



# Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the Question of Nationhood (Borderlines)

*Sankaran Krishna*

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This ambitious work explores the vexed connections among nation-building, ethnic identity, and regional conflict by focusing on a specific event: Indian political and military intervention in the ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Drawing on interviews with leading players in the Indian-Sri Lankan debacle, Sankaran Krishna offers a persuasive analysis of this episode. The intervention serves as a springboard to a broader inquiry into the interworking of nation-building, ethnicity, and "foreign" policy. Krishna argues that the modernist effort to construct nation-states on the basis of singular notions of sovereignty and identity has reached a violent dead end in the postcolonial world of South Asia. Showing how the nationalist agenda that seeks to align territory with identity has unleashed a spiral of regional, statist, and insurgent violence, he makes an eloquent case for reimagining South Asia along postnational lines -- as a "confederal" space.

Postcolonial Insecurities counters the perception of "ethnicity" as an inferior and subversive principle compared with the progressive ideal of the "nation." Krishna, in fact shows ethnicity to be indispensable to the production and reproduction of the nation itself.

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