The Discourse Pertaining to Illegal Migration in Sri Lanka

I. Renuka Priyantha[1*], Indrajee De Zoysa[2], and Upul Sanjeewa Wijepala[3]

[1]*Department of Economics, University of Ruhuna*

[2]*English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU), University of Ruhuna*

[3]*Department of Sociology, University of Ruhuna*

Abstract

The phenomenon of human migration is as old as the human reality. Humans have been migrating for a multitude of reasons. Ranging from economic to political reasons, the notion of security plays a huge role in the migrant consciousness. A combination of both non traditional and traditional security issues have made the 21st century into an age of displacement, migration and exile. The process of migration can take place within a legally accepted framework and have been taking place illegally. Especially after decolonization within the former colonies, illegal migration increased rapidly due to the rise of violence within the states, especially among those found in South Asia. With decolonization the notion of nation building took place and it was carried out on neo-liberal capitalistic ethnic lines leaving aside the civic political processes of integration. The end results was conflict at a political and an economic level creating a threat to security in various forms leading to people rejecting the particular space whilst moving on or trying to move on to a new place. Sri Lanka has not been immune to such issues and the post colonial politics pertaining to nation building in Sri Lanka based on ethnicization and neo-liberal capitalistic policies resulted in conflict and violence making people migrate illegally as well as legally. Though legal migration was not an instant issue, illegal migration from boats and various other means to countries like Australia created a lot of stress on both Australia and Sri Lanka as a whole. The purpose of this research is to analyze as to why Sri Lankans attempt to (of all ethnic groups) illegally migrate to other spaces rejecting the Sri Lankan space and critically look at the factors which propagate such attempts. Interestingly, people belonging to all ethnicities have attempted to move out due to socio, economics, political and cultural factors and we have attempted to analyze how these different variables result in making the migrant consciousness and how it ultimately results in people attempting to move illegally.

Keywords: Ethnicization, migration, nation-state building, politics, socio-economic-cultural issues

---

*   *priyan@econ.ruh.ac.lk*

This page intentionally left blank