rationale for refugees".

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3 The Convention was adopted by the UN Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the status of Refugees and Stateless Persons, held at Geneva from 2-5 July 1951 to come into force on 22 April 1954, in accordance with Art. 48 of UN General Assembly.

4 Article 1 (A) (2), 1951 Convention.


There are five essential elements in the definition of the Convention.  

(i) The person must have left her country of nationality,

(ii) The person must be genuinely at risk based on objective conditions,

(iii) Persecution or fear of perception i.e. serious harm against which the state is 'unwilling or unable to offer protection.'

(iv) This must be in relation to the person's 'race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social or political opinion,' and

(v) A genuine need for a legitimate claim to protection.

The 1967 Protocol on the status of refugees removed the spatial and temporal limitations of the Convention and extended the definition of 'refugee' on a universal and more enduring basis. The Protocol states:

Considering that the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees done at Geneva on 28 July, 1951 ... covers only those persons who have become refugees as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951, Considering that new refugee situations have arisen since the Convention was adopted and that the refugees concerned may therefore not fall within the scope of the Convention, Considering that it is desirable that equal status should be enjoyed by all refugees covered by the definition in the Convention irrespective of the dateline 1 January 1951, have agreed... the term refugee shall, except as regards the application of paragraph 3 of this Article mean any person within the definition of Article 1 of the Convention as if the words “As a result of such events occurring before 1 January 1951 and...” and the words “...as a result of such events”, in Article 1A(2) were omitted. The present Protocol shall be applied by the States Parties hereto without any geographic limitations, save that existing declaration made by

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8 The Protocol was signed by the the President of General Assembly and by the Secretary General on 31 January 1967 and came into force on 4 October 1967, in accordance with Article VIII United Nations Treaty Series no. 8791, vol.606 p. 267
States already Parties to the Convention in accordance with Article 1(B) therof, apply also under the present Protocol.

It nevertheless adhered to the definition of the Convention in identifying 'fear of persecution' in relation to civil and political rights only. This in effect excluded most Third World refugees, since they are forced to flee due to general civil and political unrest rather than 'persecution' alone.⁹

Though the 1951 Convention and subsequent Protocol have outlived their relevance in the present day reality of the Third World, they have created academic and legal discussions.

The 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention, for the first time directly addressed refugee issues at a wider level keeping in mind Third World realities. Article 1 of the OAU Convention incorporated the earlier definition and added:

The term refugee shall also apply to every person who owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part of the whole of his country of origin or nationality is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

Violence in the Latin American countries in the 1980s created serious concerns, leading to the formulation of a more comprehensive definition of the term in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration. The two-fold criteria adopted in

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defining refugee status are\(^ {10}\) (i) existence of threat to life and liberty, and resulting from: (a) generalised violence; (b) foreign aggression; (c) international conflicts; (d) massive violations of human rights; (e) circumstances seriously disturbing public order.

While the definition of refugees is still being debated and discussed by legal experts, human rights activists and academics, the issue of internal displacement cannot be overlooked. Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are those who are forced to leave their home under duress but do not cross an international border. According to Hathaway, though these people may not have crossed an international border, "their plight may be every bit as serious as services as individuals who cross borders."\(^ {11}\)

The first decisive step in addressing the issue was taken in 1992 when the UN Secretary General proposed a working definition which was later revised in 1998 as: "persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or

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\(^ {11}\) Hathaway, n.7, p.29.
human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.\textsuperscript{12}

In the present study the term refugee would include all displaced people who may or may not have crossed an international border. The term is not conceptualised in the strict legal sense as stated in the above definitions. In view of the objectives of the study, it is imperative to understand the dynamics of displacement rather than whether or not an international border is crossed. Refugees and IDPs are products of the same situation and would be studied in the same framework. ‘Refugee generation’ is the process of displacement. It is not a sporadic or isolated incident but the routinasation of displacement.

ETHNIC CONFLICT

Key Concepts

Studies on ethnic group start with the understanding that human beings are like all others, like some others or like none. It is the second premise that sets the ground for discussion on ethnic groups. People have been categorised in terms of race, religion, language, tribe etc. since time immemorial. Race is derived from an inherited common descent. The term has however, lost its relevance because it is impossible to maintain the purity of

race due to continuing interbreeding among races. Moreover, race is an ascribed condition and not a decisive variable. Physical lineaments do not fall into clear boundaries, and there could be more variation within a race than outside. The term 'race' gradually lost coinage and became a sub-category within the definition of the larger ethnic group. According to Barton, there is a distinction between the two - while race deals with categorisation, an ethnic group is the identification. According to Max Weber, race is derived from common descent and "creates a group only when it is subjectively perceived as a common trait." This happens in a situation where there is antagonism linked in the experience of one group with another. Weber cites the example of several millions mulattos in the US to state that there is no 'natural' antipathy among races. Racial kinships do not influence the formation of group. However, it can serve as a starting point. Once again, citing the case of the United States, Weber shows that racial boundaries were drawn because of status differences between two races and that slavery disqualified the Blacks from status hierarchy.

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14 For details see Michael Barton, *Race Relations* (London, 1967).

It is not just common descent or biological heredity but any kind of similarity or contrast of physical type may lead to a 'belief' of affinity. This belief in group affinity has a direct bearing on the formation of ethnic group. Thus, 'ethnic groups' could be defined as "those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter, whether or not an objective blood relationship exists."\textsuperscript{16}

One of the key points that emerge from Weber's thought is the idea of consciousness. Unlike race, which is hereditary, or tribe, which is a political artefact, ethnic membership (gemeinsmkeit) is a presumed identity. Anderson refers to it as 'imagined community'. Common descent therefore, does not create but facilitates the formation of groups in a specific political environment.

As opposed to Weber, Marx saw 'groups' as social classes based on the relations of production. The economic aspect is the base which divides capitalist society broadly into two: the bourgeoisie or the owners of the means of production, and the proletariat or the working class which sells its labour. The inherent contradictions in social relations create transformations in society

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., pp. 18-19.
where conflict becomes inevitable. It is at this stage that the 'class in itself' becomes a 'class for itself' and leads to revolutionary conflict resulting in redistribution of resources. Violence is instrumental in such a conflict through which society evolves. Three elements can be identified in the Marxian understanding. One, consciousness transforms the group into action. Two, economic determinism, which is the deciding factor between groups and three, that ethnic and economic factors encourage the group into action.

Paul Brass takes a similar line when it comes to ethnic consciousness or the genesis and escalation of ethnic conflict. He, therefore, distinguishes between an 'ethnic category' and an 'ethnic group' which is analogous to the Marxian 'class in itself' and 'class for itself'. The ethnic category is not an expression of its distinct identity. The ethnic group, expresses crystallization of identity. It involves articulation and efforts for the acquisition of economic and political rights for members of the group.17

Anthony Smith distinguishes between ethnic categories and ethnic communities. There are innumerable ethnic categories based on cultural factors like language, custom, religion, etc. But only rarely do these categories form ethnic communities and ethnic communities form ethnic nations. This formation takes place when these categories become collectively self-aware.

In this process, only a small number of ethnic categories survive the pressures of absorption and assimilation in the larger society.\textsuperscript{18} The essence of an ethnic group, according to Smith, is the concept of 'ethnie', or ethnic community. It is a collective level of identity and community. It is in such communities that the power of social conflicts can be located.\textsuperscript{19} Myth of common ancestry, shared memories, cultural elements and link with a historical territory or homeland define an 'ethnie'.\textsuperscript{20}

Ethnic groups are also sometimes viewed in terms of alienation and migration. T.K. Oomen refers to it as a group of people who share a common history, tradition, language and life-style, but are uprooted and therefore unattached to a homeland.\textsuperscript{21} No wonder, immigrant groups are referred to as ethnic groups in the United States.

Others like Brombley associate ethnic groups with homeland or territory. Ethnic groups are, therefore, defined as "stable inter-generation totality of people historically formed in a certain territory who possess

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 49.
common traits and peculiarities of mentality and awareness of unity and difference from other formulations and have a self name or *ethnoim.*”

Though objective factors have been highlighted, many scholars have defined an ethnic group in terms of identity and awareness as a group. To add to this literature, Talcott Parsons, defines an ethnic group as a group, the members of which have (both with respect to their own sentiments and those of non-members) a distinctive sense of history.

Bangera also defines an ethnic group in terms of 'ethnic consciousness'. According to him, "concrete social experiences are often important in the construction of such consciousness." Theodorson and Theodorson define an ethnic group as one which enjoys a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity of being a sub-group within a larger society. While emphasising primordial factors combined with a sense of identity, they understand ethnic groups as a sub-group or minority.

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Glazer and Moynihan, however, define an ethnic group as any group of
distinct cultural tradition or origin, even if it is the majority ethnic group
within a nation (the statvolk). 26

Fredrik Barth dispelled the role of cultural factors in the formation of
ethnic groups. Barth explains the limitations of subjective factors by showing
how they change over a period of time, due to interaction with other groups.
Yet the sense of separateness in terms of identity may continue to persist - as
in the case of Polish Americans. At the same time, these traits may be
replaced by a distinct ethnic identity, like the Bengali Muslims who fought as
Muslims for Pakistan in 1947 and then fought against Pakistan as Bengalis in
1970-71. Barth, therefore, suggests that the focus be shifted from cultural traits
to the process of creation and maintenance of ethnic boundaries, and the
continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders. Barth holds the
view that ethnic groups may become behaviourally assimilated in terms of
ethnic markers like language, life-style, dress code etc., yet maintain their
sense of ethnic identity. An ethnic group is, therefore, a form of social

26 For details see N. Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot, (Cambridge:
organization in which the members make use of certain cultural traits from their past which may not be historically verifiable.27

According to Thomas Erikson, since ethnicity itself is a wide ranging phenomenon, the definition of ethnic groups also reflects this variation. Erikson identifies four different kinds of ethnic groups to explain this variation.28

(i) Urban ethnic minorities: Non-European immigrants in European cities or non-Americans in the United States. Although aware of their distinctive origin, these groups are assimilated in the nation-state system and, therefore, make no demands for independence or statehood or a separate territory.

(ii) Indigenous Peoples: aboriginal inhabitants of a territory, who are partially integrated in the capitalist system of production and consumption. They are relatively politically powerless.

(iii) Proto-nations: They have a definite leadership and claim to a separate nation-state. They are territorially based, differentiated according to class and education and are large groups. Such groups are most


28 Erikson, n.13, pp. 12-14
covered by media and have all the characteristics of a nation except a state and could, therefore, be called 'nations without a state'. Erikson includes the Kurds of Iraq, the Palestinians, Sikhs and Sri Lankan Tamils in this category.

(iv) Ethnic groups in plural societies are normally groups residing in colonially created states that are culturally diverse. Although they participate in the political and economic system of the state, they consider themselves distinct and are also considered so by the society. The different castes or religious groups in independent India could be examples of this category. Secessionism is not their goal, and their distinctiveness is asserted in the form of group competition.

The above discussion emphasises the fact that the term ethnic group is a complex phenomenon, and there is no clear-cut definition of the concept. It has a political, sociological and anthropological explanation. All these definitions offer subjective, objective as well as behavioural characteristics as markers of ethnic groups. For the purpose of the present study, an ethnic group could be defined as a group of people who are aware of their distinctiveness from other groups, and are recognized as such. This distinctiveness is based on shared experiences and a historical past, real or
'imagined', and is expressed by cultural markers like language, religion, race, tribe etc., to express their oneness.

The characteristics of an ethnic group are:

- Identity or self-perception as distinct social entity,
- Recognition by other groups,
- Cultural traits to build upon this identity,
- Shared memories of disadvantage within a plural society, and
- Focussed towards the achievement of certain material goals in the future.

Group identity or consciousness is a key element of an ethnic group. Identity and ethnic group are, therefore, closely related. The point to be noted here is that an ethnic group emerges as part of antagonism or deprivation felt as part of the larger society.

In contemporary usage, the term 'ethnic group' and 'minority' are often used interchangeably. According to Francesco Capotorti, special Rapporteur of the UN sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the definition of 'minority' is a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state in a non-dominant position, whose members - being nationals of the state - posses ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if
only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, tradition, religion language.

A minority is, therefore, a non-dominant group in society, which may possess and wish to preserve a separate linguistic, cultural, religions or tribal tradition - which is markedly different from the rest of the population.

It would be interesting to note that like ethnic groups, even minorities need not be a traditional group with a history of self-identification. Minority identity changes as economic and political lines are drawn and redrawn.

Since ethnic conflict occurs within a territorially defined nation-state and reflect the schism between the nation and the nation state, it would be pertinent to define these terms.

Nationalism, according to Gellner, is "the political principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent." 29 Although it may present itself as the awakening of a latent force, it is a modern phenomenon, a new form of social organization, which uses some of the pre-existent cultures and sometimes invents them. 30

Marxist thinker Tom Nairn combines Gellner’s modernization perspective with Gramsci, to provide a materialist explanation of nationalism,

30 Ibid., pp. 48-49.
which appeals to an educated middle class and is able to mobilize support cutting across class. Nationalism, according to Nairn, arises in threatened and underdeveloped peripheral societies whose intelligentsia mobilizes the people along cultural lines around the development goals of the local bourgeoisie.31

Following the instrumentalist perspective, Hobsbawm sees nationalism as an 'invented tradition' of political elites to legitimise their power in an age of democratisation and revolution.32

Anderson also agrees that nation is an artefact and defined it as "an imagined political community," imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.33

Two rival conceptions of modern nationalism have emerged. The first identifies the nation with all the citizens who are part of the territorial sovereign state. The other viewpoint conceives the nation along ethnic lines and membership is inherited and not based on formal citizenship. Ethnic

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conflicts express the 'underlying tensions between these two notions of the nation.\textsuperscript{34}

Even though these two conceptions contest each other, the irony is that both in cases the term nation or nationalism has a trend towards homogenising. However, it is "a construction whose unity remains problematic."\textsuperscript{35}

The idea of nation and nationalism is so wide and varied, that it is impossible to cover in this brief section. For the purpose of the present study, it would be relevant to note three points:

- A nation-state is a territorial and political unit.
- A nation is a community of people who share a common culture, real or 'imagined'.
- Nationalism is the sentiment, the idea that creates or aspires to create nation-states out of nations.

It could, therefore, be summarised that a nation shares most of the attributes of a group, but is more territorially and politically integrated. Nation has an articulate political leadership and articulates its aspirations in the shape of a territorially carved out nation-state.


An ethnic group or nation emerges as conflict in society unfolds. As most thinkers have pointed out, the nation and ethnic groups are an 'invention' or 'imagination', based on identity or consciousness of people. The group emerges as a distinct social entity when strains are felt in the plural society. It emerges imperceptibly over a period of time, but comes to the fore only when there is open conflict in society.

Two points need to be mentioned at the end of this section. One, ethnic groups or nations are dynamic actors in society. Two, their formation and existence revolve around identity or awareness. Identity or collective identity to be precise is therefore crucial and central to ethnic groups and eventually ethnic conflict.

**Problem of Definition**

Tensions and disputes between groups occur in various situations, with varying degrees of intensity. In fact, world politics is replete with instances of discord which are loosely termed as 'ethnic conflict.' Stavenhagen refers to it as a 'catch-all' term, and Michael Hechter sees it as the "social scientists' shorthand" to describe diverse situations. The term in its wide-ranging applicability often overlooks questions of class and gender. Diverse factors

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36 Stavenhagen, n.34, pp. 14-32.

are hidden behind this seemingly uniform term. The first question that arises is: how can a single term explain this wide variety of phenomena, or alternatively, can all these conflicts be termed 'ethnic'?

The answer lies in the consciousness or the concept of identity, which is the core concept or binding factor in all these instances. Glazer and Moynihan base their explanation on the premise that ethnicity is a new social category which seeks to explain newer social realities. Despite the fact that each of these cases arises in a distinct social setting, from disparate sources and with a unique set of demands, there is a common ground - i.e., awareness of their distinctiveness in these instances of group assertiveness. There is no doubt that issues of this nature did exist in the past, but in recent times it has arisen with more intensity. The importance lies in the fact that ethnicity has been able to combine interest with an effective tie.

It is not that factors like language, religion, race etc. have suddenly emerged as important issues. It is just that these issues have become a source of mobilization for the promotion of group interests. These arguments help in dispelling partially some of the scepticism that surrounds the use of the term ethnicity and ethnic conflict. Despite this lacuna, the term is still in use due to the absence of an alternative explanatory term - an issue which needs to be addressed in future theoretical discussions.
Conflict between ethnic groups could range from social grievances and rivalry, to open hostility and armed conflict. The next question that arises is: where does one locate 'ethnic conflict' in this continuum, or alternatively, what are the characteristic features of ethnic conflict? (Characteristics of ethnic conflict are discussed below).

A plethora of definitions and different parameters have been used by scholars to address this question. According to Northrup, there are multiple levels to every conflict, which could range from a minor dispute, a clash of interest, to an intractable conflict. Agnew sees ethnic conflict as being inextricably linked to the existence of diverse groups, but it is the level or intensity which defines the magnitude of the problem.

Stavenhagen defines ethnic conflict as a confrontation between contenders who define themselves and each other in 'ethnic' terms - that is, "when national origin, religion, race, language or other cultural markers are used to distinguish opposing parties."

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40 Stavenhagen, n. 34, p. 284
Gurr and Harff distinguish between civil strife and political violence, and explain the extent of ethno-political violence on the basis of seven interconnected variables: degree of group discrimination, strength of group identity, degree of ethnic group cohesion, type of political environment, severity of governmental violence, extent of external support and the international status of the regime.41

Uyangoda in his study of Militarisation and violence in Sri Lanka, characterizes ethnic conflict as a tendency to use violence alongside parliamentary politics and electoral bargaining. It is a situation where "social groups and political forces do not appear to see electoral and parliamentary competition as an effective viable means of political mobilization."42

The above discussion shows that in most definitions of ethnic conflicts, violence is seen as crucial indicators. The Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, Sweden, have made four-fold classification of conflict, based on the intensity.43:

(i) War or major armed conflict - when there are over 1000 battle-related deaths.

(ii) Intermediate conflict - when battle-related deaths may range between 25 and 1,000 in a particular year, but exceed 1,000 throughout the duration of the conflict.

(iii) Low intensity conflict - where violence is 'more sporadic and less intense'.

(iv) Serious dispute - when one of the parties 'has deployed military, troops or made a show of force.

Though violence is an important indicator in assessing the gravity of the situation, violence alone cannot explain the fully complexity of the conflict. Data on death and disappearances are always suspected. Moreover, death and casualties are not enough to explain the intensity of violence. As the discussion below shows, violence is both a cause and effect in a conflict situation. It is often reproduced when violence by one party is always followed by revenge from the opposing party.\textsuperscript{44}

Sahadevan identifies five characteristics of ‘internal wars’, which are relevant for the present study: (1) the battle lines are drawn between the

\textsuperscript{44} For a discussion on violence, see Paul Wilkinson, \textit{Terrorism and the Liberal State}, (Hampshire: McMillan Educational Ltd., 1987).
minority group and the state which represents the majority community. Thus, militant groups who belong to the minority groups challenge the state. (2) The geographical location of the conflict represents 'ethnic enclaves' of minority groups. The strategy is to control land or territory. (3) Goals of an ethnic conflict are particularly exclusionist aimed at furthering the interest of the group. (4) Violence or a spiral of violence is so overwhelming that civilian casualties are very high. (5) It is generally the threatened group or minority that initiates the conflict.45

For the present study, ethnic conflict is defined as a situation marked by strains in society resulting from incompatible goals of groups leading to breakdown of social order. Alternatively, it is also a situation when ethnic groups challenge the state. Luc Van de Goor and others, define ethnic conflict as "a situation where two or more culturally diverse groups become engaged in overt mutually opposing violent interactions aimed at destroying, injuring or controlling their opponents." 46

45 For details see P. Sahadevan, Coping With Disorder: Strategies To End Internal Wars in South Asia, RCSS Policy Studies, #17, (Colombo: Regional Center For Strategic Studies, 2000) pp. 10-12
Based on the above definitions, the characteristics features of ethnic conflict could be identified as:

- Presence of two or more diverse groups, which consider themselves as distinct and are considered so by other groups as well,
- The opposing groups live within the same territorial unit,
- A marked difference between them with regard to aims, interests, values etc.,
- Boundaries of the nation and the State do not coincide. The State is unable to hold legitimacy of 'nation',
- The State is a key actor in the sense that it represents the majority community,
- The role of the State is crucial to the persistence of the conflict,
- Violence is both a cause and consequence, it includes violence against civilians, and
- There is fear, mistrust and suspicion between members of different groups.

However, ethnic conflict in society need not necessarily lead to refugee generation. An episode of violence may result in displacement of people, but it may be sporadic and temporary. The question that arises is: How does ethnic conflict lead to refugee generation? Or, alternatively, at what stage in
the conflict does displacement become routinised? The answer lies in the 'militarisation' of ethnic conflict.

**MILITARISATION AND REFUGEE GENERATION: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

This framework envisages that militarisation as a critical factor is related to wider gamut of forces - political, economic, psychological and external, which plays a key role in refugee generation. The nature and intensity of the conflict is inextricably linked to refugee generation.

'Militarisation' of ethnic conflict is an area rarely studied by social scientists, though they have addressed related terms like intractability, political violence, etc. At the outset, it should be mentioned that militarisation is often confused with terms like military, militarism, and violence. Military refers to the "whole organization of defensive and offensive of armed force in society." A Military regime is an autocratic government where the military controls the political system usually after gaining power through a *coup d'etat*. Militarism as state policy means that the nation in question seeks to achieve its ends by overt or threatened use of military force. If an ideology or political culture extols military values or patriotism, it is often described as militaristic.47 It needs to be assented that militarisation is distinct from the

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above terms, as also from violence. It is a wider concept and includes not just violence, but also its impact.

Jayadeva Uyangoda provides a lucid explanation of militarization. He encapsulates militarisation as a "rupture" between the State and society - when the state finds it "difficult to command passive loyalty and obedience" from all its subjects. A militarised society is, therefore, characterized by: (1) the acceptance of violence as a legitimate mode of political behaviour as a mechanism to resolve political antagonism. Ethnic groups, therefore, reject parliamentary democracy and other formal policies like elections in favour of an armed resistance against the State. (2) Violence is a dimension of state power. Apart from the formal institutions of state power, there are a number of 'unformalised' agencies of violence in a militarised society. In a situation where State as well as counter-state violence becomes 'normalized', it prolongs armed conflict.

Militarisation in this sense is close to the concept of intractability of conflict as defined by Northrup i.e. "a prolonged conflictual psychosocial process between (or among) parties..." Identity is the central feature in an intractable conflict and operates in four sequential steps in the escalation of

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48 Uyangoda, n.42, pp.118-30.
49 Northrup, n.38, p.62.
conflict. These four steps are (1) threat, (2) distortion, (3) rigidification and (4) illusion. They are important in understanding the intensity of the conflict, but intractability is not as simplistic phenomenon. It emerges from a set of factors that interplay, interact and render the conflict intractable.

A militarised conflict is 'prolonged'. It is 'psychosocial' in the sense that there is a psychological dimension in the genesis and sustenance of the conflict. But militarisation is distinct from intractability. Agnew puts forth an illuminating definition of intractable conflict, when he defines it as "dynamically reproduced through the mutual exclusivity of territorial claims and constant production of new causes as conflict continues."50 Thus, clearly demarcated territorial claims are important in strengthening the conflict. The other point crucial for the present discussion is that the conflict itself produces causes for its sustenance.

Since intense violence is a basic feature of a militarised society, it would be imperative at this stage to understand the parameters of violence in the present framework. Violence in this context means political violence.51 Political violence is the use of force with a specific agenda or purpose.

50 Agnew, n.39, pp.41-52.
51 Legally violence is the illegitimate use of force, but in sociology it is defined as overt or covert use of force in order to wrest from individuals or groups something they do not want to give of their own free will. See Alain Joe, 'General Introduction in Domenach et al. (eds.), Violence and Its Causes (Paris: UNESCO Publications, 1991), pp.9-21.
According to Ted Gurr, it is "the use or threat of violence by any party or institution to attain ends within or outside the political order."\textsuperscript{52} As opposed to other forms of violence, political violence is a collective phenomenon in response to social, political or economic grievances. It is not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

Violence in a militarised society is multi-dimensional. It would be latent or manifest, direct or indirect. Johan Galtung speaks of structural violence, which is implicit in the structure of domination and inequality.\textsuperscript{53}

An essential feature of violence in a militarised situation is that it generates from multiple sources. It is generated by the State as also those opposing the State. In a militarised society, the State increases its military budget to, accommodate expenditure on additional forces and purchase of arms. Apart from the regular army, navy and air force, the State also creates special armed forces specifically to counter militancy. There may be other armed groups or forces created unofficially with the help of the state, consent and patronage. Ethno-political violence, outside the framework of the State policy and behaviour, is rooted in two sources. The majority seeks to assert its supremacy, and the minority, wants to preserve its identity. Violence by


discontented groups involves different militant groups or different factions within groups. Forces with the support of the state may perpetrate violence.

Chart 1.1 Sources of violence in a militarised society

Manifestations of violence are also as diverse as the sources. Apart from armed conflict, when both sides contest for territory, other forms of violence erupt. State violence expresses itself as political persecution of dissident groups, by way of detention, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, death, rape and torture. Ethno-political violence is demonstrated in riots (which are spontaneous) or pogroms (which are organized), guerrilla warfare,

54 "Torture is usually part of state-controlled machinery to suppress dissent" Ibid. p.45.
kidnapping, political murders, and assassinations. Violence may also lead to destruction, damage of property, lack of freedom of movement, forceful evacuation, conscription etc. Violence in a militarised society is all pervasive, widespread and sets in a 'culture of violence' and dehumanisation of society.

Militarisation in the present context includes this diversity of political violence. But it is a wider term than violence alone. It could be defined as:

- Acceptance of violence as the legitimate form of political practice,
- Escalation in the scale of violence, and
- Inter-related dynamics

Chart 1.2 Militarisation and Refugee Generation: An Analytical Framework

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Refugee generation takes place due to a web of inter-related factors, which affect each other and affect militarisation (and are affected by it) and the inter-related factors are political, economic, psychological and external.

**Political Determinants**

Political factors include a wide range of components that determine militarisation and, refugee generation. To start with, since ethnic conflict is located in the dichotomy between the State and the 'nation' the role of the State acquires crucial significance in this analysis. The role of the state in a multi-ethnic society is broadly manifested at three levels. At the policy level, the question is whose interest does the State represent while formulating polices that impinge on the socio-economic structure of society. Political environment represents the level of participation and democratic space in the political system for different groups. It also includes the nature of ideology and strategies of the leadership - 'who represents the interests of the minorities' and the parameters within which they work. In a militarised society, for instance, the moderate leadership is often weakened, and the vacuum is filled by the militant leadership. The third and most specific role of the state is expressed in its administrative, police and military organizations in handling crisis situations. These factors have a direct bearing on economic,
psychological and external dimensions of the conflict. Political determinants have a profound psychological impact leading to political mobilization. When groups feel marginalized and alienated in a plural society, they often look towards more violent ways of addressing grievances. Emergence of militant groups is often the outcome in such situations. Geopolitics and the existence of a clearly demarcated territory are crucial for the sustenance of the conflict.

**Economic Determinants**

There is a deep-seated economic inequality and grievance at the root of most conflicts. These get exacerbated or settled depending upon the policy decisions adopted by the State. However, once the conflict gets militarised, economic factors acquire a heightened significance because a new set of economic factors emerge, to sustain and escalate the conflict. The economic costs of sustaining the war and also the immediate impact on education, employment and livelihood opportunities push people towards militancy. Psychologically, the loss of economic opportunities alienates people. Those in direct contact with violence face problems like food, shelter and essential commodities. The economies of war add yet another dimension of this scenario. Certain sections of people like arms dealers or those supplying equipment to the military find it economically expedient to sustain the conflict.
Psychological Determinants

'Wars begin in the minds of men', this encapsulates the psychological dimension of ethnic conflict. Though militarised conflicts move beyond their cause, the psychological factors of militarisation can be 'seen' in the, fear, insecurity, mistrust, and dehumanisation of people. The acceptance of violence as the 'legitimate' form of political practice mobilizes people for militancy.56

External Determinants

External determinants are territorially or geographically outside the ambit of the conflict, yet they determine the course of it. It is not a cause, but can be a catalyst in the conflict. According to David Carment, human rights issues and refugee situations are facets of ethnic conflict which bring the international dimension to the force.57

According to Sahadevan, patterns of external involvement could be broadly categorized as conflict waging, humanitarian intervention and conflict resolution.58

56 There is often a romanticisation of violence in militarized society. According to Frantz Fanon the use of violence as a cleansing agent, is aimed at eliminating the 'real evils' of society. See Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth, (Trans.by C. Farrington, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).


The international actors in ethnic conflict are states, civil society international media, international non-governmental organizations and diaspora. They influence the conflict and also form 'pull factors' in refugee generation. The States provide moral and material support (training, supply of arms and fund) to the militants. Refugee policy and response of the state as well as civil society to asylum seekers are of particular significance in the present framework. While the above factors impinge on refugee generation, the process itself creates conditions for sustaining the cycle - as shown in dotted lines in the diagram. The point is well brought out by John Dalberg-Acton when he says that 'exile is the nursery of nationality.'\textsuperscript{59} 'Long-distance nationalism', according to Anderson, is responsible for some of the most violent and long drawn conflicts in the world today.

Refugee generation is a dynamic process. Though it is difficult to identify specific factors involved in the process, once unleashed, it creates conditions for its own survival. At the outset, it must be mentioned that there is an intense cycle of violence and open hostility in a militarised society. Refugee generation occurs as an exodus during the period of intense violence, or as a trickle due to the overall impact of generalised violence. A specific episode of

intense fighting may start after a period of lull when there is failure of talks or attempts at reaching a political solution between the government and militants. At this point there is threat or anticipation of violence and rumours of outbreak of hostilities (Some people move out at this stage itself, in fear and anxiety). The next stage is when there is actual warning through announcements, imposition of curfew, sound of bombing or sirens before shelling by the army. Fear and panic is generated at this stage. People have to decide whether they have to stay or flee. Sometimes civilians are deprived of this choice, when there are announcements that people have to vacate the area at any cost. The next stage is the actual impact of bombing, shelling, ground warfare between the State forces and militant groups. The area is referred to the ‘war-zone’ or the ‘combat-zone’. Death, injury, disability, destruction of houses and property occur. If there is death of a family member or neighbour, the fear, mistrust, alienation becomes so high that people flee either to the nearest place of safety, or leave the village itself.

In this situation, there is an adverse economic impact. The livelihood opportunities of the people are affected. Naval warfare and increased vigilance render fishing difficult and dangerous. Even if they manage a catch in rare and lucky situations there is no market for the product, because of the absence of people and imposition of curfew. There is destruction of property
i.e. shops, farms, equipments. There is an economic embargo imposed in the area for security reasons. Due to this essential items and medicines are not available. Lack of electricity, raw materials and restrictions on travelling worsen the economic situation and force people to flee to refugee camps to get food. There is acute poverty and unemployment. The alienation and frustration especially among the youth is so high that they are drawn into militant groups. The underlying rationale is that this deprivation can only be set right by violent political struggle.

Once there is a decisive outcome in terms of controlling territory, the war moves on. The forces that have been able to wrest territory move on to the next decisive phase in the fighting and the same cycle of threat, warning, actual violence and the impact of violence takes place in the next combat-zone.

However, even in times when there is no overt, intense violence, people still flee. This is because violence continues in many forms, including arbitrary arrests, disappearances, detention, forceful conscription and forceful evacuation. There is a complete loss of faith in the Rule of Law. Displacement of people happens from other parts of the country as well and not just the combat-zones.

External factors add yet another dimension to conflicts. External determinants affect the refugee situation in two ways. Firstly, the role of
refugee policy of foreign countries determines the destination of refugees in terms of internal or external displacement. The role and response of the neighbouring state is of crucial significance in this context, because it is often the place where they seek immediate refuge. If the country has closed borders and impermeable entry points, people are forced to remain confined within their own country. If, on the other hand, there is shared culture or ethnic affinity with the neighbouring population, it acts as ‘pull factor’. Thus, the response of the host community is also important in this regard. Secondly, the role of the diaspora is a key factor in a refugee situation. The diaspora gives moral and material support to the conflict. At the same time, refugees who flee the country become part of the diaspora and add to the fervour of the movement from outside the country. (This is shown in dotted lines in the flow chart).

CONCLUSION

Refugee generation is a dynamic process inextricably linked to the conflict. The intensity of the conflict has a direct impact on the process of displacement. Refugee generation is not an isolated phenomenon having a simple cause - effect relationship with the ethnic conflict. It is a feature of the
conflict itself and develops within this wide array of inter-related variables - economic, political, psychological and external.

In the absence of an analytical framework to explain refugee generation in a situation of ethnic conflict, this theoretical exercise is an attempt to fill the gap. However, the viability of the framework can be best understood in an empirical situation.