

**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study is to examine the concept of "internationalization" of domestic issues and conflicts, which is a frequent occurrence in international politics. It is proposed to do this on two levels. One is to examine the process of internationalization; how and in what way does a domestic issue or conflict get internationalized and spread across the international system. The second is to examine the content of the concept of internationalization; why do domestic issues or conflicts get internationalized, and what are the forces at work in this process. In this way one can arrive at a more substantial understanding of the term "internationalization" and what is understood by that concept.

The period 1977-1987 in Sri Lanka was a time when the ethnic conflict, which had hitherto been of domestic proportions, grew in its severity and violence, and became internationalized. The period also highlights two challenges the country faces. One is the challenge of achieving communal harmony and national unity. The other is the importance of a foreign and security policy to a country, in the face of the variety of factors in the international milieu - security, political, economic and human rights - that come into play when a conflict gets internationalized.

This study will be done in two stages. First an overview of the theoretical and methodological literature appropriate to the examination of the processes and content of "internationalization" is undertaken. Thereafter, a framework of analysis to look at the internationalization of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict during this period will be formulated. And based on the examination of Sri Lanka's experience, some of the characteristics of the concept of "internationalization" will be sketched.

Presently, there is a greater emphasis on conflicts with super-power and great



power ramifications. Many other conflicts can slip through such a broad sieve. Hence, especially in a post-Cold War context, it is useful to explore conflicts that persist at other levels in the international system e.g. regional power configurations. The study of the Sri Lanka example, and the characteristics of internationalization that are observable from it, in addition to clarifying the implications of the ethnic conflict for Sri Lanka, will help throw some light on other South Asian conflicts which have got internationalized, and also, consequently, on the political dynamics of the South Asian sub-system.