

FEDERAL SYSTEM AS A SOLUTION TO THE ETHNIC CONFLICT IN SRI LANKA

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Since the United National Front (UNF) government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the idea of federalism as a permanent solution to the ethnic problem has been discussed in many forums. In fact, at the talks held in Oslo between the UNF government and the LTTE, it was agreed to have a federal system as a basis for a negotiated settlement of the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka.

Therefore, there is a need to examine whether federalism can serve as a basis for a permanent solution to the problem

The purpose of this study is, first, to explain the theory and practice of federalism, secondly, to examine the pre-conditions and requisites necessary for a federal system; thirdly, this study will examine whether a federal system can be a basis for the settlement of the ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka. This study will also examine why the LTTE changed its demand from the separate state to a federal state.

The hypothesis of the study is that the introduction of a federal system of government in Sri Lanka will help to solve the ethnic conflict permanently.

The theoretical basis of the study is that of a federal system of government, most of those who have written on federalism agree that "they have in mind an association of states, which has been formed for certain common purposes but in which the member states retain a large measure of their original independence" instead of being concentrated in one government. Both levels of government are mentioned in a constitutional document, and neither can modify or abolish the system without its own consent. A constitution is federal if (i) two levels of government rule the same land and people (ii) there is some guarantee of autonomy to each government in its own sphere. Based on the theory of federalism, the paper addresses the areas (a) Theory and practice of a federal system, (b) Pre-conditions and requisites for a federal system, and (c) Whether a federal system can be a basis for the settlement of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

Methodology of the study will be descriptive analysis. All available primary and secondary data will be utilized. Data for the study will also be collected through a survey to be conducted at the University of Peradeniya.