

Forward process of conflict analysis: An application to the Sri Lankan conflict

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The Sri Lankan ethnic conflict has, over the past 20 years, imposed substantial costs on the people of Sri Lanka. All ethnic groups are either directly or indirectly affected by the conflict. The present form of the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict primarily developed under the difficult socio-economic condition of the 1970s to the point where violence has become an institutionalised part of the lives of the Sri Lankan people since 1983. Despite its violent history current negotiations have shown promising signs that a future resolution may exist. The two main parties, the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government, have been engaged in six rounds of peace talks. The LTTE has for the first time shown willingness to loosen up on its traditional demand of a separate independent state. In a similar manner, the Sri Lankan government has announced that the time is ripe to give the Tamils political autonomy in the North and East provinces of Sri Lanka.

The main objective of this paper is to offer strategic analysis of the Sri Lankan conflict by applying economic techniques. The study applies the forward process of conflict analysis to the Sri Lankan conflict. The primary purpose is to determine the type of political structure as the most likely to serve as a resolution to the conflict, given the present environment of the conflict, the power of the parties and their current objectives. More specifically, this paper will identify and provide a quantitative evaluation of future solutions to the Sri Lankan conflict. An attempt is made to obtain probability statements for a set of political solutions, and provide an interpretation of their numerical values. The analysis is targeted at a solution of the structure that can serve as resolution of the conflict.

Key words: Conflict Analysis; Ethnic conflict; Economic analysis; Political structure