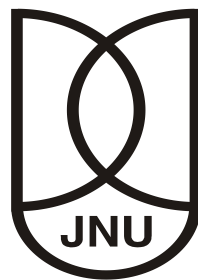# Role of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Homeland Politics, 2006-2011

Dissertation Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Award of the Degree of

Master of Philosophy

Submitted by

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DATE: 27/07/2012

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled **"Role of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in Homeland Politics: 2006-2011"** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

TULIKA GAUR

CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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New Delhi   Tulika Gaur

27th June, 2012.

ABBREVIATIONS

BTF   British Tamil Forum

EPRLF   Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front

EROS   Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students

GoSL   Government of Sri Lanka

IPKF   Indian Peace Keeping Force

LTTE   Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

PLOTE   People's Organization of Tamil Eelam

RAW   Research and Analysis Wing

RC   Refugee Council

SCOT   Standing Committee of Tamil Speaking People

SLAF   Sri Lankan Air Force

SLFP   Sri Lanka Freedom Party

SLMM   Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission

TAG   Tamils Against Genocide

TEEDOR   Tamil Eelam Economic Development Organization

TELA   Tamil Eelam Liberation Army

TELO   Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization

TESOC   Tamil Eelam Society of Canada

TRC   Tamil Relief Centre

TRO   Tamil Refugee Organization

TULF   Tamil United Liberation Front

TYO   Tamil Youth Organization

UK   United Kingdom

UNICEF	United Nations International Commission for Educational Funds
UNP	United National Party
USA	United States of America
USTPAC	United States Tamil Political Action Committee
VR	Vaddukoddai Resolution
WTM	World Tamil Movement

CONTENTS

Conclusion

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Migration and diasporic phenomena have become major factors in today's international and domestic systems. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, these two phenomena have been receiving more attention by publics, politicians, media persons, and academics than ever before. The phenomenon of diasporic participation in homeland politics is not new, especially in the wake of globalization. Globalizing factors have led migrants to keep a strong interest in their homeland politics. Events in their country of origin seem to be closer than ever before. Developments resulting from globalization have brought homeland affairs closer to diaspora and consequently brought diaspora closer to homeland politics (Bercovitch 2007: 20). The trends in international politics indicate that the role of diaspora in various political scenarios seems to be an important one. Thus, diaspora has emerged as a powerful actor in the world where politics is an affair that extends much beyond the states and political forces (Smith and Stares 2003: 3). New arenas for political expression are opened, particularly for ethnic communities which are denied the freedom of expression in homeland. According to Bercovitch (2007: 22) "Diasporasic communities' role in politics can be seen at four levels: at the domestic level in home country; the regional level; the trans-state level, and the level of the dispersed group in other countries. At each of these levels the diasporaic activities focus on maintenance, defence and promotion of their interests". They seek to maintain cohesion and a sense of separate identity in the host country, and work actively through various political and economic channels in its host country to promote the interests of their kin groups living in homeland (Axel 2002: 411). Hence, they have become an integral part of homeland politics and international politics as well and it seems to be inevitable to avoid them as a factor impacting the political scenario at both levels. In this context, the Tamils of Sri Lanka serve as a useful example of a population whose many migrations have created a worldwide diaspora. The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is one of the largest diaspora communities in the world and has been quite active in exerting its influence both in Sri Lanka and in its host lands abroad. From the ethnic, cultural, religious, economic, and political perspectives, it is a highly heterogeneous entity, like most

other established diasporas. Despite various basic similarities to other diasporas, it has its own uniqueness. Its size, scope, and complexity make the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora a noteworthy subject for academic research.

Diaspora can be of immense importance when it comes to peace-building, post-conflict reconstruction and socio-economic and political development in its homeland. The main reason for such influential diasporic engagement can be explained in terms of the changing nature of political relationships involving state and ethnic groups (Smith and Stares 2003: 3). Generally, ethnic groups lack international representation and membership and, therefore, they have to rely on their overseas members for external support (Kaldor-Robinson 2002: 185). In some cases, diaspora remains the only hope for ethnic groups to ensure their survival in a majoritarian and coercive state. The proposed study will focus on the role of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in protecting the interests of its brethren in war battered North-East Sri Lanka. Specifically, it will try to analyse the nature of diasporic response to the homeland politics.

Diasporas are social groups that (i) settle and establish themselves in another country and (ii) are internally heterogeneous (Werbner 2002; Kleist 2007). A diaspora group can and does have the same interests, defined among other things by class, gender, generation, occupation or religion. Diasporas are rarely constituted by a single factor. The nature of the diasporan intervention is the result of the respective power relations within diaspora and between diaspora, home country and the host country (Wahlbeck 2002). Diaspora intervenes in homeland politics only if it is organised and enjoys material and political power. Diaspora without these does not intervene in homeland at all.

According to Bercovitch (2007: 19-22), "Globalization has given immense space for these diasporas to become an important international political forces. There has been an increase in the intensity of the diasporic groups' ties with their homeland and, hence, an increase in their involvement in their homeland politics. There have been many examples to illustrate the active role of diaspora in their homeland politics. With greater access to cheaper, more efficient travel and communication, more recently established diaspora-communities have been able to strengthen the diaspora-homeland nexus". Meanwhile, the proliferation of insurgencies and intrastate conflicts

around the world, have produced growing numbers of refugees and migrants, seeking a new home. This, in turn, has created a number of diasporas that have a more recent, stronger, and arguably more emotional connection with developments in their erstwhile homes, especially when there is social or political upheaval (Demmers 2002: 86). There are several ways in which diaspora affects or responds to homeland politics. It may participate in policy-making, holding elections, preventing or mediating a conflict and post-conflict reconstruction. In South Asia, we find that the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the West has been active in their homeland affairs by supporting the Tamil insurgents fighting for their right to self-determination against the Sinhalese government forces in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora identifies itself as the "victim diaspora" because majority of its members fled the country in the wake of ethnic violence in Sri Lanka mainly after 1983. This group is largely made up of refugees and former refugees who are literally scattered around the world, but concentrated in certain countries in the West. About 170,000 Sri Lankan Tamils live in Tamil Nadu, whose coast line is less than fifty miles from the northern Sri Lanka. About 65,000 of them live in camps, and about 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils are considered as non-camp refugees (Encyclopædia Britannica 2008). According to the UNHCR, "During 1980-1999, 256,307 people of Sri Lankan origin applied for asylum in Europe. From a population of about 2,000 Tamils in 1983, Canada's Sri Lankan Tamil population has grown to about 200,000 persons. About 90 per cent of them live in Toronto. During 1987-2001, Sri Lanka was among the top three countries which sent refugees to Canada". About 200,000 Sri Lankan Tamils live in Western Europe, primarily in Britain, Germany, Switzerland, and France. Around 10,000 Sri Lankan Tamils live in Australia, primarily in Sydney, and several thousand of them are settled in Singapore and Malaysia (Encyclopædia Britannica 2008). South Africa has a population of about one million persons who are Tamils and this group consists of both Indian and Sri Lankan origin. The United States has a few thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils who went there as refugees. Hence, as noted by Sriskandarajah (2004: 493), "the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora consists of an estimated 700,000 people settled in Canada, Europe, India and Australia and the UK. It is likely, therefore, that one in every four Sri Lankan Tamils now lives abroad. There has been a long tradition of Tamil migration from the Jaffna

peninsula for education and employment. However, it is in the context of civil war in Sri Lanka that the emergence of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora should be studied".

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has formed community organizations as well as websites, newspapers, and radio and TV stations that have helped maintain its culture and contact with Sri Lanka. However, during the years when the LTTE was active, the group infiltrated the diaspora community to extract funds for their militancy against the Sri Lankan state. Numerous front organizations collected donations from the Tamil community. Many within the diaspora supported the LTTE voluntarily, and considered them as the sole actor with enough power to stand up against the Sri Lankan government (Collier and Hoeffler 2004: 575). However, a large section of the diasporic community disapproved the coercive tactics employed by the LTTE in collecting funds (Zunzer 2004: 27-28). It was estimated that the LTTE rose about approximately US $ 200 a year from the diaspora during the conflict, much of which went to procuring weapons. Apart from financial contributions, the Tamil diaspora also played an advocacy role aimed at promoting the Sri Lankan Tamil cause. With the two-fold role of creating awareness at the global level, and strengthening the eelam movement, the diaspora-run media played an important role in framing and articulating the issues of peace and conflict.

However, it has to be noted that the Tamil community cannot be considered as a unitary entity that advocates the cause of Tamil eelam; not all Sri Lankan Tamils supported the Tigers during the war and not all Sri Lankan Tamils in the diaspora identified with the LTTE (Zunzer 2004: 27-28). Since the defeat of the LTTE, the diaspora is more divided than ever. The basic goals of the diaspora have shifted from merely supporting the armed struggle to a non-violent struggle for protection of Tamil rights. This shows that even though the war is over, concerns of the diaspora over the safety of its kin group in homeland remains the same. There are different responses from different groups on the central issue of Tamil eelam. There are some ardent Tamil nationalists, especially in the West, who have not yet given up the hope for Tamil eelam. There are others who are ready to settle for a federal solution. In contrast, the poor Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Tamil Nadu expect any solution that ensures them livelihood and security. In the aftermath of the defeat of the LTTE, the discourse of violence and reconciliation among the diaspora has changed. The end of the war brings new dynamics in the relationship between the different actors in the

conflict. On top of that, there seems to be an increasing disjuncture between the interests and needs of Tamils in Sri Lanka and those in the diaspora (International Crisis Group Report 2011).

This study will basically address the question of how significantly the diaspora activities contribute to peace in homeland. There is an increasing recognition of the potential of diaspora in stimulating peace and development in countries of origin. This acknowledgment accompanies a call to engage the Tamil diaspora organisations in finding a solution to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. The present study will analyse how the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has managed to come to the forefront and assert its presence in the international arena since the fourth eelam war. It focuses specifically on the diaspora settled in the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Canada, Norway, Australia and the US.

The study covers the time period of 2006-2011. In 2006, the fourth eelam war broke out and in May 2009, it came to an end with the death of the LTTE Chief, Vellupillai Prabhakaran. The fourth and final phase of the eelam war took place at a time when the whole world was preoccupied with 'counter-terrorism strategies' after the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States. Influenced by the war on terror, the Rajapaksa regime launched an all out war against the LTTE in mid-2006. The eelam War IV began after President Rajapaksa failed in his attempt to convince the LTTE that the practical conditions of the peace process had changed. In spite of these changed strategies and tactics it was clear that the victory was achievable at the price of a high number of casualities. About 40,000 civilians died in the war, and over 300,000 civilians were internally displaced. They were kept in degrading condition until the 2010.

At this time, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora was primarily engaged in political lobbying and creating public awareness about the homeland conflict. Thus, it played an important role in framing the conflict issues. They used all the modern tools such as internet and various social networking sites to highlight the problem of its kin group and gather support in its favour. Also, they created websites to help out their people who were in need of house, jobs and asylum when they fled their homeland. The diaspora lobbied the international community to stop the Sri Lankan government's military offensive against the Tamil Tigers.

After 2009 there have been various efforts to create order in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been playing an important role in that. The post war era has seen the active involvement of the diasporas in its homeland affairs. The international community has gradually recognised the high potential of the Tamil diaspora for establishment of peace and development in its country of origin.

Following the LTTE's defeat, the diaspora has continued to mount human rights charges against the Sri Lankan government and demand international support to protect the Sri Lankan Tamils' interests. A section of the Tamil diaspora is also engaged in activities to weaken the Sri Lankan economy by boycotting Sri Lankan goods as well as pressurizing the European Union to stop 'GSP Plus' trade concession to Sri Lanka. These measures would cost Sri Lanka millions of dollars in trade and thousands of jobs, especially for female garment workers. In 2011, the government appointed the "Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC)" submitted its report which contains a number of recommendations for peace and reconciliation.

The post-civil war era has witnessed the mushrooming of various initiatives and organizations particularly over the past years. Chief among them are the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) and the Global Tamil Forum (GTF). The TGTE aims to consolidate the diaspora and its resources into an elected governance structure. It hopes that elections held throughout the diaspora-settled countries will eventually provide it with the democratic credentials and moral authority to compel the international community to support an independent state for Sri Lankan Tamils. It is seen as a long-term project, achieving its ultimate goal within 30-60 years. The GTF is a conglomerate of elite personality-driven pro-eelam organizations from fourteen countries that all claim to speak on behalf of their respective Tamil population. The GTF aims to be a quasi-advocacy and humanitarian organization based in London. It aims to gather the Western government's attention on the immediate humanitarian concerns of Tamils in Sri Lanka, such as closure of the internment camps, rather than get bogged down in larger political questions. Its immediate aim is to convince the Western governments to pressurize the Sri Lankan government to negotiate a political deal with the Sri Lankan Tamils.

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is active in political terms. The indication is that, at least in the short-term, the pro-LTTE elements in the diaspora will use non-violent

politics to continue the struggle for a Tamil Eelam. The diaspora is resilient too, seen in terms of its enduring ability to mobilise support against the Sri Lankan government.

In the post-war phase, the diaspora has assumed a significant role in the homeland politics, in positive as well as negative ways. The post-war phase has opened space for new collective action. With the end of the war, the Tamil ideology has not disappeared. Hence, the assessment of the activism of the Tamil diaspora depends upon various internal and external factors, which will be studied in detail. How well Sri Lanka recovers depends on policy-making at both the local and international levels and the transformation of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora.

Review of the Literature

The general literature on diaspora is plenty. But with regard to the role of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in its homeland politics, the literature in scanty. As a matter of fact, there is hardly any full-length study available on the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. The review in this section is divided into four categories: the role of diaspora in homeland politics, homeland politics and civil war in Sri Lanka, diasporic response to the civil war in Sri Lanka, and the post-war involvement of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in their homeland affairs.

The Role of Diaspora in homeland politics

Abdile (2009) analyses the role and contribution of diaspora to politics in terms of peace-building. They provide a general overview of diasporic role in politics and discuss the various risks faced by diasporas in different political situations. The concept of 'new wars' is extensively debated in his work through examples of how diaspora contributes to conflict in their respective country of origin and, in turn, reshape the political settings, the factors influencing their involvement, and the potential 'import' of conflict to their host country. Smith and Stares (2007) argue that diasporas remain to be an integral part of the political settings in both their host country as well as homeland as they are able to play their role as both peace-makers and peace-wreckers. Prior to making any claims about the impact of diasporas on any

given political situation, it is essential to understand the historical context, interests and efforts of the diaspora group in question, as well as their organisational structure and the general background to the political settings such as if there has been any particular event or clash that has led to that situation. Apart from this, the circumstances under which the diaspora intervenes or wishes to intervene in conflict and in turn affect the politics have also been discussed in detail in their edited work. Thus, for the conceptual part of the research, this book is important as it defines various concepts. According to Demmers (2002), the long distance interaction of the diaspora groups in the homeland politics seems to be the result of their engagement in a sort of "virtual conflict: they live their conflicts through the internet, email, television, and telephone without direct (physical) suffering, risks or accountability." Due to an increased level of global inter-connectedness through cheap modes of transportation and communication, diaspora groups are also more than ever before able to build strong links between their country of origin and their host country. Thus, they are now a 'fax time' away from their relatives in their homeland, with modern technologies making it easier than ever before to keep in touch.

Bercovitch (2007) argues that "the best way to conceive of the role of diasporas in politics is to think of the various developments within a particular political setting and then to evaluate the possible role diaspora may play in each development." The participation of diaspora in a particular political setting would simply depend on the event or incident that is significant or is important in shaping that particular political scenario. Zunzer (2004) says that there are various ways and levels of the diasporic contribution and participation in the homeland politics. He analyzes that members of migrant communities face a transition in their social status and individual identities. Also, the process of integration into societies provides an opportunity to develop independence from inhibiting social and political conditions of their former societies and political systems. This independence can be an asset for the development and democratization of their homeland. This, in turn, depends on the abilities of the community to find some opportunities to engage themselves for some or the other cause in their homeland. Sheffer (2003) maintains that some diaspora groups target the homeland politics as well as the hostland and its institutions. In terms of usage of their political views by diasporas both in the homeland and hostland, one can argue that their main aim varies from being able to help their kin groups to maintaining their

own reputation. They also have other crucial objectives to advance when they are involved in homeland politics. Tambiah (2000) explains the reasons and consequences of transnational movement of people from the developing countries to the developed ones. He tries to explain that the nature of these movements being 'transnational' leads to inter-relatedness and, hence, contributes to more active participation in homeland politics.

Homeland politics and Civil War in Sri Lanka

Uyangoda (2007) argues that the political scenario of Sri Lanka has always been centred around the ethnic conflict that resulted from the failure of successive governments in meeting the expectations of the Tamils. The government always promoted the Sinhala majority's interest, while discrimination against the Sri Lankan Tamils became endemic. Manogaran and Pfaffenberger (1996) trace the chronological and cognitive dimensions of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, Tamil regional and socio-political identities, aims of the secessionist groups, and the economic basis of Tamil eelam. They reiterate that sharpening of ethnic identities led to militant demands for a separate Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka remains to be a modern phenomenon fuelled by a surging, recalcitrant nationalism of the Sinhalese majority, which has used Buddhist community and Sinhalese language as twin symbols of the state. This has resulted in alienation of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

According to Ropers (2010), Sri Lanka is an exemplary case of a protracted ethno-political conflict. Its main issue is that while the political representatives of the Sinhalese majority grant the Tamil speaking minority groups, a status as "co-habiting" communities, they don't grant them the right to cooperate in forming a multi-ethnic Sri Lanka. The Tamils felt threatened by the major irrigation and settling projects in areas in the East where they traditionally lived, as this meant demographic changes in their "territorial" homeland. Initially the differences between the two communities were sought to be resolved in the parliament. As the differences became more pronounced it became more difficult to work out a lasting compromise, and the conflicts became an inevitable result.

DeVotta (2009) analyzes the rise and fall of the LTTE and the Tamil separatist movement in Sri Lanka. The movement began in the early 1980s after nearly a decade

of discriminatory government policies limiting the Sri Lankan Tamils' employment in civil services, restricting their access to institutions of higher learning, and institutionalizing the dominance of the Sinhalese language over the Tamil. Worse, there was violence against the Tamil minority by the Sinhalese hyper-nationalists. He claims that the LTTE leader Prabhakaran's single minded insistence on the creation of a Tamil eelam and his unwillingness to compromise ultimately transformed the organization into a fascist force, imposing its ideology over the entire Tamil community. Furthermore, caste and regional divisions within the Tamil community allowed the government to facilitate a major split within the LTTE with the defection of one of Prabhakaran's main lieutenants, Colonel Karuna. Moreover, sustained and massive military operations by the Sri Lankan armed forces wore down the already weakened LTTE, eventually leading to its complete military collapse. Yet, as DeVotta points out, even though the state's military victory has crushed the LTTE, the lingering effects of decades of discriminatory treatment continue to fester within the Tamil community.

Sri Lankan Tamil Diasporic Response to the Civil War in homeland

According to Sriskandarajah (2004), the origin of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora can be explained in the context of ethnic violence in 1983. It has led to a massive influx of people. Besides the military implications, the events of 1983 also had a direct impact on the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. It made them more reluctant to return to their homeland and most of the members lodged asylum claims. After the incidents of 1983, the emigration flows of professional and middle-class Tamils gained strength. Since ethnic violence continued and grew severe along with the time, the level of participation of the diaspora in their homeland affairs tended to increase. The pre-migratory experience of this group has shaped the political identity of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. Aspirations about the 'Tamil eelam' that were forged at home have been transported across space and time, and continued to be relevant in the diaspora. Velamati (2008) analyses the impact of nationalism on the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. She maintains that though the Tamil nationalism has been transported, there remain various perceptions about the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka within the diasporic community. Majority of the Tamil diaspora remains critical of the methods of

spearheading the cause of Tamil eelam that includes killing of their Tamil brethren. However, a common feeling of disgust against the government does prevail among them. Furthermore, most of the members of the diasporic community look up to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora residing in southern India. This has strengthened the extra-territorial pan-Tamil feeling among them.

According to Fuglerud (1999), the diasporic identity was increasingly circumscribed by the nationalist policies of the LTTE. This nationalism provided "a name for individual nostalgia and shared exclusion from the host society" while constructing new representations of migrants' Sri Lankan Tamil origin and connectedness. This interconnection is marked by time of migration, participation in political organizations, and the feeling of traditional loyalties, especially family, caste and village membership. These factors constrain relation among the diasporas and make them focus towards a moral authority of revolutionary politics. Fair (2007) identifies the different levels at which the diasporas intervene and affect the homeland conflict and, in turn, politics. She claims that the role of a dispora depends upon the means of mobilization and identity production, use of technology and scope of their institutional arrangements. The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora speak out for support for Tamil eelam because they have been settled in countries that protect their freedom of speech. To assert themselves, they have established various organizations that promote Tamil equities in Sri Lanka. They have also made extensive use of the World Wide Web to establish cyber communities, chat rooms and users' group which basically deal with creating awareness about the problems faced by their kin groups back in their homeland.

Cheran (2003) says that diasporic groups, capable of maintaining and investing in social, economic and political networks that span the globe, are of increasing relevance and interest to policy makers in home countries as well as host countries. Therefore, the concept of 'diasporic circulation' can be seen as an effective tool for engaging the diaspora in a meaningful way in reconstruction and development of war–torn areas in Sri Lanka. Sustaining a society under stress, strain and displacement has been the most important function of the Tamil diaspora. The 2002 Ceasefire Agreement led to the establishment of the first phase of diasporic circulation, as during the ceasefire, a huge chunk of diaspora visited their homeland and during these visits, transfer of knowledge, capital and capacity-building had taken place. Only

what is needed now is to strengthen and systematize this circulation process so that proper implementation of the programme planning can take place. Weiss (2011) explains the circumstances and the level of diasporic engagement during the time period 2006-2009. His work gives us a clear picture about the conditions prevailing in Sri Lanka during the fourth eelam war and how the government and the other international organizations reacted to it. This leads us to assess the response of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora to the final stage of war as well.

According to Nandakumar (2011), the events of the early 2009 swayed both the moderate and uninterested Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora to become almost "hardcore" supporters of the Tamil struggle. The lack of condemnation from international powers only strengthened the resolve of the diaspora and, in some cases, was used to justify support for an armed struggle. The Tamil diaspora, separate yet inseperable from the Tamils in the homeland, will continue to ensure that as long as the Tamils in the island are being oppressed, there will be a call for their rights. Wayland (2004) highlights the nexus of domestic and transnational politics by demonstrating how actors from ethnic networks utilise transnational opportunities to pursue political goals in various states, particularly in their homeland. She argues that the formation of ethnic networks in the Tamil diaspora during the ethnic conflict enabled the LTTE to engage in protracted insurgency against the Sri Lankan army. She supports the view that a consideration of the transnational dimension provides new insight into how ethnic conflicts may be sustained or resolved.

The International Crisis Group Report (2010) also explains the level of involvement of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in their homeland politics and eventually in the ethnic conflict going on in their homeland. It has been reported that the diasporic activities have been really significant and increasingly active during the fourth eelam war as the main concerns of diaspora have been the state sponsored crimes against their Tamil community residing back in the homeland.

The Post-war involvement of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in its homeland

Cheran and Vimalarajah (2010) give the insight about the post-war engagements of the Tamil diaspora. They argue against the conventional view that diasporas are a

hindrance to achieve sustainable peace as they have been funding the war. Instead, the importance of the diaspora cannot be neglected if the Sri Lankan state wants to achieve sustainable peace and just order. The different ways in which the Tamil diaspora has been working since the aftermath of defeat of the LTTE remains to be organizational in nature. The authors suggest that the diaspora should be seen as a rational political actor vested with interest and agency. The Tamil diaspora will remain a critical factor in any conflict resolution effort, including those by host countries, due to its interest in 'homeland politics' and its stance on the domestic politics of the host country. Louis and Deenadayalan (2011) have efficiently described the post-war scenario in Sri Lanka. This work gives us the clear picture of the situation that was there immediately after the war ended. It has a section which deals specifically with the international response to the atrocities committed by the Sri Lankan government against its people in the name of "war on terrorism." The book also contains analysis about the diasporic response as well.

A research report by the Crisis Group (2010) deals with basically the post-war activities of the Tamil diaspora, which is based on interviews of the Sri Lankan government officials and Sri Lankan army personnel. This report says that the perception of the Sri Lankan government about the diasporic activism after the LTTE has not been much positive, but then they have not lost faith in their diaspora also. While the government keeps on attempting to maintain the financial influx from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora intact, the interviews from various members of the Tamil diaspora show that they are and probably will never be convinced about the safe future of their brethren under the undemocratic rule of Mahinda Rajapaksa. Bandarage (2010) says that the role of the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas after the war in Sri Lanka has been of immense importance and cannot be ignored. It becomes difficult for the Sri Lankan government to reach a solution without the diasporic involvement in the policy making as it has been very much attached to homeland politics.

It is clear that there is no full-length study available on the diasporic role in homeland politics during the last phase of the eelam war and its aftermath. This study aims to fill this gap through a systematic analysis of whether, why and how the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora around the world has formulated responses to the developments in its homeland.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are to:

- Analyse the emergence of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora as a transnational factor in the politics in Sri Lanka.
- Critically examine the diasporic interests and motives behind its active engagement in its homeland politics.
- Analyse the nature of the diasporic role in homeland politics and its strategies.
- Examine the responses of the Sri Lankan government to these diasporic activities, and
- Assess the impact of diaspora's involvement on the conflict process.

Research questions

The study will try to answer the following research questions:

- How did the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora respond to the final phase of the Eelam war?
- What has been the change in the strategy of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora regarding the eelam demand?
- How did the diaspora manage to mobilize the world opinion and influence the developments in its homeland?
- How does the Sri Lankan government perceive the role of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora in homeland politics?
- To what extent the involvement of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is essential for establishing peace and order in Sri Lanka?

Hypotheses

These research questions will be answered by testing the following hypotheses:

- The coercive strategies of the Sri Lankan State and the consequent human rights violations have enhanced the role of diaspora in homeland politics.

- The transnational activism of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora will contribute more to protraction of the homeland conflict through military means than promoting its secessionist agenda through political and peaceful means.

Research methods

The study employs historical and analytical methods, which is used to interpret events and materials available on three major Tamil websites: Tamilnet; Ilankai Tamil Sangam; and the British Tamils Forum (BTF). Materials have been collected from primary sources, which include speeches, statements etc. The secondary sources include research reports published by the NGOs and other organizations specializing in the study of conflict and peace building, and books and articles written by scholars in the field.

Chapterization

This study is divided into seven chapters, which will deal with various aspects of the topic of this research. The current chapter has already introduced the theme and methodology of the research and has provided and insight of the research questions that are addressed through this research. The review of literature has been done and objectives are presented. Following chapters have dealt with other aspects of the research.

Chapter II: **Diaspora and Homeland Politics: A conceptual framework**

This chapter introduces the theme of the study and define the various concepts. This chapter develops a conceptual framework on the role and strategies of diaspora in different political situations in their homeland and how far they bring about a change.

Chapter III: **The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora: A Profile**

This chapter provides a background to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora. Particularly this chapter analyses the process of migration of the Sri Lankan Tamils, their settlement pattern and their economic and political status in various countries of their settlement.

Chapter IV: **Homeland Politics and the Sri Lankan Tamil Diasporic Responses: A Historical Perspective**

This chapter has two sections. The first section presents the political scenario of Sri Lanka which has been revolving around the ethnic conflict that pushed several thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils out of their country. Being conflict-induced migrants with strong ethnic identity, their interest in the homeland politics have been very strong. In this context, the second section explores the involvement of the Tamil diaspora at various stages of the ethnic conflict. It also examines the changes in the conflict process after the involvement of diaspora and the impact it has made on the relations between the Sri Lankan state and their affected kin group.

Chapter V: **Diasporic Responses to the Fourth Eelam War: Objectives and Strategies**

This chapter basically deals with the basic agenda of the diaspora during the last phase of the Eelam war. Particularly, it examines the strategies adopted by the diaspora to stop the military operations, arrest the massive human rights violations taking place in the island and the responses of the West to the diasporic pressure.

Chapter VI: **The Post-war Transnational Role and its Impact on Homeland Politics**

This chapter covers the post-war developments in Sri Lanka and the role of diaspora in highlighting the grievances of the Sri Lankan Tamils. In other words, it deals with various strategies of the diaspora to get justice and peace for their ethnic kin group in Sri Lanka. Diasporic organizations involved in homeland politics are highlighted and their political agenda is examined.

Chapter VII: **Conclusion**

The seventh chapter summarises the arguments and draw some broad insights on the role of diaspora in civil war and peace processes by testing the hypotheses. The chapter also assesses the challenges and limitations faced by the Sri Lankan diaspora in advancing the ethnic cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

CHAPTER II

Diaspora and Homeland Politics: A Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Since time immemorial the phenomenon of movement of people from their own land to some other place has been taking place. But for a long time these people were not included in any kind of study or task. These people remained with the identity of 'refugee', 'diaspora' or 'displaced person'. But with the advent of globalization, politics has become unbounded and de-territorialized, and since then every other person could be a part of the political affair. Diasporas were recognized as international actors and today they have proved to be an important actor, real actor, and real entities with real interests in the global politics. They are no more 'virtual', today they make a count of themselves both in their homeland as well as host land as a different group altogether. And this number is continuously increasing day by day. They have started making their presence felt among the other international actors, in their host land as well as homeland. They are now the connecting link or the binding thread between their host land and their homeland at every front, be it political, economic or socio-cultural.

Diasporic participation in its homeland politics has been a noted phenomenon. The moment a migration takes place, it doesn't disconnect an individual from all the emotional connections and bonds with his homeland. Rather, there are cases when these bonds get all the more strengthened than they were prior to the migration of the individual. There used to be a time when the immigrants were termed as 'the uprooted', but now they are called as the 'transnationals'.[1] According to Waldinger (2008), "...migration has proved to be an important transnational process that has been contributing to 'politics' beyond the territorial limitations. Whereas it might be more

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[1]**"Transnational** is a term, which is used to describe mobile subjects that create and sustain multiple social relations that link together their societies of origin and residence. In the past, the concept of nationality was derived from shared culture within a bounded territory. Emerging diaspora communities have facilitated deterritorialization through the creation of a new conception of the nation-state. This conception also includes as citizens those who physically reside within the territories of multiple other states, but continue to engage politically, economically, socially and culturally in their countries of origin" (Schiller 1995: 48).

accurate to say that the immigrants are really "the transplanted," almost all scholars agree that to say international migration has cross-border connections. Given the uncertain, transitional nature of the migration process, connections linking origin and destination places are inevitable". Hence, the diaspora is supposed to be an independent political entity, who while migration has taken the responsibility of their kin groups, hence, they continue to be a part of politics at all the three levels: host land politics, homeland politics and international politics.

The diasporas affect and in turn get affected by the changes in their homeland's political as well as socio-economic conditions and accordingly, their political status as well as behaviour is conditioned. Diasporas place great importance on their homeland, because of their ethnic and cultural association with it, especially if it has been 'lost' or 'conquered' (Shain 2002). This has led ethnic nationalist movements within several diasporas, often resulting in the establishment of a sovereign homeland. But even when these are established, it is rare for the complete diaspora population to return to the homeland, and the remaining diaspora community typically retains significant emotional attachment to the homeland, and the co-ethnic population there.

Hence, the great majority of diasporas consequently continue attending to the polity which they left once. They also remain concerned with homeland politics because they possess some political experience prior to emigration itself, which leaves a legacy capable of countering the post-migration factors that produce distance from homeland political matters. Although most migrants maintain ties to their kin groups left behind, these connections in turn motivate them to maintain their interest in homeland politics.

Defining Diaspora

Since time immemorial the process of movement of people has been a significant part of our life. With changing times, the wave of globalization has brought this movement to a level where it has become hassle-free and easier. This has led the people move more freely, safely and above all more frequently across the borders. With these people moving, their identity, culture and faith and most importantly, their political ideology also crosses borders. Besides all these they bring along with them certain

memories that remain crucial in framing their identity and political status in their host land or maintaining their old identity and connections with their homeland. Hence, national identities and political experiences, both of which are imparted before migration, make diasporas political activity in their homeland as well as host land a salient feature of the immigrant experience. The political activism of the diasporas includes efforts to create new states, change existing regimes, alter nationality or voting laws in ways that would facilitate migrant participation in homeland politics, defend homelands' beleaguered by enemies or disasters, or lobby host land on homelands' behalf etc. Home country national loyalties are widely felt, with sufficient intensity to consistently impel the diasporic community into activism. Hence, they make their political activity, a concept beyond borders which remains no more confined within the territorial boundaries of their homeland. Bercovitch (2007) argues that the process has now reached the level where the diasporas have "de-territorialized" their identity and have become global actors.

Theoretical definitions of diaspora are extensive and vary widely. Earlier definitions focus more on 'forcible dispersion' and the myth of return (Safran 1990; 1999). Definitions made in the field of cultural studies particularly approach the notion of diaspora as a type of consciousness, with an emphasis on their 'hybrid identities' (Clifford 1994; Hall 1990). In recent years, the focus has shifted from the more limited definitions of who should be considered as part of diasporas, to take into account the complex processes of mobilization and the heterogenous nature of diaspora groups (Werbner 2002; Kleist 2007).

The term "diaspora" is derived from a Greek word *diaspeirein,* meaning the 'dispersal or scattering of seeds'.[2] Safran (1991) uses a rather strict definition of diaspora, defining them as expatriate minority communities:

(1) that are dispersed from an original 'centre' to atleast two 'peripheral' places;

(2) that maintain a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland;

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[2] The concept was originally used to refer to the dispersal of the Jews from their historical homeland. Today we speak of Koreans, Palestinians, Chinese, Kurds, Armenians, Mexicans, Tamils and numerous other groups as constituting the new diasporas (New Webster's Dictionary, 1993: 264).

(3) they believe they are not-and perhaps cannot be- fully accepted by their host countries;

(4) that see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when the time is right;

(5) that are committed to the maintenance or restoration of their homeland; and

(6) of which the group's consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by this continuing relation with the homeland.

In short, diasporas are those social groups that (i) settle and establish themselves in another country and (ii) are internally heterogeneous. A diaspora group can and does have the same interests, defined among other things by class, gender, generation, occupation or religion. However, they are rarely constituted by a single factor. Since the concept and nature of diasporas varies, it remains difficult for one to come up with a universal definition of diasporas. Hence, Bercovitch (2007: 19) defines diasporas as "the transnational communities created as a result of the movement of people, living in one or more host countries, organized on the basis of solidarity, shared ideas and collective identities, and showing loyalty to, and affinity with, their host country as well as their original homeland".

Overall, even though the definitions may vary, 'diaspora' as a concept tends to be build on three common criteria: dispersal; settlement in multiple locations; and, the idea of a 'homeland'[3] (Wahlbeck 2002). The final definitional element, that of action, is denoted by such terms as 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1992) or 'transnationalism'[4] (Basch et al. 1994). The basic idea is that 'diaspora' as a mental category affects to a greater or lesser extent one's behavior towards the 'homeland'. The strong ties between diasporas and their original homelands have given rise to the 'transnationalisation' of domestic politics.

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[3] Specifically, the term "homeland" refers to the place of origin.

[4] "Transnationalism also refers to a recent shift in migration patterns since the 1980s. Migration used to be a rather directed movement with a point of departure and a point of arrival. It is nowadays increasingly turning into an ongoing movement between two or more social spaces or locations. Facilitated by increased global transportation and telecommunication technologies, more and more migrants have developed strong transnational ties to more than one home country, blurring the congruence of social space and geographic space" (Barkan 2003).

Homeland Politics

Forced separation, evolution of national sentiments over time, an idea of return are some of the ideas that attribute towards making of term 'homeland'. It does not matter whether the concept of homeland is an actual homeland or just a symbolic attribution because the diasporas have a tendency to keep their attachments to their homeland. In defining contemporary diasporas, scholars have pointed out that diaspora communities do not necessarily yearn to return home or articulate their primary connections through a real or symbolic homeland (Clifford 1994). 'The homeland' lying in the symbolic centre of diaspora groups is in fact an invention, produced by the imagination of people living precisely outside of their 'homeland' (Appadurai 1990:11). Homeland is a term that is loaded with various connotations, generalizations and has been used in very different contexts. The boundaries between the host and homeland have become blurred with increased transnational linkages such as human mobility across national spaces and the de-territorialized nature of social relations and political practice (Cheran and Vimalarajah 2010). However, it can be said that diaspora communities have multiple homes (Cheran 2006: 4-8).

The involvement of diasporas in the politics of their erstwhile home has not been of any surprise. This form of political engagement is considered as a subset of the "transnational political practices" of migrant communities (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2001). Diaspora remains at the critical juncture of both homeland as well as host land politics, i.e. it can equally participate, affect and in turn get affected by changes in any of them. However, homeland politics has come to be labelled as "long-distance nationalism" (Anderson 1998) or "diaspora nationalism" which is described as the political participation of the co-nationals living outside the state borders through their host land channels as well as independently.

In order to define the term 'homeland politics' it becomes necessary to understand the term 'transnationalism' as "the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and the country of settlement" (Basch et. al. 1994: 7). It requires long-term contacts between the immigrants and their homeland through the web of cultural, social, economic and

political relationships.[5] According to Snel et al. (2006: 289), transnational activities are 'cross-border activities in the true sense of the word, such as money transfers, or visits to and political participation in the country of origin i.e. homeland'. These activities may be conceived as direct activities.[6]

Furthermore, these transnational activities of diasporas can be divided into five categories: everyday economic activities, professional economic activities, political activities, and socio-cultural activities (Snel et al. 2006). Examples of everyday economic activities include remittances to family and friends. Professional activities include investment, trade and business travel to homeland. Political activities include keeping up with political events through newspapers and television, voting, membership in political parties, and giving money to political parties. Socio-cultural activities include membership in homeland's social organizations, attendance at meetings where only members of their same community attend, and participation in identity related cultural events. Socio-cultural activities in homeland include return visits, contacts by email and telephone, membership in social organizations, giving money to community projects, and disscussing politics and war with family and relatives in homeland.

Since the diaspora has been extremely close and connected to its erstwhile homeland, transnationalization of homeland politics is bound to happen. It is due to this that the erstwhile homeland politics come to host land and diasporas become the driving force for it. However, with changing times, these transnational ties and homeland politics have received a major setback in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks and are now seen as the problematic features in host land security matters.

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[5] Transnationalism is generally confused with "internationalism". However, difference between these are that internationalism is considered to denote the phenomena of state affairs i.e. relationships between states and beyond state boundaries while, transnationalism is considered to refer to affairs of non-political actors that goes beyond the territorial boundaries when the non-state entities operate and form the relationship (Vertovec 2009).

[6] On the other hand, transnational activities in the host country include actions such as 'visiting cultural events with artists from the country of origin, participating in meetings that many compatriots attend, or mobilizing political support for parties or movements in the country of origin' (Snel et al. 2006:289). These may be described as indirect activities.

Factors Affecting Diasporic Involvement in Homeland Politics

The modern world has witnessed a higher frequency in the movement of people both voluntarily and involuntarily. Statistics suggest that approximately 175 million people i.e. 2.9 per cent of the whole world population have opted for moving out of their homeland for some or the other reason and this number is increasing day by day (Lyons 2004). This, in turn, has resulted in transfer of ideas and harmonization of cultures, making the diasporas to sustain with others who are both similar and different from themselves. Also it has strengthened the bond between them and their past as it has helped in sustaining and maintaining the links with their people residing in their homeland and their soil. Diasporas in homeland politics, do not act as singular agents, but are instead characterized by diversity in terms of identities, interests and capabilities, both on the individual and organizational levels (Bercovitch 2007:36; Brinkerhoff 2008:70-73; Faist 2007:35; Vertovec 2005:4). However, there are several factors that condition this involvement of diasporas in their homeland affairs both in positive as well as negative ways:

- *Globalization*

Globalization has tended to increase the pace at which the diaspora used to participate in their homeland as well as host land politics in earlier times. This can be illustrated in three ways:

- Globalization has smoothened the process of communication through which the dispersed population is able to act internationally without any interference from the host country. These diasporas keep in touch with their other people through various ways which include internet and publications etc. (Bercovitch 2007: 20).
- Since globalization has removed the boundations, it has led the diaspora to keep their connection to their homeland even stronger. Now the diaspora can see whatever is happening in their homeland on television and hence it makes them more interested in their homeland political and social affair (Bercovitch 2007: 20).
- As globalization has limited the confinement of the boundaries it has also let the people across borders connect through various ways. This in turn has

enabled the diasporas to raise their voice on behalf of their kin groups in their homeland if they feel that injustice is done[7] (Bercovitch 2007:20).

Hence, globalization has given immense space for these diasporas to become an important international political forces. There has been an increase in the intensity of the diasporic groups' ties with their homeland and, hence, an increase in their involvement in homeland politics. Since they play an important role in conflict, it is very natural that in direct or indirect manner they would be affecting the politics of their homeland as well. Not only this, since they remain a connecting link between the host country and homeland, they remain an integral part of regional and international politics as well. With greater access to cheaper, more efficient travel and communication, more recently established diaspora-communities have been able to strengthen the diaspora-homeland nexus. Meanwhile, the proliferation of insurgencies and intrastate conflicts around the world, have produced growing numbers of refugees and migrants, seeking a new home. This, in turn, has created a huge number of diasporas that have a more recent, stronger, and arguably more emotional connection with developments in their erstwhile homes, especially when there is social or political upheaval.

- *Pre-migratory experiences and the homeland background*

The patterns of diasporic engagements in homeland politics are generally shaped by prior experiences, which involve the institutions that transmit political ideas, values, and norms, and the practice of political participation itself. A pre-migration political participation is bound to generate continued interest in homeland matters even after migration.[8] As membership in civic and political organizations imparts political dispositions as well as skills, diasporas with a prior record of activism or membership will have a stronger homeland orientation than those lacking such an experience.

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[7] The modern world has seen many uprisings in a particular country that has been initiated by the diasporas. For example Sikh movement for an independent 'Khalistan' in India was basically an initiation from the Sikh diaspora and not from the state of Punjab in India.

[8] For example, voting history is a powerful predictor of future behaviour. While migration may disrupt the norms that support continued voting, it is anticipated that voting, as a symbolically important act undertaken in public, generates other commitments, such that persons with a pre-migration experience of voting will retain greater interest in home country politics than those without (Plutzer 2002).

Similarly, it is obvious that higher the level of pre-migration activism, the greater the level of post-migration homeland interest (Waldinger 2008).

In relation to homeland background, war-related experiences produce 'conflict-generated' diasporas (Lyons 2004). "Hatred formed during war and displacement is thought to remain strong among diasporas, whereas their homeland counterparts become tempered by the reality of war, and in peacetime, the experience of positive gains" (Collier and Hoeffler 2004: 575). Lyons (2007: 530) argues: "Diaspora groups created by conflict and sustained by traumatic memories tend to compromise less and therefore reinforce and exacerbate the protracted nature of conflicts". "The attachment of diaspora to the homeland territory is shaped by their often-violent displacement from, and myth of return to, the homeland, which provides a central narrative and set of symbols around which diaspora identity is organized. The need for such symbology leads to a transmission of an identity bound up in traumatic memories across generations through nostalgia and story-telling" (Lyons 2007: 532-533). The fading memory of homeland war is thought to render their understanding of it simplistic, and together with a lack of experience and up to date information opens the door to romanticized long-distance nationalism.

To summarize, conflict-generated diasporas are thought to be weakly integrated socially and culturally in the host land due to the development of a homeland oriented identity. Maintaining their hatreds developed during war and displacement, the structural integration empower these diasporas to pursue transnational activities which impact homeland politics in a negative manner.

- *Relationship with their host states*

While residing in their host states, diasporas undergo similar experiences, namely those of displacement and strangeness. These feelings make them all the more attached to their homeland and hence, motivate them to be aware and actively participate in homeland affairs. In relation to the host land context, alienation, marginalization and the 'misery' of modern life lead the diasporas to adopt 'ethnicity' and long-distance nationalism as an alternative source of personal empowerment and pride (Anderson 1992: 8-9; Anderson 1999; Brinkerhoff 2008; Fuglerud 1999; Zunzer 2004: 9). The process of integration in the host land is thus central to explanations of diaspora's attitudes and activities in their homeland affairs.

The host land context also provides opportunity and access to resources important to determining diasporas' impact on homeland affairs (Anderson 1992: 8-9; Collier 2000: 14). This is a function of three things:

- absence of homeland government control,

- acquiescence of host land government authority, and

- the wealth and modernity of host land society.

Diasporas remain under the protective shield of their host land where they are provided with freedom of speech and expression that is generally absent in their homeland and has led them to migrate. They feel secure as the host land is responsible for their shelter and hence, they don't have to fear the state.

On the one hand, , the political parties in the host states give the diasporas numerous options for civic engagements,[9] by making policies for them, which eventually boosts the morale of the diaspora for homeland political involvement (Zolberg 1999). As the diasporas learn new meanings and forms of representation in their host societies, they simultaneously contribute to and participate in hegemonic constructions by "bringing them back home."

On the other hand, the host state gives the newcomers access to the wealth thereby providing the migrant community with a material base that it can use to exercise leverage back home. The diaspora groups take advantage of these freedoms and lobby the host government as well as the international community to implement desired foreign policies towards the homeland. They are able to maintain resources and have access to some powerful factors[10] that can influence their homeland politics. Their ability to do so is affected by their social or political status, the views of their host-society and the homeland leadership, and the political and social character of their kin-state (Bercovitch 2007). To summarize, we can say that diasporas with weak host

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[9] This is done by establishing special diaspora ministries to manage relations with diasporas, and giving similar mandates to existing foreign affairs ministries and departments. These new structures create formal contacts with diaspora organizations and also create opportunities for diaspora influence on the individual level. In many countries legislative seats are reserved to represent diaspora voting preferences (Spiro 2006: 214).

[10] These factors are access to international media and organizations and also their powerful or significant host-government. All these contribute in making the diaspora an actor at the global stage and impact the events going on in their host land as well as homeland.

land social and cultural intergration[11] and high structural integration[12] will have an increased level of involvement in homeland politics.

- ***Growing trends of 'Securitization' and proscription of diasporic activities***

A new paradigm of power and security has emerged since the 9/11 terror attacks in the United States. The emergence of 'Homeland Security' as major ideology and practice has led to serious consequences for diasporic involvements in their homeland affairs. In a security-dominated paradigm, the diaspora communities are often viewed as breeding grounds for terrorism and thus, their involvement in their homeland political affairs may be seen with an eye of suspicion which, in turn, may impact their involvement in their homeland affairs. The notion that diaspora communities automatically represent security threats[13] and therefore are appropriate targets for law enforcements attention seems to be predominant (Cheran 2003).

Thus, we can say that the new linkages between the diasporas and terrorism have actually reduced the efficacy of the diasporas to participate in their homeland politics to a great extent.

- ***Long-distance politics and governance of the homeland***

The long-distance politics in homeland, whose state uses embassies and high commissions in the host countries, and monitors and gathers intelligence about its diaspora population and their activities and thereby, essentially co-shape the diasporic involvement in their homeland affairs. There are possibilities that these institutions may not support their people in host countries and may trouble them, hence, diapsoric involvement in its homeland politics depends upon these institutions' attitude towards them.[14] The effects of homeland politics on diasporas economically, socially or in

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[11] "Social and cultural integration refers to the inclusion by diasporas of natives in their social networks, and the adoption by diasporas of hostland norms and values" (Snel et al. 2006:287).

[12] Structural integration refers to the participation of diasporas in the central institutions of the state, including education, employment and social benefits.

[13] Refugees and non-citizens are particularly vulnerable in the terrorism discourse. The fear that newcomers may hold sympathies for rebles fighting against a state that oppressed them also prevails in the host states and hence the law enforcement is a natural way to curb the diasporic activites that link them to their homeland.

[14] For instance, in case of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, since they have been identified by their homeland as "enemies", the Sri Lankan High Commission has been making efforts to curb any activity that

terms of their self-image ensure their high stakes for in continuation of their involvement in homeland politics (Baechler 2002).

Thus, we can see that the diasporas are both motivated as well as hindered to get involved in their homeland politics by a number of factors. How do they respond to these factors, however, remains to be the crucial thing as it depends on what interests diasporas have and to what extent can they be fulfilled by their actions.

Objectives of Diasporas to get involved in their Homeland Politics

Diaspora communities have certain objectives, general as well as specific, to respond to their homeland politics. They include peaceful management of a deadly conflict that ensures international and regional progress and stability, economic and political interest of the diaspora community itself, maintaining a particular reputation of an organization or individual, etc. In all cases, the diaspora community receives some benefit from their assumption of the role, either through the process (e.g., improved status) or in the outcomes (e.g., advancement of security interests). A few objectives of a diaspora community to participate in their homeland politics can be the following:

- Diasporas often attempt to involve in homeland politics in order to prevent rival powers from intervening and expanding their influence. They will try to intervene in politics in order to extend and increase their own influence.

- Diasporas offer their facilitating services in order to earn the gratitude of their homeland government. For instance, if they have some fears regarding the emergence of a conflict[15] that can affect their ethnic groups, successful mediation by the diaspora may save both the government as well as the conflicting parties from the unnecessary expenditure due to the conflict. This

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questions the Sri Lankan state. In this effort it has been noted to provide false informations to the hostland authorities about the illegal activities of its diaspora. As a result, the recently held referendum process in the United Kingdom and Canada witnessed absence of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora as they feared negative repercussions for their families and friends (Baechler 2002).

[15] A deep-rooted conflict challenges their homeland's progress and peace and in turn the progress of their kin groups is also hindered. In such a situation, diaspora may offer its facilitating services to initiate dialogue between two parties to prevent aggravation.

might in turn, earn them the faith of both the warring parties and provide them with the right of having a say in the policy formulations.

- Diasporas may also intervene to maintain its status and reputation as a peace-loving and progressive community, by facilitating dialogue between its homeland and host country in various diplomatic and economic areas.

How does the Diaspora respond to Homeland Politics?

There are several ways in which diaspora affects or responds to homeland politics. It may participate in policy formulation, elections, conflict resolution process and post-conflict reconstruction. The impact of these responses can lead either towards betterment of the situations in homeland or emergence of friction between the diaspora community and the government of the homeland as the latter may feel the former encroaching their sovereignty.

The nature of the diasporic intervention is the result of the respective power relations within diaspora and between diaspora, home country and the host country. Diaspora intervenes in homeland politics if it is organised and enjoys material and political power. Diaspora without these does not intervene in politics at all, be it their homeland politics or the global politics. Also, to what extent their interests are getting fulfilled remains to be their main concern while intervening in homeland (Bercovitch 2007: 19).

The ability of the diaspora community in affecting their homeland politics can be measured on two basic parameters:

- what status do they hold in the international community, and
- How far they can assert themselves vis-a-vis their homeland.

Diaspora, being aware of the critical situations in the homeland and realizing the realities of the policies made and their implementation stands to be the most crucial factor that can help in improving things. The diasporas realize the conditions that may lead their homeland to face a war. Hence, they can suggest the government of their homeland to make such policies that seeks to remove the root cause of the conflict. It can make the homeland government as well as the international community aware of

the real conditions if the false portrayal is done and in turn, real efforts may be taken towards a radical rebuilding and more peaceful structure.[16]

Another influence of diaspora in its homeland can be seen in terms of political and economic restructuring and this is an area where diasporas can be of enormous help. They can help in political restructuring of their homeland by providing conditions that can develop a literate and strong civil society[17] (Orjuela 2006: 6). Furthermore, there might be situations when the need for an international organizations' help and aid is felt, and it is during this time that diaspora can link itself with that organization and pressurize its homeland government to follow the norms that are prescribed by them in order to maintain peace and progress in the country (Wayland 2004: 425-426). They can also ask their homeland government to provide their kin groups with democratic institutions and ensure them of a free and fair media. They can make their kin groups aware of the international norms that define and limits democracy and also their basic human rights so that a check is maintained if those rights are violated at any point of time (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2006: 13; Cheran 2003: 17).

Diasporas can also challenge the autocratic regimes. They can also challenge the corrupt government and let their own people grow in a free and fair environment. They can arrange workshops that may encourage people and government officials to come forward and discuss issues and policies that are supposed to be laid (Kent 2005: 13).

According to De Haas (2006), "Diaspora potentially involves in development policies in many different ways. They:

(1) actively involve in policy formulation;

(2) support capacity-building and network formation among diaspora organizations so as to enhance their abilities to undertake development initiatives;

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[16] This was seen in the case of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora when they started blaming their homeland government for the human rights abuse against their ethnic kin groups just after the war with LTTE has ended. They alleged the Sri Lankan government of still targeting the Tamils in the north even though the war was over.

[17] For example, the members of the Sierra Leone diaspora living in the United Kingdom established the Sierra Leone War Trust for Children (SLWT), which remains committed towards improving the welfare of the war-affected children through the rehabilitation of the villages in the Bombali province (Bercovitch 2007).

(3) Directly sustain development initiatives of diaspora by providing financial and/or organisational support;

(4) Involve diaspora organisations as 'experts' or 'consultants' in development projects designed by development agencies, and,

(5) Involve diaspora organisations in programmes of permanent or temporary return."

Regarding economic restructuring aspect of the diasporic participation in homeland, diasporas remain to be the most important source of income for their homeland and hence, definitely they also become the most effective one to have a say in the political matters as well. Those residing in rich countries can provide the aid for various constructive causes such as literacy and health (Wayland 2004: 417; Migration Policy Institue 2004: 14-23). Diasporas can also help their homeland by getting those projects from their host governments. Foreign companies making their business in a particular offshore location prefer to consult the residents of that area and in this context diasporas can play a vital role by mediating between their homeland and the foreign investors. These investments are proved to be more important than those of the conflict-prevention and escalation phase as they aim at achieving a long-term sustainability and help in ensuring peace in the homeland (Orjuela 2006; Mohamoud 2005; Migration Policy Institute 2004: 23-25). Furthermore, diasporas who wish to return to their homeland can also become major source of expertise and provide their homeland with a more efficient and planned strategy for economic growth. They can create awareness about the basic utility approach that they may have learnt during their stay in their host land (Cheran 2003).

Diasporas can be of immense importance when it comes to the fact of resettling the displaced people. As this remains to be the most challenging part of this phase for the homeland government, participation of diasporas becomes crucial as they can provide with basic health care facilities and residence to people. Also they can aid their homeland governments in their resettlement work (Cochrane 2007: 19; Orjuela 2006: 6). Diasporic participation can also be seen in terms of socio-psychological rehabilitation of the victims of the conflict or a natural disaster. They can create different community centres to organize various social gatherings and celebrations to end the trauma of victims (Migration Policy Institute 2004: 28-34).

An important aspect of diasporas' work and effectiveness in the socio-cultural arena concerns the promotion of justice, truth and reconciliation in the post-conflict phase. One way for parties in the conflict to come to terms with a violent past is to honour the memory of the victims by talking about them openly and honestly. This means searching for the truth, not with a view to punishing anyone, but with a view to gaining a better understanding (Bercovitch 2007: 35; Rigby 2001). Reconciliation is the means to heal people and rebuild the webs of relationships, which have been broken down during the conflict. And when it comes to reconciliation, people in the homeland are more accepting and willing to listen to advice from members of the diaspora rather than any other foreigners. Members of the diaspora can offer expertise, knowledge and understanding of cultural norms, how to amalgamate different norms, and a deeper appreciation of the situation in their homeland (Cochrane 2007: 19). Diasporic literature, publications and other cultural productions can contribute to the process of healing by countering negative images. An added feature of the expatriate involvement is that it may lead to repatriation, as diaspora members lay the groundwork for the kinds of institutions they would like to participate in as they fulfil dreams of returning to their homeland (Smith and Stares 2007: 3-6).

Conclusion

Diaspora remains connected to the homeland by its involvement in homeland affairs. However, the relationship between the diasporas and their homeland doesn't seem to be that simple. It is a complex, and depends on various socio-cultural, political and economic norms. This remains to be the reason why diasporas have gained so much of importance in the wake of globalization. The answer lies in the fact that they keep affecting the politico-social norms both in their homeland as well as host land, and also affect the relationship between their host land and their homeland. Hence, they remain an inevitably important factor in global politics. The various aspects of their effects can be measured along the lines of conflict and peace situations both in their homeland as well as host land.

Connecting to the homeland is a pervasive feature of the diasporic experience, However, not all diasporic communities maintain these ties; among those who stay

connected, levels of intensity and regularity seem to vary greatly. While homeland ties of varying sorts (cultural, economic, political, and social) persist, they compete with new allegiances that bind the diasporas to their host lands, which, in turn, may weaken the homeland connection. While some are highly involved, others may rarely or never engage in transnational action. Thus 'not all diasporas are transnational communities, but transnational communities arise within diasporas' (Vertovec 2005: 4).

To conclude we can say that diasporas and their participation in their homeland politics is something that cannot be judged at one instance. It has to be judged across several criteria and levels. Their involvement in homeland politics may be of a political, military, economic, social or cultural nature (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Snel et al. 2006). It includes either direct[18] or indirect action[19] and occurs either at the individual or organizational level (Al-Ali et al. 2001a: 581). Direct activities have an immediate impact in the homeland, while indirect activities influence the homeland via host land channels. The individual level refers to personal-to-person contacts and individual actions linking diaspora and homeland, while the organizational level refers interactions among formal associations, organizations or political parties. Thus, it is sure that it becomes inevitable for a state to ignore these groups and do not entertain them in their political affairs. They can be highly co-operative and dangerous at the same time. Hence, there definitely remains a need for the international community to recognise their presence and give them appropriate conditions in which they are free to assert themselves and have the power of decision-making for themselves as well as their brothers and sisters staying in their homeland.

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[18] In terms of direct impact, through homeland constitutional reforms and new legislation there is an increasing trend in dual citizenship and political representation for diasporas, allowing them an unprecedented influence in political affairs (Guarnizo et al. 2003:1214; Vertovec 2005: 4-5).

[19] Beyond voting, diasporans may have indirect influence in homeland elections by impacting homeland contacts. Voters in the home state often depend on remittances from their relatives abroad, and this economic influence spills over into ideological influence (Itzigsohn et al. 1999: 328-9; Lyons 2004: 534-537).

CHAPTER III

The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora: A Profile

Introduction

Diaspora as a concept is complex. A useful and necessarily wide definition of diaspora is "that segment of people living outside the homeland" (Tololyan 1996: 8). By conceptualizing diaspora in this way one can make divergent interpretations of what homeland is. Diasporas are the result of migration from a home country to a new one, and may be motivated by a host of factors including economic or political needs. This is visible within the Sri Lankan diaspora which includes Tamil and Sinhalese ethnicities. In case of Sri Lankan Tamils, their movement has taken since the time Sri Lanka was colonized by the European powers. Since then the external connections of Sri Lanka with the world have been existing but it got a new form and strength only after it got freedom from Britain in 1948. The country has witnessed the migratory trends among their people for one reason or the other since its independence.

The main origin of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora can be traced to the North-Eastern part of the Sri Lankan territory. Earlier it was sought to be a choice, in search of better life and income which was basically the choice of the elite class of Sri Lanka. They opted for a sort of temporary emigration which was basically aimed at higher and better education and employment. Britain and North America were the most preferred locations to settle. However, later the trends got changed and Middle-East also became one of their preferred choices as this location gave other sections of the Sri Lankan society a chance for betterment in form of providing job opportunities at all levels. The employment opportunities in this region were attractive and well suited to the kind of studies the Sri Lankan Tamils had during the British rule in their country. Although the social stratification of the Sri Lankan mass remains to be on the ground of ethnic, linguistic and religious diversification, the Sri Lankan Tamils have managed to sustain their distinct identity that includes the population of just two millions, Tamil speaking and predominantly Hindu people. A point worth noting is that this section stands differentiated from the "Tamils" who belong to the central hill region of Sri Lanka, known as Indian origin Tamils.

Migration Pattern

Prior to the independence of Sri Lanka two waves of migration of Sri Lankan Tamils have been identified: the first is the pre-colonial migration and the second one is the post-colonial migration.

- *Pre-colonial Migration*

The dispersion of the Sri Lankan Tamils had been taking long before the European incursions into the island. The economic developments in the state of Malaya and Burma, in 1820s were the main attraction for the highly ambitious Tamils of Sri Lanka. In the late 1890s the number of independent migrants increased in these states. These migrants were mainly from the labour class who went there as coffee and rubber planters. Mostly these migrants consisted of the male population because there were fewer opportunities for the female employment at that time. Moreover, independent migration was much easier to handle than the communal migration (Guilmoto 1993: 111-120).

- *Migration during colonial period*

After the colonial powers came to the island, they started exporting labours to their home countries in order to fill the need for cheap labour that was felt there due to the wave of capitalism. Furthermore, the prosperity of the western and eastern states led these poor people of Sri Lanka all the more motivated to go abroad in search of a better earning for their lives. The state of Malaya witnessed influx of around 3,50,000 people out of which 80 per cent remained to be the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Migration to Burma has been a noted phenomenon of the Sri Lankan Tamil migration. The migration began immediately after the occupation of Rangoon by the Anglo-Indian forces and the further developments there attracted people from the poorer Tamil region of Sri Lanka. Those migrated during this phase were mainly women as they got the opportunity to get employment in various sectors of the economy in Burma (Sinappah 1994: 29).

- *Post-colonial migration*

Independent Sri Lanka had witnessed events[1] that ultimately led to widening the rift between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The migratory pattern of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the post-independent era can be divided in to three phases, which were marked by different circumstances in Sri Lanka that provoked the Tamils to migrate. Phase I occurred in the post-independence era of 1950-1980; phase II took place following the 1983 pogroms; and phase III resulted due to the commencement of President Kumaratunga's "war for peace" campaign from 1995 to 2011 (Suntha 2011).[2]

- *Phase I: 1950-1980*

The first three decades after independence of Sri Lanka are the years that had introduced the Sri Lankan Tamils to 'discrimination'. Despite the formation of the constitution which under its article 29(2) prohibited legislation that discriminated against any individual on the basis of religion or community (de Silva 1997: 248f., 260), the discrimination against the Tamils kept occurring. The 1956 Official Language Act declared Sinhalese as the official language, under which all the business, education and all the government activities were to be conducted in Sinhalese. This prevented the Tamils from undertaking or even continuing with their employment (Weerakoon 1991: 1-8). Due to this, the educated Tamil population were forced to leave their island in search of economic opportunities.

The standardization policy aggravated the grievances of the Tamils by making them devoid to take up the higher education in the country. All these ideas started making the Tamil diaspora realize that they were right to judge their government earlier. The feeling of being a 'victim diaspora' further gained strength and resulted in another

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[1] British politics made the Tamils the privileged community which was very much unacceptable to the Sinhalese. Hence, they tried to keep the benefits, of the policies laid by the Sinhala-dominated government, limited to their own community and maintained that they remained mostly anti-Tamil in nature. This in turn gave Tamils a feeling of being discriminated. Hence, the rift got more widened as the fact remained that the Sinhalese were in majority and they continued to practice all policies that targeted the Tamils in some way or the other (de Silva 1997).

[2] *"While these phases are often seen as distinct, a number of overlapping factors can be found. As is the nature of history, there are no clean divisions from one era to another; aspects of the previous era may remain through several generations. For example, discrimination over access to further education is often cited as a central theme to the migration of the Sri Lankan Tamils in phase I and II, but this may not feature for those joining the diaspora in phase III"* (Suntha 2011: 13).

section of diasporas wanting to get education wherever they could afford to. This led to a serious 'brain drain' within the Sri Lankan society (Suntha 2011: 14-15).

Members of this phase of migration are the ones who always had the hope of returning back to their homeland when the Tamils were given equal status.

- *Phase II: 1983-1995*

The second phase of migration coincided with the emergence of Tamil militant groups. Essentially these actors consisted of youth angered by the perceived failure of their political leadership to gain more rights for Tamils and deliver on the election manifesto of the 1977 Vaddukodai Resolution[3] (Wilson 2000: 110). The increasing volume of displacements was further borne out of prevailing increasing tensions and inter-communal violence, such as the burning of Jaffna Library in 1981 (Wilson 2000: 160f.) and the riots of 1983 (Kumar 2006: 10).

Apart from all this there were several incidents of anti-Tamil violence, in the capital Colombo that resulted in the deaths of an estimated 3000 Tamil civilians, led to growing fears among the Tamils that their physical security could not be guaranteed in Sri Lanka. The events of 1983 marked the watershed in the island's descent into a separatist civil war and in its first two decades, this war claimed atleast 60,000 lives directly, and resulted in mass destruction in north-east and displacement of the Tamils usually residing there (Sriskandarajah 2004: 494).

The events of 1983 had a great role in making the Tamil diaspora such big community that became inevitable for the world to keep ignoring them anymore. The anti-Tamils violence made the Tamils feel scared to stay in the country and motivated more to settle abroad. Moreover, the social elite class that used to go to West for temporary engagements like education and employment started getting reluctant to move back to their homeland as they perceived the environment prevailing there hostile to them. As a result, across Europe and North America, thousands of Tamil students and guest workers lodged asylum claims. Also the emigration flows of the professional and middle-class Tamils started gaining strength. The events of 1983 marked the start of

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[3] The Vaddukodai Resolution was adopted at the first National Convention of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) on 14 May 1976 under the presidency of S. J. V. Chelavanayakam. The TULF's participation in the 1977 general elections was anchored in this Resolution. In this Resolution, the TULF declared its intent of forming a sovereign State of Tamil Eelam.

the widespread conflict-related flows of Tamils seeking asylum overseas and later through family reunion programmes.[4]

According to Suntha (2011: 15), "this phase of migration comprised of mainly younger men and women, many of whom were students or activists for the main Tamil political parties. Within this group, particularly among the activists, many had suffered ill-treatment and torture at the hands of the Sri Lankan police; some migrants at this time included survivors of the Welikada Prison Massacre of 1983[5] (Wilson 2000: 127)." This generation of migrants had an ideology that was totally different from the earlier migrants of phase I. Their non-violent approach was unable to convince these newer diasporas and hence, there was a wave of support to the Tamil militancy with an idea of answering the Sinhalese in their own way.

For this new and angry generation of intellectuals, academics, fishermen and farmers, organizations like the LTTE presented an effective and disciplined organization (Singh 2006: 22). Between the 1980 and 1995, the mindset of these phase II diasporas remained to be conditioned by the LTTE. These diasporas considered LTTE as a natural and justified outcome of the violent opposition of the Tamil diasporas' 'peaceful struggle' for the Tamil rights. And their militant role was considered as a consequence of the failure of the TULF to implement the Vaddukodai Resolution fully (Suntha 2011: 16).

- *Phase III: 1995-2010*

The previous phases of the migration of the Sri Lanakn Tamils were essentially the product of the discrimination done against them by their state. However, phase III came along with an increased militarisation by both the Tamils as well as the

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[4] The highest number of people had applied for asylum in Europe during the 1980s. This was the period when civil war had begun to take its shape and got worse as the time passed. The report of UNHCR claims that the number of asylum seekers during this phase was around 256,307. (UNHCR, 2001, Tables V.4 and V.13). During the 1990s, the Sri Lankan Tamils became the top most people applying for asylum in Canada where their number was around 34,186 (UNHCR, Table V.21), of which a major chunk was granted some form of residential status in their host country. Though the absolute number of Sri Lankan Tamils settling overseas may not be large when compared to other recent flows of people, the proportion of the Tamil population affected remains significant.

[5]The Welikada prison massacre took place during the 1983 Black July pogrom against Sri LankaTamil minority in Colombo. Fifty-three prisoners were killed inside a high-security prison. The incident occurred in two different series of actions: the first on 25 July 1983 when 35 Tamil prisoners were attacked and killed by Sinhalese inmates. The second massacre was two days later when Sinhalese inmates killed another 18 Tamil detainees and three prison deputies.

government, which eventually resulted in a huge bloodshed and made the Sri Lankan Tamils, leave their homeland. This phase was marked by third and fourth Eelam wars, which were more intense than the two Eelam wars in terms of brutality and militarisation. Hence, the civilian experiences of the third Eelam war differed vastly from those during previous phases of conflicts, particularly before the Indian Peacekeeping Forces' operations since 1987 (de Silva 2005: 705f).

The most recent influx of these migrants have been basically due to the fourth Eelam war in mid-2006 that had paralyzed the whole north-eastern part of Sri Lanka till the mid of 2009. Majority of these migrants wanted to avoid the ugly consequences of the ethnic war. Hence, they chose to migrate to places that they considered to be safe for them. And like many modern diasporas, the Sri Lankan Tamil community has developed multi-dimensional linkages that strengthen the nexus between the diaspora and erstwhile homeland, as well as between different diaspora settlements across the world. "The settlement led to founding of numerous community groups that had become a key source of funds for aiding the development of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka, while also being linked to militant groups as fund-raisers" (International Crisis Group Report 2010). Advocacy groups have also emerged which seek to alleviate the plight of the Tamils by bringing it to the attention of their host governments. Hence, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been instrumental in shaping the Sri Lankan political landscape, particularly through its support and sponsorship for the Tamil nationalist project.

People who migrated during this phase were generally those in the age of their late thirties and forties and along with them their family and children also migrated. These children are now the teenagers and youth among the Tamil diaspora. Hence, chunk of migrants consisted of both type of people who got their education in Sri Lanka as well as who got their education in their host land. One group faced the general discrimination while the other has only the memories of the discriminatory practices faced by their parents and elders.

Thus, we can see that the formation of diasporas depends on various factors that include economic reasons as well as state persecution. Whereas economic reasons tend to be a matter of choice, the state persecution led towards the formation of 'victim diaspora' who now are supposed to pay more attention towards making

change in their homeland than the ones who are economically motivated. Victim diasporas were basically the result of "... mass displacements that were occasioned by events wholly outside the individual's control- wars "ethnic cleansing", natural disasters, pogroms" (Cohen 1997, 180). "The term 'victim diaspora' represents the culmination of a series of deleterious episodes that resulted in forced external relocation" (Suntha 2011: 9). As a victim diaspora the Sri Lankan Tamils are no different and their involvement in their homeland politics is neither surprising nor unique.

Settlement Patterns and Socio-Economic profile of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora

Currently the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora consists of more than 700,000 people settled in North America, Europe, India, Canada and Australia. Most of them have migrated since the mid-1980s, primarily as a direct or indirect result of the civil war in Sri Lanka. India has been the foremost destination for the Tamils who fled Sri Lanka during this period. Their number remains to be around 170,000 of which approximately 65,000 have been interning in camps and rest have integrated into Tamil Nadu and do not intend to return to Sri Lanka (Krishna 2000: 91). India does not only serve as the host country but also as the transit route to the West for these migrants. The Lankan Tamil diaspora residing in India accuse India of supporting the Sri Lankan government and ignoring the atrocities committed by the Sinhalese state to their ethnic kin. They expect India's greater support and say in the matter of providing autonomy to the Tamil nationalists. This section prefers to call the LTTE as 'part of the problem' and not 'the problem' (Cheran 2001: 4; Bose 1994: 84). Hence, according to these migrants, any solution, be it federal or autonomous, seems to be acceptable so far it ensures them safe life and livelihood in their homeland.

Canada, the second biggest hub of the Lankan Tamils, has witnessed the growth in the number of Lankan Tamils from 2,000 in 1983 to 200,000 by 2000, out of whom 90 per cent of them stay in Toronto (Human Rights Watch Report 2006). With the increase in numbers and the change from refugee claimants to citizenship or permanent resident status, the Lankan Tamils have become influential factors in their host countries' politics as well. "The Toronto constituency consists of approximately

6,000 eligible Lankan Tamil voters. Year 2003 marked the importance of the Lankan Tamils when they elected 86 Liberal party delegates in Ontario from a total of 1,434 delegates" (Cheran 2003: 10). If we talk about their participation in their homeland affairs, there remains a trend in Toronto to help and support the villages and schools back in the north-eastern part of Sri Lanka. When the TULF (*Tamil United Liberation Front*) won the 1977 elections, it paved the way for formation of first Tamil political group in Canada which was known as TESOC (*Tamil Eelam Society of Canada*). It gathered information about the situation in Sri Lanka and asserting their identity in the international arena. Over the time it came closer to LTTE as there had been remarkable support for the separatist ideology as noted by G. B. Kotakadeniya, a police spokesman in Colombo, "Canada has been a hotbed of the Tigers. That is where the biggest contribution came from" (Wayland 2004: 422). However, there remain contestations over this statement as the Sri Lankan Tamils in Canada have been pro-LTTE but in the wake of 9/11 attacks this support has been reduced to the minimum as the LTTE was proscribed as a terroristic organization by Canada (Vimalarajah and Cheran 2010: 1-28)

Norway has become the other major hub for the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora during the 1990s when India had changed its attitude towards LTTE after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. The cultural centre of gravity also shifted away from India and at this point of time the members of the diaspora already settled in Norway felt the responsibility to protect the political and cultural future of their brethren. These migrants ended up settling in many parts of Norway making fishing a way to earn their livelihood. A section within this diaspora has been of the view that it is through migration that they can preserve their culture and be 'Tamils' in a non-Tamil environment while the rest of them see migration as a form of exile that compels them to stay connected to their homeland and be there to bring about change in there. These migrants remain actively involved in the diasporic political organizations but not all of them supportive of LTTE.

The estimated figures of the **United Kingdom's** Tamil diaspora range from 100,000 to 200,000 alone.[6] This group was marked by class structure; those who belonged to upper class Tamils came here to pursue higher education as they were deprived of

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[6] PILPG 2009. *Engaging Diaspora Communities in Peace Processes,* available at www.diaspora-centre.org/DOCS/PILPG_Engaging_Dia.pdf (last accessed 15 Jan 2012).

admission to the higher education system on the basis of language in Sri Lanka. Also with the increased discrimination in employment in Sri Lanka, majority of them decided to stay back post their higher education. It was only after 1983 riots that people fled to the UK as refugees. The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the UK continues to have well developed social, cultural and economic networks that function as powerful 'social capital' in sustaining Tamil communities both in UK and Sri Lanka. They work as doctors and consultants and also possess other white-collar jobs in UK. Their initiatives of Refugee Council (RC) and the Tamil Relief Centre (TRC) support Tamil immigrants. Apart from these welfare organizations there are religious based organizations which again remain active. They provide space for exchange of information and for transferring resources for the development of schools and universities in the Northeast of Sri Lanka. Various alumni organizations provide primary healthcare services besides the IT training facilities. There also are professional organizations such as TEEDOR-UK (*Tamil Eelam Economic Development Organization*) which closely co-operate with TRO (Tamil Rehabilitation Organization) and contribute knowledge and finance to infrastructural development in the North and the East. They have been providing substantial resources for humanitarian relief to thousands of families displaced from the war-torn areas in Sri Lanka (Vimalrajah and Cheran 2010: 1-28).

Germany has given shelter to approximately 50,000 Sri Lankan Tamils, out of which 50 per cent of them stay in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (Encyclopædia Britannica 2008). These migrants are members of the first generation of migrants who remain attached to the struggle for an independent Tamil state in Sri Lanka. Over the years they have formed various cultural associations that include Tamil language teaching seminars, Sports clubs and Hindu temples established in Berlin and other parts of West Germany. The political ideology of this particular group remains close to that of LTTE which has been a major representative of the Tamil cause by establishing a far-reaching network of organizations, which mostly aim at collecting revenue for humanitarian purposes. During the 1980s and the 1990s there existed other Tamil political groups such as PLOTE (*People's Organization of Tamil Eelam*); TELO (*Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization*); and EPRLF (*Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front*), which have been equally active. But the most

important organization is WTM (*World Tamil Movement*) which used to distribute political publications in line with the official positions of the LTTE (Zunzer 2004).

Switzerland houses over 30,000 Sri Lankan Tamils. Out of these approximately 95 per cent have got permanent resident status which makes them eligible to affect both the homeland as well as host country's politics. The large immigration of the Lankan Tamils to Switzerland was not only based on push-factors but also to a certain extent on pull-factors, as the Swiss economy for instance was in need of labour in the 1980s. Since 1980s they have been consistently working in the areas of hotel management and restaurant services (McDowell 1996: 5-6; Encyclopædia Britannica 2008). Prior to 2001 the LTTE along with its wings had been influencing the Tamil people in Switzerland. "They run their own business, the so called People's Shops, and their own restaurants, they sell telephone cards, organize dance competitions, cricket and football matches and less frequently, political demonstrations. They have been running Hindu temples by themselves or have a presence on the board of directors" (Zunzer 2004: 17). Till 2000 the Lankan Tamils were totally convinced by the ideology of LTTE as it was active in organizations such as women's organizations, sports clubs, local Tamil media etc. After the defeat of LTTE they have been consistently working on organising demonstrations against the Sri Lankan state and government and also have been actively propagating the idea of Eelam state.

Among the first Sri Lankan immigrants to **Australia** were those recruited to work on the cane plantations of northern Queensland in the late 19th century. There are also reports of Sri Lankan workers in the gold-mining regions of New South Wales and the pearling industry in Broome, Western Australia. Estimates of numbers during this time range from 500 to 1,000 persons. Between 1961 and 1971, the Sri Lanka-born population rose from 3,433 to 9,091 and again to 22,516 by the time of the 1986 Census. During 1986 - 1996, the Sri Lanka-born community in Australia was doubled in size (Gamage 1996: 37-38). The upsurge of migration from Sri Lanka resulted from the continuing conflict between Tamil separatists and the Sri Lankan government. Since 1991, there has also seen significant migration from Sri Lanka under the family migration, onshore protection, and skilled migration categories. "According to the population data, Victoria had the largest number of Sri Lankan Tamils (26,670), followed by New South Wales (16,910), Queensland (3,990) and Western Australia (2,970). In 2001, of the total Sri Lanka-born people aged 15 years and over,

57.1 per cent held some form of educational or occupational qualification compared with 46.2 per cent for all Australians. Among the Sri Lanka born, 37.2 per cent had higher qualifications and 10.3 per cent had certificate level qualifications. Of the Sri Lanka-born with no qualifications, 24.9 per cent were still attending an educational institution. Among Sri Lanka-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 67.5 per cent and the unemployment rate was 7.9 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 63.0 and 7.4 per cent respectively. Of the 30,500 Sri Lanka-born who were employed, 51.7 per cent were employed in a skilled occupation, 30.8 per cent in semi-skilled and 17.4 per cent in unskilled. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 52.6, 28.9 and 18.6 per cent respectively" ((Encyclopædia Britannica 2008).

Over 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils are living in **France.** In the last 10 years, "Little Jaffna", located at the last stretch of the winding street of Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis in the 10th arrondissement, between metros Gare de Nord and La Chapelle, has sprung to life and begun to truly flourish (Encyclopædia Britannica 2008). The vast majority of Parisian Tamils fled Sri Lanka as refugees in the 1980s, escaping the violent civil conflict. The French Prefecture was initially quite reluctant about granting asylum to Tamils. In 1987, the Office for the Protection of Refugees (OFPRA) granted asylum for many. This liberal period eventually ended off in the 1990s as a result of new European measures designed against migrants. Today, there are about 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils living in France, of which the greatest number live in Paris. Little Jaffna is also famous for the annual chariot procession held during Ganesha Chathurthi. Both the area and event have become popular tourist attractions.

Other European countries like **Netherlands** have more than 20,000 Tamils, the majority of whom are refugees from Sri Lanka. Sweden has a Tamil population of about 2,000 which is of recent origin. Denmark has over 7,000 Tamils, the majority being refugees. There are two well-patronized Hindu temples – one for Vinayagar and another for Abhirami – and the Tamil population has got well adapted to the Danish environment (Encyclopædia Britannica 2008).

There have been various sub-categories within the whole set of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora which are based along the lines of caste, class, gender, village or town of origin, education and religion. Apart from these there remains some more criteria

which may make one section of the diaspora feel different from the other. These criteria are related to the reasons for migration, the process of migration, the timings and the duration of migration, and last but not the least the level up to which the diaspora has been accepted into the host society or in other words, the level of integration of the diaspora in the host country. Despite the presence of all these differences, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been able to remain as an integrated group and their unity remains an ideal to the rest of the world.

The conditions that have contributed towards the solidarity of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora are:

- *Creation of Diasporic Centres:*
  Since a large number of Sri Lankan Tamils came as asylum-seekers, they basically tended to go to those places where they felt that their "own people" were already present. Hence places such as London, Switzerland, Toronto were the ones which came first on their mind. This has created a sort of "Diasporic centres" within the West. These centres have been the key nodal points in the material and discursive flows of the Tamil diaspora life (Sriskandarajah 2004: 495).

- *Increased Social-Networking:*
  The social networking within these asylum seekers have grown a lot with the time and this deepened interaction has minimized the gap between those arrived earlier and independently and those who came once the conflict had started. With the changing times the earlier settlers have been working as the "support systems" as they help the newcomers to find employment and accommodation and establish themselves. Hence the differences became less between the Sri Lankan Tamils who took shelter abroad at different times (Sriskandarajah 2004: 495).

- *Emergence of associations and organizations:*
  Due to large influx of these asylum-seekers, many associations and organizations were framed to cater to Tamil needs, such as Tamil-language schools, music, dance academies, students and youth groups and also various

migrants and refugee lobby groups. These associations in turn reinforced linkages within the growing community (Sriskandarajah 2004: 495).

- *Distance from other groups:*

Despite the presence of various other ethnic groups from Sri Lanka, Tamil diaspora has maintained distance from the Sinhalese. For them, being committed to Tamil nationalism is the highest priority rather than being Sri Lankan (Sriskandarajah 2004: 495).

"Together these factors have served to bolster the linkages within the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora so deep that, despite being numerically small and geographically dispersed, it has emerged as a vocal and influential force in shaping the political developments in their homeland as well as host-land" (Sriskandarajah 2004: 496).

Political Status of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora

A diaspora Tamil political identity is primarily structured around the events in their homeland:

- (a) Large-scale anti-Tamil violence in 1983,
- (b) Indian intervention and subsequent war with the LTTE in the late 1980s,
- (c) And the exodus from the northern peninsula of Jaffna after the government take over in 1995 (Orjuela 2008: 440).

Apart from these their political status is designed by their activities which, in turn, are the result of the host states' environment on them. Host country's attitudes and approaches towards diaspora communities affect the way in which the political identities of a diaspora form. A few members of the diaspora, with the patronage of an established political party in their host country, can be able to represent their community by being elected to council wards where Tamils form large constituencies. Movement onto the national scale in order to affect policy on inter-state affairs, particularly the homeland-hostland relations, is heavily dependent on the political system of the host country.

- *Political status in the United Kingdom*

The UK's 'first past the post' (FPTP) electoral system favours parties which gain one more vote than their rival in any constituency, rendering all other votes 'wasted' (Johnston et. al. 2002). This effectively limits the parliamentary representation as this system leads to an under-representation of small parties or parties with widely distributed support. Hence, even though the Tamil diaspora are in a big number in the UK, their distribution all across the country remains to be a hurdle to get them proper representation in parliament. Nonetheless, they continue to own a position among some of the main pressure groups which are crucial for the established parties of the UK[7] to win the elections.

However, the democratic tradition in the UK has provided the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora to 'free atmosphere' in which they can mobilize under any banner they wish. Thus, as a result, the diasporic community came up with the establishment of the "British Tamil Forum" to focus the diasporic engagement with the UK politicians and policy-makers in a more direct manner. Through this organisation they attempt to ensure that their host country legitimizes the socio-political aspirations of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and help them support their cause (Suntha 2011: 12-13).

While the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community has been able to influence the municipal laws and state policies in the United Kingdom in relation to investment, trade and financial regulations, they have also been seen to influence the inter-state relations including trade, aid and sanctions (Misra 2008). They have modified their actions according to the changed global environment since 9/11 and the post-2009 period has been marked by the emergence of civil disobedience by the diasporas.

- *Political Status in Canada*

The political status of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the Canadian polity makes it the most vibrant and possibly the most advanced Sri Lankan diaspora community worldwide (Zunzer 2004: 19). Compared with other groups in Canada, the number of

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[7] Established parties are the Labour Party, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

Sri Lankan Tamil organizations is very high. These organizations were originally formed for local networking during the settlement process only.

The first political organization was the "Tamil Eelam Society of Canada" (TESOC) formed in 1970s. This was aimed at gathering information about the situations in their homeland and, accordingly, make their host government aware of that. However, with time, TESOC changed its political position and tended to come closer to LTTE.

The Canadian Tamils have a strong presence in the Canadian polity. It was the pressure of the Canadian Tamils that led the Canadian government to include the issue of Sri Lankan Tamils in its foreign policy agenda.

- *Political Status in Switzerland*

The political status of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Switzerland remains to be on stronger side as more than 25,000 Sri Lankans received the citizenship of Switzerland before 1993 and this number has been increasing gradually till date. Hence, their say in the political matter remains to be of utmost importance.

The LTTE started to have representatives in Switzerland from a very early stage and in the 1990s, the LTTE had become one of the strongest political force giving the Tamil community in Switzerland. However, since 2001, after the parliament passed a law prohibiting LTTE, it was much less publicly visible and focussed on cultural and religious festivals (Zunzer 2004: 17-19).

- *Political Status in Germany*

Even though the Sri Lankan Tamils are geographically dispersed in Germany, they have managed to maintain their dense networking through various political organizations which at a time were close to the LTTE. Organizations such as "Tamil Refugee Organization" (TRO) were basically established for LTTE's civil administration through funding and expertise. Furthermore, WTM used to publish and distribute political campaigns and issues about Sri Lankan Tamils which once again had the standpoint of the LTTE (Zunzer 2004: 15-17).

Currently, the political identity of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, on the whole, remains linked to the issue of Tamil independence. However, it naturally remains in flux on certain issues, namely the policies that inform their political identity, their world view, which organizations or individuals should lead the Tamil cause and the Tamil attitude towards the international community (Suntha 2011: 20-21). Since the command is in the hands of the youth Tamil diaspora, we need to keep in mind what they have actually seen and sensed is the lack of international community's response to their homeland conflict and the state government's atrocities done to their kin groups. Hence, for them, these are the issues that will be shaping their political identity and these will be the crux of their involvement in politics. In addition to the population movements, advances in telecommunications have facilitated the expansion of political/national identity beyond the traditional boundaries of their host land (Cochrane et. al. 2009).

Conclusion

According to Sriskandarajah, "the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora remains to be the complex social formation that has been shaped by pre-migratory experiences, the process of migration and dispersal, and the process of adjustments to host societies" (2004: 500). Their emergence as a key player in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has been a result of the importance given to them by the LTTE themselves as well as the various technological advancements over the decades that have broken the barriers of long distance and boosted the exchange of information from one place to another. It seems that it will definitely continue to retain its importance amidst political upheavals in Sri Lanka even after a solution to the existing problem has been achieved.

However, it has to be noted that the Tamil community cannot be considered as a unitary being that advocates for the cause of Tamil Eelam: not every Tamil supported the Tigers during the war and not every Tamil in the diaspora considered him or herself to be part of the civil war. Since the defeat of the LTTE, the diaspora has been more divided than ever. The basic goals of the diaspora have shifted from merely supporting the armed struggle to a non-violent struggle for an independent Tamil state. This shows that even though the war is over, the scepticism of the diaspora

regarding the safety of their countrymen under the authoritarian government there remains the same. As they haven't drifted apart from their goal but it's just that they have changed their path. There are different responses from different groups on the central issue of Tamil Eelam. There are some ardent Tamil nationalists, especially in the West, who have not yet given up hope for Tamil Eelam. There are others who are ready to settle for a federal solution. In contrast, the poor Sri Lankan Tamil refugees living in Tamil Nadu refugee camps, any solution that ensures them livelihood and security seems acceptable. In the light of the effect of the defeat of the LTTE on discourses of violence and reconciliation in the Tamil diaspora, the end of the conflict brings new dynamics in the relationship between the different actors in the conflict. On top of that, there seems to be an increasing disjuncture between the interests and needs of Tamils in Sri Lanka and those in the diaspora. At the Academic Roundtable on 'Sri Lanka in Transition' at Utrecht University in May 2010, Nicholas van Hear (2006) argued that the diaspora should now be distinguished into four separate strands as a result of shifting dynamics after the defeat of the LTTE:

(1) LTTE rump/old guard

(2) LTTE heritage (including and especially the second generation Tamils),

(3) Middle guard/middle ground (attempts at opening up the discussion for pluralism).

(4) Anti-LTTE factions.

The middle two categories are those diasporic fractions that have become active after the war. The LTTE heritage is now becoming more visible as the new generation of Tamils seems eager to take over their parents' fight. As the Financial Times wrote in October 2009, the young Tamils are 'swapping bombs for blackberry's' and are willing to aid the LTTE heritage in the struggle for Tamil Eelam. At the same time, the middle guard of the diaspora is organising itself around alternative efforts to claim Tamil Eelam and to attain justice.

However, the crux of the matter is that if the political status of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has to evolve in a stronger way, then they need to form a common strategy with different political programmes so that they can be united even if they are distant apart. If they are able to unite by ignoring or giving up their differences for a common

cause, there are chances that the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is capable of achieving their desired results.

CHAPTER IV

Homeland politics and the Sri Lankan Tamil Diasporic Response: A Historical Perspective

Introduction

A country's politics is driven by several factors which cover the entire socio-economic aspects of that particular country. Apart from this the relationship with its neighbours also plays a major role in politics. Peace and conflict are supposed to be the part of any political structure. Both affect politics of a country and, in turn, get affected by it. What kind of a political structure a country can support depends on what kind of situation the country is in. For example, a country facing a conflict may not opt for a liberal political structure while it might be preferred in a peaceful country. Human beings have learnt to be social and form together to achieve their common goals. There can be no denial of the fact that human nature has been conflicting around the same things and, hence, this has made conflict a very usual and normal thing in our lives. These conflicts in turn affect us in both positive and negative ways. Sometimes they lead us to have betterment in our policies. There are chances that some of these conflicts exacerbate and lead to violence and destruction. Hence, conflict in turn, forms an inevitable part of politics.

DeVotta (2004: 1-2) argues that theories of ethnic conflict tend to underestimate the impact of politics on the intra-ethnic and interethnic relations.[1] The politics of Sri Lanka has been such that facilitated ethnocracy and "ethnic outbidding" in the Sinhalese community, which eventually resulted in marginalization of the Sri Lankan Tamils who were in minority and led them to opt for the politics of "violence outbidding" and mobilize for an ethnic conflict.[2] Snyder (1993: 86) has noted that ethnic nationalism "predominates when institutions collapse, when existing institutions are not fulfilling people's basic needs and when satisfactory alternative

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[1] Instead the theories typically focus on historical, biological, constructivist and instrumentalist explanations.

[2] "Ethnic outbidding" is the situation in which the politics of a country is so designed that there is least opportunity for the opponents and those in power may easily opt 'anti-minority' stance (DeVotta 2002). "Violence outbidding" involves fighting the state representatives through combined approach of suicide attacks as well as guerrilla and conventional warfare (Ropers 2010).

structures are not readily available." "The institutional decay that follows, especially if involving an ethnic group that is territorially based, may lead those marginalized to mobilize seeking redress. Depending on how the state or the majority group reciprocates, the aggrieved group may seek a separate existence. Herein lies the cause of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict" (DeVotta 2004: 5-7).

Among the various ethno-nationalist insurgencies in South Asia, the civil war in Sri Lanka has been perhaps the most enduring and seemingly intractable and the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has remained to be a crucial component of the lethality and tenacity of this conflict (Fair 2007: 172). There is no evidence about the real date on which the conflict broke out. Instead, there have been various instances that have formed a chain-like structure and have resulted into a war. Most of the writings about the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict suggest that the process of militarization can be said to have started in the 1970s. This period was marked by formation of several Tamil militant groups who aimed at gaining an autonomous status for themselves.

By the early 1980s, one of these groups had emerged as pre-eminent one Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran (Fair 2007: 172). In 1983, the LTTE conducted its first military operation (an ambush on a police patrol in Jaffna) (Fair 2003). Since then, the conflict has claimed over 65,000 lives and displaced over 1 million people (Wayland 2004: 414). Due to this war, a sudden push was initiated for the Tamils to move away from their homeland in search of a safe and better life ahead. However, being conflict-induced migrants with strong ethnic identity, their interest in their homeland politics remained intact and they continued to affect the homeland politics through their active participation in the conflict. A historical review of the political scenario of Sri Lanka becomes necessary in order to understand the various strands of the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka as these historical records will show that the majority-minority relationship has been the main cause of the ethnic conflict as well as the factor in Sri Lankan politics.

The Majority-Minority relationship in the pre-colonial era

According to Sivarajah (1996: 17), "For a proper understanding of majority-minority relations in post-independent Sri Lanka, it is essential to examine the historical

context in which these relations evolved during colonial and pre-colonial periods." The historical setting of the socio-economic and political interaction among the various communities in the island remained to contain a critical bearing on their relationship in the post-colonial period.

The traces of differences between the Sinhalese and the Tamils can be seen in their claims and counter-claims made by their respective elites on the issue of who came first or which community was originally settled in the country. A major section among both the communities saw 'prior arrival' as a factor that would provide special rights as 'sons of the soil' (DeVotta 1985: 45). This view was particularly strong among the Sinhalese and had a major role in making them strive towards giving Buddhism and Sinhalese (language) a special status in the country. They continued to justify their view by illustrating various invasions of the Tamil kings since 145 BC and perceived this as a conspiracy to get hold of their country. Another incident highlighted by the Sinhalese in claiming themselves as the sons of the soil is the Elara-Dutta Gamini conflict of the 2nd century BC, in which the Tamil king Elara was defeated and killed by the Sinhalese king Dutta Gamini (Sivarajah 1996: 17). Repeated attempts by the Tamil kings to attack Sri Lanka and bring it under their hegemony eventually made the Sinhalese to abandon their very ancient kingdom of Anuradhapura and hence the anti-Tamil feeling was strengthened. More strength is given to their claim by their great chronicle Mahavamsa[3] which says that the father of the Sinhalese, Vijaya and his followers came much ahead of the Tamils in the country i.e. around 5th BC and their language Sinhalese is supposed to have some linkages to the Indo-Aryan language (Sivarajah 1996: 19-21). Also the Mahavamsa provided a myth that the Sinhalese were the people with something special about them. All these factors together have precipitated the thinking of the Sinhalese about their separate identity against the Tamils and guardian of the Sri Lankan territory.

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[3] "Mahavamsa is an important text in Theravada Buddhism. It covers the early history of religion in Sri Lanka, beginning with the time of Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. It also briefly recounts the history of Buddhism in India, from the date of the Buddha's death to the various Buddhist councils where the Dharma was reviewed. Every chapter of the Mahavamsa ends by stating that it is written for the "serene joy of the pious". From the emphasis of its point-of-view, it can be said to have been compiled to record the good deeds of the kings who were patrons of the Sinhalese" (Sivarajah 1995: 18)

On the other hand, there have been various claims by the Tamils that stands in opposition to that of the Sinhalese. They claim their association with the Sri Lankan island to be as old as that of the Sinhalese or even older. They argue that if the Sinhalese follow Mahavamsa's declaration that their legendary founding father, Vijaya was the first to come on the island then they should accept that the Tamils also came at the same time along with a Pandayan princess from Madurai as his queen. And along with his queen came several maidens and also 1000 families from among 18 craft-guilds entered the territory of Sri Lanka.[4] The Tamils claim that prior to the rule of Sinhalese the kingdom of Anuradhapura was ruled by two consecutive Tamil kings, Sena-Kuttika and Elara for twenty two and forty four years respectively (Sivarajah 1996: 18-20). Furthermore, scholars have argued that if the ancestors of the Aborigines reached Australia over 40,000 years ago and determined settlers navigated the Pacific Ocean to reach America's western coast at least 13,000 years ago, then it is highly unlikely that South Indians were unaware of the large island that was situated just 22 miles across the shallow Palk Strait (Dharamdasa 1992:a; DeVotta 2004: 25). Hence, their ownership over this area remains to be stronger than the claim of the Sinhalese. Furthermore, since their migration in large numbers continued, it enabled them to be in such position to maintain their identity as a language-culture group, while on the other hand it also restricted them to get absorbed in the Sinhalese tradition fully.

Thus, we can say that during the pre-colonial phase the differences between the Sinhalese and the Tamils were not that significant even though they continued to exist. The notion of perceiving the Tamils as the 'historic enemy' received attention only when the old Sinhalese civilization collapsed in the 13th century by frequent South Indian invasions. This led the Sinhalese move towards the south while the north and the east became an independent Hindu Tamil kingdom. This establishment was the boost to the Tamils in reinforcing their separate identity in Sri Lanka.

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[4] "At the beginning the Sinhalese settlers and their descendants inter-married with Dravidians who came to the island from South India and there was considerable mixing of the two ethnic groups. Hence, Sri Lanka has been from early in its recorded history a multi-ethnic society in which a recognizable Dravidian component was present. Thus, the Sinhalese-Tamil ethnicity was not an important point of division of society at least in the early period because neither Sinhalese nor Tamils remained pure" (Sriskandarajah 1995: 17).

The Majority-Minority relationship in the colonial era

From 1505 onwards, Sri Lanka was under the rule of various colonial powers. The Portugese, Dutch and the British had colonized the island for around 450 years. The British opted for a policy of divide and rule and while their development efforts[5] centred around the southern and the western parts of the territory which made the Tamils left out in the northern and eastern provinces. Hence, to make them feel inclusive in the system several schools were set up by the missionaries in these regions. This led the Sinhalese away from the American and British education system while the economic development in the southern-western part deprived the Tamils of such luxuries. In a way they were successful in widening the rift between these two communities by their dual policies. There were also perceptional differences between the Sinhalese and Tamils. The Tamils felt aggrieved due to government policies in political and economic representation of Tamils, and the Sinhalese perceived the Tamils as getting a greater share in parliament, bureaucracy, and the educational fields. As the Sinhalese saw it in the early 1950s, though they were a substantial majority of the population, more than 40 per cent of the workers in the clerical service and one-third of all university graduates were Sri Lankan Tamils. The clashes of perception of Tamils against the Sinhalese led them to favour the concept of a 'separate state' where they could exercise control over primary administrative areas. The Tamil minority lived mostly in the north-east and they wanted a decentralized set-up where they could enjoy their cultural, religious, political, and economic rights (DeSilva 1999: 428-432; Bush 1990: 41-58; Kearney 1986: 109-112).

During the colonial era the Tamil elites and the Sinhalese elites were treated as equals. It was only when the universal franchise was introduced in 1931 that they started feeling insecure about their political rights as their less number in the government representation was failing to counter the Sinhalese majority. Hence, the need for 'equal representation' was felt by them and they started demanding for it. Even though the division had just started taking shape during this time, it was still in its latent phase. Hence, the English speaking elite class from both the communities was able to get them together and attain the status of an 'independent state' from the British in 1948.

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[5] These developments consisted of coffee plantations and tea estates which led them to bring labourers who were majorly ethnic Tamils.

The Majority-Minority relationship in the post-colonial era

"Upon independence the Sri Lanka adopted the unitary constitutional structure which was already given to them by the British. The Tamils were quite sceptical about it as they knew very well that such type of constitutional arrangement would not provide protection for them as they were in minority and there was a great danger that the majority would dominate them. The parliament in the 1950s was ruled by two nationalist parties which comprised of the Sinhalese and hence they represented Sinhalese interests" (Fair 2005: 138). Obviously, it was unable to meet up to the Tamils' expectations and they were unable to address Tamil needs and equities. After independence, the Sri Lankan state was in real sense a Sinhalese state which established Buddhism as the state religion. A further spark was provided by the Sinhala Only Act of 1956 which made Sinhalese the official language and jeopardized the hopes of the Tamils of getting official status for their Tamil language as well. Apart from all these discriminations, the Tamil speaking minorities were disadvantaged in the public sphere, the educational system and the economy. For instance, Tamil civil servants were forced to learn Sinhalese; Sinhalese civil servants were stationed in Tamil areas and Tamils were forced to interact with them in Sinhalese (DeVotta 2009: 1025). Not only this, Sinhala was used in all the offices including those situated in Tamil majority areas which made the entire administration there under the rule of the Sinhalese. Quota system in universities were introduced in 1971 which led the Sinhalese to get admission easily and made it more difficult for the Tamils. Furthermore, the encroachment policy opted by the Sinhalese to counter the Tamil majority areas also led the Tamils to mobilize and rage a war against the state. "The Sinhala Only Act of 1956 not only sparked the ignition but it also resulted in first ever anti-Tamil riots. These were followed by the 1958 riots and spawned policies that promoted Sinhalese Buddhist hegemony" (DeVotta 2009: 1026).

These changes after the country's independence affected the Sri Lankan Tamils dramatically. However, for the Sinhalese it was a time to finally claim their rights as the country's majority. "Thus, Sinhalese and Tamil nationalism developed alongside on the island. Initially, the tensions between the two communities were dealt within the parliament. As differences became more pronounced it became more difficult to work out lasting compromises, and conflicts were dealt outside of the constitutional institutions. One major reason for this was that within majority as well as minority

politics, patterns of behaviour, structures and attitudes developed which continually ignited confrontation on both sides. In Sinhalese politics, one of those patterns was described as 'ethnic outbidding'. This means that of the two major Sinhalese parties the one in the opposition tended to undermine the governing party's interethnic attempts of understanding by appealing to the Sinhalese voters in a nationalistic and vote-catching way" (Ropers 2010: 2).

The Tamil side also witnessed the development of similar patterns. Their votes were based on those agendas that suited their interests such as reforms within the existing majoritarian rule, autonomy etc. The Tamils had started recognizing the need for their autonomy during the 1950s and the 1960s, it couldn't get its military shape until the 1970s. In 1976 the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was established, which later on in the next general election performed remarkably well and saw victory in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. During the late 1970s and the early 1980s several other organizations came up with the agenda of addressing the Tamil demands and equities. Prominent among these were Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), the People's Liberation Organization for Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Among these the LTTE emerged as the strongest one as it directly attacked the Sri Lankan military and state representatives, it was the only one to be able to deal with the differences within the Tamil movement (Fair 2005: 138).

Confronted with the overwhelming dominance of the Sinhalese parties within the Sri Lankan democracy after independence, and after a series of fruitless civil attempts to compromise, the LTTE under the leadership of Velupillai Prabhakaran strove to become the "sole representative of the Tamil people". For this purpose they established a ruthless regime within the Tamil polity and fought the Sri Lankan state representatives and institutions with a combined approach of suicide attacks as well as guerrilla and conventional warfare" (Ropers 2010: 3). As ethnic tension grew, in 1976, the LTTE began to campaign for a Tamil homeland in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, where most of the island's Tamils reside. In 1983, the LTTE ambushed an army convoy, killing thirteen soldiers and triggering riots in which 2,500 Tamils died. The riots radicalized Tamil youths, convincing many that the TULF's strategy of using legal and constitutional means to achieve independence would never work, and

armed insurrection was the only way forward. Hence, this was the background which gave the scope for a conflict to turn into a war later on.

Diasporic Response to the Political crisis of Sri Lanka: 1983 onwards

After the 1977 riots, the J. R. Jayewardene government made one concession to the Tamil population; it lifted the policy of standardisation for university admission that had driven many Tamil youths into militancy. The concession was regarded by the militants as too little and too late and violent attacks continued. The LTTE initially carried out a campaign of violence against the state, particularly targeting policemen and also moderate Tamil politicians who attempted a dialogue with the government. Their first major operation was the assassination of the mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Duraiappah, in 1975 by Prabhakaran (Fair 2005: 1027-28).

The LTTE's mode of operation during the early war was based on assassinations. In July 1983, the LTTE launched a deadly ambush on a Sri Lanka Army check point outside the town of Thirunelveli, killing an officer and 12 soldiers. Using the nationalistic sentiments to their advantage, the Jayawardene government organised massacres and pogroms in Colombo, the capital, and elsewhere. About 3,000 Tamils were killed and many more fled Sinhalese-majority areas. This is considered the beginning of the civil war and emergence of the political crisis in Sri Lanka.

The various political upheavels in Sri Lanka and the diasporic responses to them from 1983 till the onset of fourth eelam war can be studied under the categories of Eelam War I, Indian intervention, Eelam War II, Eelam War III and Peace processes (2002-2005).

Eelam War I (1983-1987)

Eelam War I is the name given to the initial phase of the armed conflict between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE. Although tensions between the government and Tamil militant groups had been brewing since the 1970s, full scale war did not break out until an attack by the LTTE on a Sri Lanka Army patrol in Jaffna, in the north of the country, on July 23, 1983, which killed 13 soldiers. The attack, and the

subsequent riots in the south (dubbed Black July),[6] are generally considered as the start of the conflict. This fighting continued until 1985, when peace talks[7] were held between the two sides in Thimphu, Bhutan, in hopes of seeking a negotiated settlement (DeVotta 2004: 169) However, they proved fruitless and fighting soon resumed. By this time a wave of migration had already hit the Sri Lankan Tamils who were the main victim.

By 1987, the Sri Lankan military had cornered the LTTE in Jaffna, on the tip of the island and were confident of bringing an end to the conflict. However, due to internal pressure, specifically concern about the 50 million Tamils living in India, the Indian government called for a halt to the offensive. After the request was ignored by Sri Lanka, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi ordered ships to be sent to relieve the LTTE. After this convoy was blocked by the Sri Lanka Navy, India instead chose to airdrop supplies to the besieged city in a mission named, Operation Poomalai[8] (Pfaggenberger 1988: 139).

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[6] It is known as "Black July" because on July 24, the day the 13 servicemen killed in an LTTE ambush were to be buried, some Sinhalese civilians who had gathered at the cemetery, angered by news of the ambush, which was magnified by wild rumour, formed mobs and started killing, raping, and assaulting Tamils, while looting and burning their properties in retribution for what happened. Sinhalese civilians were equipped with voter registration lists, burning and attacking only Tamil residences and business, while army and government officials stood by. Even Sinhalese civilians who harboured Tamil families in their households (or suspected of doing so) were set upon by the mob. It was estimated that at least 1,000 Tamil people were killed, tens of thousands of houses were destroyed, and a wave of Sri Lankan Tamils left for other countries (Tambiah 1984).

[7] The first major peace talks between the Sri Lankan government, Tamil militants and Tamil political parties were held in the Bhutanese capital of Thimpu in July 1985.The talks were also the most comprehensive meeting of a government delegation, militants and moderate Tamil politicians. The militant groups and Tamil parties agreed on a formula which urged the government to accept four principles including the right to self determination and the recognition of the north and east as the traditional Tamil homeland. However, the government rejected these demands. Analysts say that the LTTE and other Tamil militant groups came to the conference harbouring the misconception that they would get the separate state of Eelam (DeVotta 2004: 171).

[8] "**Operation Poomalai** or **Eagle Mission 4** was the codename assigned to a mission undertaken by the Indian Air Force to air-drop supplies over the besieged town of Jaffna in Sri Lanka on 4 June 1987 in support of Tamil Tigers during the Sri Lankan Civil War. Jaffna was at the time under blockade by Sri Lankan troops as a part of Colombo's offensive against the Tamil separatist movement. Concerned over alleged violations of interests of the Tamils, who had broader support among the Tamil population of South India as well as the government, India attempted to negotiate a political settlement but the Indian offers had been rebuffed by Colombo. As civilian casualties grew, calls grew within India to intervene in what was increasingly seen in the Indian (and Tamil) media as a developing humanitarian crisis, especially with reports of aerial bombardment against rebel positions in civilian areas. The Indian Government under Rajiv Gandhi decided to attempt to deliver aid to the northern area of Sri Lanka as a symbolic act of support to the rebels. The first of these efforts, a small naval flotilla, was

Following the successful completion of the mission, and faced with the possibility of further involvement of the Indian military, including reports that Indian ground forces were being prepared for possible involvement in Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka President J. R. Jayewardene held talks with the Indian government to resolve the dispute. As a result of the negotiations, the siege of Jaffna was lifted and the Indo-Sri-Lankan accord was signed on July 29, 1987. Sri Lankan troops then withdraw from the north of the country and handed control over the entire area to Indian peacekeeping troops named the Indian Peace Keeping Force. This brought about an end to the first stage of the ethnic conflict.

During the first eelam war, a large number of Sri Lankan Tamils managed to flee the country in search of a safe and better life.

Diasporic Response to Eelam War I

"Sri Lankan Tamils have been migrating from their homeland since before independence, but the number of these migrants in that period remained to be relatively low. At the time of independence that is 1948, when the legislation had just started discriminating them, the number of Tamil migrants remained to be low as at that particular time period it was still a matter of choice for them. Moreover, migration was confined to only those that could afford the costs of travel and study abroad or were lucky enough to find jobs" (Nandakumar 2011: 5). It was only in 1983 that the level of migration and displacement reached to its highest level, with Tamils leaving their homeland in much higher numbers to any safe place they could think of. The pogrom of 1983 was a watershed event. "Tamil people had faced frequent outbursts of communal violence in the past but the July '83 holocaust was unparalleled, qualitatively different in its ferocity, brutality and in its scale of destruction" (Balasingham 2004: 101-102).[9] Most of them fled to UK, Canada,

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thwarted by the Sri Lankan Navy. Two days later, in a show of force, India mounted the airdrop over Jaffna" (Wilson 1989).

[9] It has been estimated that 3,000 Tamil people were killed in July 1983 which eventually caused a mass migration of Tamils away from the island as the fold gates opened and any Tamil who could do so fled the country and the threst of oppresiion and persecution (Nandakumar 2011). The less affluent crossed the Palk Straits and settled in india while the more affluent migrated to Western countries.

Western Europe, Switzerland and Australia or New Zealand as these were the places where they could find their kin groups already settled since the colonial times.[10]

This phase of migration strengthened the Tamil diaspora. Not only they grew in numbers, but also their feeling of being oppressed and the memories of the injustice done to them started getting crystallized. This in turn motivated them all the more to maintain their idea of separate nationalism and work collectively towards having such an identity that could be recognized by the whole world (Nandakumar 2011: 5).

From an insurgency viewpoint, the Eelam War I served two purposes for the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community. Foremost, the incidents helped link the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora - the fundamental component of the insurgency's financial, propaganda and procurement strategy - to a cause. Second it helped heighten, what were already significant, tensions between the Sinhalese and the Tamil diaspora communities all the more. Hence, those who left the island after 1983 felt it easy to become connected to those voices that stood against any kind of repression and injustice. Since the early 1980s, they had been supporting the cause of separate eelam and during the eelam war I they entirely supported the LTTE. The environment of 1983 encouraged the growth of Tamil militancy and the July 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom led many Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora to spontaneously support all Tamil militant groups that came up in its wake.

- *Lobbying*

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been organized as well as politicized to some extent even before the events of Black July took place in their homeland.[11] For example, the expatriate Sri Lankan Tamils lobbied members of Parliament in Great Britain and legislators in USA and Australia in support of the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka. Much publicity was given to a resolution in 1980 passed by the Tamil

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[10] The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in Canada is the largest with an estimated 400,000 Sri Lankan Tamils in the country. In the UK, the Tamil population is estimated to be around 300,000.

[11] Even before witnessing anti-Tamil riots in their homeland, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora stood by the sides of Vietnamese, Pakistanis and Polish demonstrators to protest against the acts of repression in their respective homelands. This was the time when the 12th World University Games were held in Edmonton in early July 1983 (Suntha 2011).

Coordinating Committee in London that the "new Governemnt of Tamil Eelam will come into being on the Pongal day 1982" (Sivarajah 1995: 270).[12]

- *Funding the war*

During the early period of the eelam war, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora also provided economic aid and assistance to the LTTE in order to support their demand for a separate eelam. Funds came from countries where there were large numbers of Sri Lankan Tamils: Switzerland, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America (Fair 2007: 181).

- *Protests and Demonstrations*

"As early as 1984, the protests against the Sri Lankan government had already begun by the new additions to the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora" (Nanadakumar 2011: 6). Switzerland was the first country to witness such a demonstration when around 1,000 Sri Lankan Tamils protested before the Swiss Parliament demanding the status of 'asylum seekers' for their kin groups who had fled their homeland and came to seek shelter in Switzerland.

Another form of their protest was seen in the UK in 1984 when the Sri Lankan cricket team had come to play a tournament with England. The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora protested that a team from a country actively committing genocide should not be allowed to have cordial relations, even in sports, with any other peaceful country in the world[13] (Nandakumar 2011: 6).

All these protests continued to take place frequently until the first phase of eelam war was over. These efforts didn't prove to be a huge success but eventually were able to portray an example of the organisational capabilities of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora and showed the world as well as their homeland how active they were in political terms. It also showed their non-violent strategies of protesting against the violent acts

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[12] The Eealm Tamil Liberation Council was set up at a convention in 1982 and Professor Blanstain was appointed as a consultant. He outlined a strategy to canvass international bodies dealing with Human Rights and funds were collected on a world wide scale.

[13] "Secutiry staff at Lords cricket ground were made aware of the possibility that a small number of Tamils might protest the Sri Lankan team's presence. As the first ball was about to be bowled, a dozen Tamil protestors surged onto the pitch and sat down on the turf, until they were forcibly moved by the secutiry forces. Then, after the lunch-interval, a much larger group ran onto the pitch again. Seventeen people were arrested that day and many more injured" (Nandakumar 2011: 6).

that their homeland faced. These early protests were a sign of events to come. Importantly, it was an early indicator that the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora was ready to get mobilized into a political force despite the comparatively small numbers of Tamils who attended protests and demonstrations.

Indian Intervention in Sri Lankan Ethno-Political crisis (1987-1990)

India became involved in the conflict in the 1980s for a number of reasons, including its leaders' desire to project India as the regional power in the area and worries about India's own Tamils seeking independence. The latter was particularly strong in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where ethnic kinship led to strong support for independence for Sri Lankan Tamils. Throughout the conflict, the Indian central and state governments had supported both sides in different ways.[14]

India became more actively involved in the late 1980s, and on 4th June 1987, the Indian Air Force airdropped food parcels to Jaffna while it was under siege by Sri Lankan forces. At a time when the Sri Lankan government stated they were close to defeating the LTTE, India dropped 25 tons of food and medicine by parachute into areas held by the LTTE in a direct move of support toward the rebels. Negotiations were held, and the "Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord" was signed on 29 July 1987, by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President Jayewardene (De Silva 1999: 428-432). Under this accord, the Sri Lankan Government made a number of concessions to Tamil demands, including devolution of power to the provinces, a merger—subject to later referendum—of the Northern and the Eastern provinces into the single province, and official status for the Tamil language.[15] India agreed to establish order in the North and East and sent the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) for the same purpose. Militant groups were initially reluctant to accept the accord but agreed to surrender their arms to the IPKF (DeVotta 2004: 172).

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[14] "Beginning in August 1983, till May 1987, Indian government, through its intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), provided arms, training and monetary support to six Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups including LTTE, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS), Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and Tamil Eelam Liberation Army (TELA). LTTE's rise is widely attributed to the initial backing it received from RAW. It is believed that by supporting different militant groups, the Indian government hoped to keep the Tamil independence movement divided and be able to exert overt control over it" (DeVotta 2004: 172).

[15] This was enacted as the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka.

While most Tamil militant groups laid down their weapons and agreed to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict, the LTTE refused to disarm its fighters. Keen to ensure the success of the accord, the IPKF then tried to demobilise the LTTE by force and ended up in full-scale conflict with them.[16] During the IPKF's stay in Sri Lanka, there had been many cases of massacres on innocent Sri Lankan Tamil civilians by the Indian army, such as the 1989 Valvettiturai massacre[17] and the Jaffna hospital massacre.[18] The IPKF also met stiff opposition from the Tamils. Simultaneously, nationalist sentiment led many Sinhalese to oppose the continued Indian presence in Sri Lanka. These led to the Sri Lankan government's call for India to quit the island, and they allegedly entered into a secret deal with the LTTE that culminated in a ceasefire. But the LTTE and IPKF continued to have frequent hostilities (Pfaffenberger 1988: 143). Although casualties among the IPKF mounted, and calls for the withdrawal of the IPKF from both sides of the Sri Lankan conflict grew, Gandhi refused to remove the IPKF from Sri Lanka. However, following his defeat in Indian parliamentary elections in December 1989, the new Prime Minister V.P. Singh ordered the withdrawal of the IPKF, and their last ship left Sri Lanka on 24 March 1990. The 32 month presence of the IPKF in Sri Lanka resulted in the deaths of 1200 Indian soldiers and over 5000 Sri Lankans. The cost for the Indian government was estimated at over 10.3 billion rupees (De Silva 1999: 430-432).

According to De Silva, "In the long term, the Indian intervention in the Sri Lankan Civil War was a tactical victory for the Sri Lankan Government. The Indian

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[16]The three year long conflict was also marked by the IPKF being accused of committing various abuses of human rights by many human rights groups as well as some within the Indian media.

[17] "1989 Valvettiturai massacre occurred on August 2 and 3, 1989 in the small coastal town of Valvettiturai, on the Jaffna Peninsula in Sri Lanka. Approximately 64 minority Sri Lankan Tamil civilians were killed by soldiers belonging to the Indian Peace Keeping Force. The massacre followed an attack on the soldiers by the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam cadres. The rebel attack had left 6 Indian soldiers dead and another 10 injured. Indian authorities claimed that the civilians were caught in a cross fire. It was believed that the incident resulted from a deliberate provocation by the LTTE intended to trigger an overwhelming Indian response; thus tarnishing the IPKF's image, during sensitive negotiations to leave the island nation" (Indian Express, August 24, 1989).

[18] "The Jaffna hospital massacre happened on October 21 and 22, 1987, when soldiers of the Indian Army entered the premises of the Jaffna Teaching Hospital in Jaffna and killed about 68–70 patients, nurses, doctors and other staff members. The LTTE, the government of Sri Lanka, and independent observers such as the University Teachers for Human Rights and others called it a massacre of civilians, whereas the Indian army officer in charge of the military operations, Lieutenant General Depinder Singh, claimed that they were fired upon from inside the Hospital and people were caught up in a cross fire. Soldiers responsible for this massacre were not prosecuted by the Indian government" (Krishna 2005: 190-192).

intervention angered the Tamil Tigers who retaliated by killing over a thousand IPKF soldiers as well as assassinating Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 which in the long term effectually ended Indian government's co-operation with the LTTE and instead initiated close co-operation between the Indian and Sri Lankan governments to defeat the Tamil Tigers" (1999: 432).

Diasporic response to their homeland politics (1987-1990)

A huge number of Sri Lankan Tamils had migrated to India during the eelam war I due to a number of reasons: (Sivarajah 1995: 257)

- Being the 'regional big brother' and an ally of Sri Lanka, India gave hope to the Sri Lankan Tamils that it would help them.

- Most of the Sri Lankan Tamils who migrated were poor and, hence, going far away to western countries was impossible for them.

- The presence of their ethnic kin group in Indian state of Tamil Nadu made them a bit comfortable rather than going to a whole new place.

All these factors are the proof of the hopes and expectations of the Sri Lankan Tamils from New Delhi in dealing with their homeland and supporting their cause. In other words, it was the pressure of the Sri Lankan refugees and their ethnic kin group residing in Tamil Nadu on the state government that resulted in pressurizing the central government to intervene in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka (Sivarajah 1996: 176-184). According to Sivarajah, "Signing of the Indo-Lanka Accord in 1987 was a big relief for them and they hoped for more. Following the Indo-Lanka Accord there was a ceasefire which led many of the refugees to return to their homeland. The first repatriation took place after the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord in 1987 and between 24 December 1987 and 31 August 1989, 25,585 refugees and non-camp Sri Lankan nationals returned to Sri Lanka"[19] (1995: 257).

As a consequence of the accord, stationing of the IPKF made the situation a bit better for the Tamils as it kept the Sri Lankan army away from the Tamil areas, hence saving

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[19] The second wave of repatriation began in 1992, after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi during which 54,188 refugees were voluntarily repatriated to Sri Lanka, until March 1995. Eelam War III commenced in April 1995 starting the third wave or refugees. By 12 April 2002, nearly 23,356 refugees had come to Tamil Nadu. The flow of refugees had stopped in 2002 because of the cease fire agreement.

the Sri Lankan Tamils from further atrocities. However, the Tamil hopes were shattered when the IPKF indulged in a direct war with the LTTE and eventually many Tamil civilians were targeted by the IPKF. Furthermore, the agitation among the Tamils increased all the more when the Indian government decided to withdraw its forces and let the Sri Lankan government handle the situation. This move of the Indian government was perceived as a mere act of 'appeasing the neighbourhood' by the diaspora community and hence, the stance of India was criticized heavily. After getting disappointment from the Indian government, the diaspora activity in their homeland conflict increased. Funding the war, lobbying their host governments continued but this time it was at a greater pace.

The International Crisis Group stated thus, "The Tamil Diaspora, who fled the country to save their children, sold their assets and consolidated their financial position. Many then used this as opportunity to provide financial support for the LTTE to the extreme. The Tamil Diaspora celebrated every win by the LTTE as the Eelam, without using wisdom and vision for the future. They praised the Prabaharan as the greatest leader that Tamils had in the living memory. The Tamil daispora used their finance to modernise the LTTE armoury. They made Parabaharan as the "Sun God" and funded his underground kingdom-like lifestyle. Their agenda remained to be the demand for separate eelam and the efforts to gather support for it continued on their behalf" (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

Political and material support from India, particularly Tamil Nadu, was the key to the growth of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka during this phase. At least on two occasions, Prabakaran was saved from annihilation, thanks to Indian intervention. But after he carried out the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, popular support in Tamil Nadu for the LTTE dried up. And the Eelam Tamil cause was pushed to the backseat even in political rhetoric.

Eelam War II (1990-1995)

'Eelam War II' is the name given to the second phase of armed conflict between Sri Lankan military and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The war started

after the failure of peace talks[20] between the Premadasa government and the LTTE. This phase of the war was initiated by the LTTE who massacred almost 600 Sinhalese police personnel after they were ordered by the Premadasa government to surrender to the LTTE on promise of safe conduct (DeVotta 2004: 173-174). When the Indian Peace Keeping Force withdrew, the LTTE established many government-like institutions in the areas under its control. A tentative ceasefire held in 1990 as the LTTE occupied itself with destroying rival Tamil groups while the government cracked down on the JVP uprising. When both major combatants had established their power bases, they turned on each other and the ceasefire broke down (De Silva 1999: 430-432). The truce was broken on June 10, 1990. The government launched an offensive to retake Jaffna. The government placed an embargo on food and medicine entering the Jaffna peninsula and the air force relentlessly bombed LTTE targets in the area. The LTTE responded by attacking Sinhalese and Muslim villages and massacring civilians and in October, they expelled all the 28,000 Muslims residing in Jaffna. One of the largest civilian massacres of the war occurred when the LTTE massacred 166 Muslim civilians at Palliyagodella.[21] "The largest battle of the war was in July 1991, when the army's Elephant Pass base, which controlled access to the Jaffna Peninsula, was surrounded by 5,000 LTTE cadres. More than 2,000 died in a month-long siege, before 10,000 government troops arrived to relieve the base" (Human Rights Watch Report 1992). The LTTE, in its part, scored a major victory when one of their suicide bombers killed Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in May 1993. In November 1993 the LTTE succeeded in the Battle of

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[20] Formal peace talks between the government and the LTTE commenced at the Colombo Hilton in February 1990. The peace talks failed due to mutual distrust and accusations that both sides were arming themselves while talking peace. President Premadasa, who took initiative to solve the issue of north and east through negotiations in 1990s, was also assassinated by the LTTE suicide bomber in May 1993. This assassination was followed by a string of assassinations of Sinhalese political leaders using suicide bombers (Sivarajah 1995).

[21]"The Palliyagodella massacre happened in October 1991 in which LTTE cadres massacred 109 Muslim men, women and children in Palliyagodella. The background to this massacre was the growing tension between the LTTE and the Muslim community. The Palliyagodella villagers had asked the Sri Lankan military for protection from LTTE extortion. The Sri Lankan forces issued shotguns to the Muslim villagers but these were inadequate to beat off LTTE attacks. Female LTTE cadres and child soldiers were involved in this attack" (Gunaratne 1998: 217-218).

Pooneryn.[22] This attack left 532 in the Army and 135 in the Navy either killed or missing in action (Human Rights Watch Report 1992).

In the 1994 parliamentary elections, the UNP was defeated and, amidst great hope, the People's Alliance, headed by Chandrika Kumaratunga, came to power on a peace platform with a 62 per cent majority (DeVotta 2004: 173). A ceasefire was agreed in January 1995, but the ensuing negotiations proved fruitless. The LTTE broke the ceasefire and blew up two Sri Lanka Navy gun boats known as SLNS 'Sooraya' and 'Ranasuru' on 19 April. This led to beginning of the next phase of the war, known as Eelam War III.

Diasporic response to the Eelam War II

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community responded to the eelam war II by continuing the protests against the state of Sri Lanka gradually. The numbers who attended protests rose with reports of massacres, or extremely severe attacks upon the Tamil population, while fewer took it to the streets if there had not been an event in Sri Lanka. In the late 1990s the number of protestors had grown to thousands from the early number of tens or hundreds during the eelam war I. For example, after the Kalutara prison massacre[23] in 1997, a vigil outside 10 Downing Street was attended by 400 people carrying large banners and dozens of placards with slogans condemning the massacre (Nandakumar 2011: 6).

During the early 1990s, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community was actively making efforts to lobby their host governments as well as other international organizations to support their cause. Their efforts were fruitful to some extent as the LTTE was able to get political sympathy for its struggle from major states around the

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[22]"The Battle of Pooneryn was a battle fought on November 11, 1993 for the town of Pooneryn. The main target of the LTTE was the Sri Lankan government naval base at Pooneryn. The camp controlled the southern shore of the Jaffna lagoon and was being used as a command centre for government forces preventing the Liberation Tigers from using the lagoon to supply the peninsula. The Tigers captured several naval gunboats, heavy mortars and two tanks though one was later destroyed in an air attack. Also, large quantities of other arms and ammunition were captured" (The Sunday Times, 13th October, 1996).

[23]The **Kalutara Prison Riots** occurred on December 12, 1997, at the high-security prison in Kalutara, Sri Lanka wherein minority Tamil political prisoners were killed by the majority Sinhalese prisoners.

world. The international media also started initiatives to bring the issues to the limelight and show the world the rights abuse done by the Sri Lankan government (Sivarajah 1995: 264-270). A number of diasporic organizations were behind this achievement: Australian Frederation of Tamil Associations, the Swiss Federation of Tamil Associations, the French Federation of Tamil Associations, the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils, the Ilankai Tamil Sangam, the Tamil Coordinating Committee in Norway, and the International Federation of Tamils (Fair 2007: 184).

During this phase, "the primary objectives of these diaspora organizations and their efforts were to attack the government of Sri Lanka while creating the support for the cause of the LTTE. This was done by consistently propagating a three-fold message:

- That Tamils in Sri Lanka were innocent victims of military repression by the Sri Lankan security forces and of Sinhalese and anti-Tamil discrimination;

- That the LTTE was the only legitimate voice of the Tamils and was the only vehicle capable of defending and promoting Tamil interests in Sri Lanka; and

- That there could be no peace until Tamils achieved their own independent state under the LTTE's leadership" (Fair 2007: 184).

In addition to supporting the LTTE, the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas also remitted funds that directly supported their families and localities of origin. Although these funds were given with an objective of ensuring the well-being of their family members left behind in the war-torn Tamil areas, but eventually, they also played a role in prolonging the conflict to some extent. These remittances enabled the Sri Lankan Tamils to remain in the conflict-affected areas. Without such financial support, there was a possibility for those Tamils to either flee from the country or seek employment in other parts of Sri Lanka. Because these remittances subsidized the Tamils who remained, they indirectly contributed to the ability of the LTTE to recruit cadres by keeping these people in the region (Fair 2007: 182-183) and take the conflict to another level.

Eelam War III (1995-2002)

Eelam War III is the name given to the third phase of armed conflict between Sri Lankan military and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. After the period

of 100 days of cease-fire the hostilities broke out on 19th of April 1995. The LTTE broke the ceasefire and blew up two Sri Lanka Navy gun boats known as SLNS 'Sooraya' and 'Ranasuru'. The new government also then pursued a policy of 'war for peace' (DeVotta 2004: 173). As violence continued in the North, LTTE suicide and time bombs were exploded numerous times in populated city areas and public transport in the south of the country, killing hundreds of civilians.[24] In response to this bombing, the Sri Lankan government outlawed the LTTE and with some success pressed other governments around the world to do the same, significantly interfering with their fund-raising activities.

Exhaustion with the war was building as casualties mounted and there appeared to be no end in sight. By mid-2000, human rights groups estimated that more than one million people in Sri Lanka were internally displaced persons, living in camps, homeless and struggling for survival. As a result, a significant peace movement developed in the late 1990s, with many organisations holding peace camps, conferences, trainings and peace meditations, and many other efforts to bridge the two sides at all levels.

Towards the end of 2001, however, following the September 11 attacks, the LTTE began to declare their willingness to explore measures for a peaceful settlement to the conflict. One reason for this action could have been the fear of international pressure and the direct US support for the Sri Lankan Government as part of the 'War on Terror'. On the other hand, the government was facing increasing criticism over its 'war for peace' strategy, with peace nowhere in sight, and the economy in tatters. After losing a no-confidence motion, President Kumaratunga was forced to dissolve parliament and call for fresh elections. The elections, held on 5 December 2001, saw a sweeping victory for the United National Front, led by Ranil Wickremasinghe, who campaigned on a pro-peace platform and pledged to find a negotiated settlement to the conflict (DeVotta 2004: 177).

On 19 December 2001, amidst efforts by Norway to bring the GoSL and the Tamil Tigers to the negotiating table, the LTTE announced a 30 day ceasefire with the Sri Lankan government and pledged to halt all attacks against government forces. The

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[24] In January 1996, the LTTE carried out one of their deadliest suicide bomb attacks at the Central Bank in Colombo, killing 90 and injuring 1,400. In October 1997 they bombed the Sri Lankan World Trade Centre and, in January 1998, detonated a truck bomb in Kandy, damaging the Temple of the Tooth, one of the holiest Buddhist shrines in the world

new government welcomed the move, and reciprocated it by announcing a month long ceasefire and agreeing to lift a long standing economic embargo on rebel-held territory.

Diasporic Response to Eelam War III

The role of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been an important one in the period after 1995. The work carried out in the international arena remained to be of utmost significance in the period between 1996 and 2002. The individual Sri Lankan Tamils had worked hard amongst the Tamil as well as other diaspora communities to establish the organisational structure that was needed to fight their freedom struggle back in their homeland by visiting them from house to house and country to country. As a result, in the period between 1996 and 2002, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora was able to deliver 20 per cent more than what was expected from their kin groups[25] back in their homeland. It was heart-warming for their kin groups residing in Sri Lanka to know that the Tamils staying abroad from violence and threats still wanted to play an important part for the proud victories that were achieved during the process of demand for the Tamil Eelam. "Because most of the members of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora had family members in Sri Lanka and because most had at least one family member (however near or remote) killed, raped, or tortured in the war," says Southeast Asia expert Christine Fair (2007), "the diasporan Tamils had a strong distrust of Colombo." The powerful Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora had been the key factor that made the LTTE to engage in negotiations with the GoSL.

The LTTE used subversion extensively through its Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora to advance its cause. After settling in friendly host-nation countries, the LTTE set up offices and cells to support the war effort. The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora organized local offices, hence, establishing a global infrastructure to develop and maintain political and diplomatic support, raise funds and procure weapons and equipment by selling the promise of an independent Tamil Eelam. With access to the growing Tamil diaspora, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam developed an extensive global

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[25] Particularly the LTTE, was by that time considered as the sole voice of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

network that used both persuasive and coercive techniques to achieve its end.[26] It was noted by the World Bank (2003) that "Sri Lanka was among the top 20 developing countries that received large amounts of remittances from its diaspora. The Tamil diaspora residing in Canada and Europe had managed to provide substantial resources that sustained both the armed struggle for a separate state and the Tamil refugee communities that were spread across the war-torn areas in Sri lanka. In all there were estimates that the LTTE raised approximately US$ 200 million a year from the diaspora during the conflict, much of which went to procuring weapons" (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

The Period of Peace Process (2002-2005)

The peace process had begun in 2001 when a new government came to power. The two sides formalised a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 22 February 2002, and signed a permanent ceasefire agreement (CFA). Norway was named as mediator, and it was decided that they, together with the other Nordic countries, monitor the ceasefire through a committee of experts named the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission[27] (DeVotta 2004: 177-178). "In August, the government agreed to lift the ban on the LTTE and paved the way for the resumption of direct negotiations with the LTTE. Following the signing of the ceasefire agreement, commercial air flights to Jaffna began and the LTTE opened the key A9 highway, which linked government controlled area in the south with Jaffna and ran through LTTE territory, allowing civilian traffic through the Vanni region for the first time in many years, but only after paying a tax to the LTTE. Many foreign countries also offered substantial financial support if peace was achieved and optimism grew that an end to the decades-long conflict was in sight" (BBC News 26th August 2002).

"The talks were held in Phuket, Thailand in September 2002 and further rounds followed in Norway, Germany and Japan. During the talks, both sides agreed to the

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[26]The LTTE was known to have presence in over 44 countries, of which it had a structured presence in 12 top-level contributing countries‖ such as England, Canada, Australia and the United States (Jayasekhara 2009).

[27] The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) was established as a body that would monitor the ceasefire and enquire into reported violations of the ceasefire agreement. Its members were drawn primarily from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland.

principle of a federal solution and the Tigers dropped their long-standing demand for separate state. This was a key compromise from the LTTE, which had always insisted on an independent Tamil state and it also represented a compromise from the government, which had seldom agreed to more than minimal devolution. Both sides also exchanged prisoners of war for first time" (BBC News 16th September 2002).

However, the talks broke down on 21 April 2003, when the Tamil Tigers announced they were suspending any further talks due to their displeasure at the handling of some 'critical issues'.[28] On 31 October, the LTTE issued its own peace proposal, calling for an *Interim Self Governing Authority* (ISGA).[29] This provoked a strong backlash among the hardline elements in the South, who accused Prime Minister Wickremasinghe of 'handing the North and East to the LTTE'. Under pressure from within her own party to take action, Kumaratunga declared a state of emergency and took three key government ministries, the Ministry of Mass Media, the Interior Ministry and the crucial Defence Ministry. She then formed an alliance with the JVP, called the United People's Freedom Alliance, opposed to the ISGA and advocating a harder line on the LTTE, and called for fresh elections. The elections, held on 8 April 2004, resulted in victory for the UPFA with Mahinda Rajapakse appointed as Prime Minister (BBC News 4th November 2003).

Meanwhile, March 2004 was marked by a split in the LTTE itself when the Eastern Tamils disassociated themselves from the organization under the leadership of Colonel Karuna.[30] The reason for their separation was their allegations against the LTTE that the Eastern Tamils were not given sufficient resources and power positions within the LTTE.

A further conflict of interests between the LTTE and the government of Sri Lanka came into limelight when the country faced the Indian Ocean Tsunami in December

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[28] Among the reasons the Tigers gave were their exclusion from reconstruction talks in Washington DC on 14 April and a more general allegation that they were not receiving the full economic rewards of peace.

[29] The Interim Self Governing Authority was a proposal issued for power sharing in the north and east of Sri Lanka. The ISGA was supposed to be fully controlled by the LTTE and would have broad powers in the North and East.

[30] Colonel Karuna was the Eastern Commander of LTTE and one among the most trustworthy people of Prabhakaran. His dissension resulted in a significant loss to LTTE as he pulled around 5,000 eastern cadres along with him. Some scholars suggest that later on this group started receiving assistance from the Sri Lankan army in attacking and countering the LTTE from the eastern side.

2004. Thousands of people were killed and many more were left homeless. Though aid kept coming from the foreign countries, due to improper distribution the north and the east was left to suffer on their own.[31] This angered the LTTE all the more and they decided that the entire Tamil community would boycott the upcoming elections in 2005. This eventually proved to be fatal to them as the Rajapaksa regime came back to power[32] and upheld its policy of 'war on terror' against the LTTE. Following the elections the LTTE also declared that if proper measures were not taken by the government to meet the Tamil's requirements, they would 'renew their struggle' once again. Even though there was a remarkable decrease in the violence immediate after the Tsunami, yet it could not last for long and violence erupted once again in December 2005, leading to another phase of eelam war at its outset.

Diasporic Response to the Homeland Politics during the Peace Processes of 2002-2005

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora played a very important role in bringing about the ceasefire agreement in 2002 (Fair 2007). Following the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001, the United States and other western countries began to view groups such as LTTE in very different terms. Increasingly, states were inclined to view the LTTE as a terrorist organization rather than an insurgent organization representing the legitimate interests of an oppressed and politically discriminated group. In many cases these states had already impacted banned against the LTTE and supporting the LTTE. However, until 9/11, many states did not prioritize efforts to limit the activities of the LTTE and its supporters (Fair 2005: 145).

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[31] By 24th June, the government and LTTE agreed on the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS), but it received sharp criticism from the JVP, which left the government in protest. The legality of P-TOMS was also challenged in the courts. President Kumaratunga eventually had to scrap P-TOMS, which led to widespread criticism that sufficient aid was not reaching the North and East of the country.

[32] The main candidates for the election, which was held in November, were the UNF candidate, former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe, who advocated the reopening of talks with the LTTE, and the UPFA candidate, Prime Minister Rajapaksa, who called for a tougher line against the LTTE and a renegotiation of the ceasefire. The LTTE openly called for a boycott of the election by the Tamils. Many of them were expected to vote for Wickremasinghe, and the loss of their votes proved fatal to his chances as Rajapakse achieved a narrow win.

After this incident, many overseas Tamils who supported the LTTE were shocked at being cast as a terrorist group. For so long, they had been receiving the recognition of an insurgent movement, hence, they were deeply affected by the western states' stance of having an eye of suspicion towards them all of a sudden. In an effort to shed the label "terrorist", the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community sought the LTTE representatives at home and abroad and encouraged them to abandon the military struggle, pursue a diplomatic solution and restore legitimacy to the cause of Sri Lankan Tamil community[33] (Fair 2007: 188).

Due to this change in the policy towards the LTTE, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community got a chance to cease the donations that they had to give earlier to the LTTE. They used to claim that the government forced them to stop giving the financial aid to the LTTE through their enhanced vigilance and fear of reprisals. However, it was the main preference of the diaspora community itself as they wanted the LTTE to come to the negotiating table with the government of Sri Lanka for a peaceful solution. And since the LTTE relied on the diaspora community for their economic assistance, they had no other choice rather than coming forward for a ceasefire and reach a conclusion through rounds of negotiation (Fair 2007: 189). This changed environment, however, led the diaspora community go at a distance from the LTTE.

Conclusion

The Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas' political activism had emerged well before the start of civil war and certainly before the dominance of the LTTE. The role of Sri Lankan Tami diaspora in influencing politics in Sri Lanka, particularly in providing the ideological basis for Tamil militant secessionism in Sri Lanka, has been noted for a long time (Coomaraswamy 1987). The Tamil diaspora community had throughout the world founded community organizations, websites, newspapers, and radio and TV stations in order to maintain their cohesion with their homeland and support their

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[33] According to some scholars, even before the events of 9/11, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora had started becoming hesitant in supporting the LTTE blindly. Instead they had started asking for their strategy and justifications about the acts of violence against the Tamils in their homeland. There were news about the forcible recruitment of children and the tactic of suicide-bombing that provoked some supporters to question the LTTE's operations and check whether the LTTE ultimately helped or hindered the Tamil cause (DeVotta 2005).

ethnic kin groups in their struggle. Further, many diaspora organizations were set up, to publicize the plight of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and lobby host governments, in the aftermath of the 1977 anti-Tamil riots in Sri Lanka. These included the Ilankai Tamil Sangam, the most active political group representing Sri Lankan Tamils in the United States; the Standing Committee of Tamil Speaking Peoples (SCOT), a London-based group concerned with providing relief to Tamil areas; and the Ceylon Tamil Association (Australia), a strong Tamil community association in Sydney. These groups mobilized within their host-communities, and on occasion even took to the global stage, most notably in 1978 when a London-based Tamil activist addressed the United Nations General Assembly by pretending to be the Sri Lankan Foreign minister and highlighted the 'genocide' of Tamil people in Sri Lanka, before the real foreign minister could reach the stage (Rajasingham 2002). The best demonstration of the diaspora's influence on their homeland politics was the presence of two diaspora Tamils among the four official LTTE delegates to the first session of direct negotiations with the Sri Lankan government in September 2002 (TamilNet 2002).

However, during the years when the LTTE were active, they infiltrated the diaspora community organizations to extract fund for their militant operations in Sri Lanka. Many within the Tamil diaspora communities supported the LTTE voluntarily viewing them as the sole actor with enough power to stand up against the Sri Lankan government (DeVotta 2004). However, there were less obliging members who didn't support the methodology of the LTTE and hence, were hesitant to give funds.[34] Even though they didn't support the LTTE, yet their presence at Tamil public functions, such as "Heroes' Day" celebrations or a march on the legislature, provided strength to their separatist cause.

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[34] Such group of diasporas had even complained later on that the LTTE used coercive methods in gathering donations.

CHAPTER V

The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora's Responses to the Fourth Eelam War: Objectives and Strategies

Introduction

The Eelam War IV is the name given to the fourth phase of the armed conflict between the Sri Lankan military and the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. This phase of the war has been different in comparison to all other three phases as the political scenario and equations at the national and international level changed. The fourth eelam war began in mid-2006 and came to an end in mid-2009. Hence, falling in the category of post-9/11 events, there have been various dimensions of the war that make it different from the previous phases. During this phase of war, there have been various developments at the domestic as well as international politics that led to a different reaction to this phase of war from the international community and the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora as well. The entire world in the post-9/11 era has been very critical of any movement against the state. This, in turn, made the fourth eelam war a terroristic activity when the Sri Lankan state tried to advocate against it. Most of the western states had supported the Sri Lankan state when it declared 'war for peace' in the wake of the 'war against terrorism' that was declared by the U.S. after having suffered the unfortunate 9/11 terroristic attacks.

By the time the fourth eelam war started, the whole world had declared LTTE as the terroristic organization and the support to it from various small organizations were seen as an act of terrorism only. Hence, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, which at one point of time was seen as the 'backbone of LTTE' was not able to support the insurgent movement in their homeland as they were scared to be tagged as 'terrorists'. Apart from this reason, there was another factor that led the diasporas to refrain from contribution and instead support their ethnic kin groups in another way. This factor was the ideological shift among the diasporas which had come as a result of the inclusion of the second generation of the diasporas in their efforts (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

"During the fourth eelam war, it was the second generation who had taken charge of the diaspora protests in a different manner. They were mainly the children of those forced to flee Sri Lanka, rather than those who chose to leave. They were children of Tamils who had endured the discrimination and violence from the Sri Lankan government. Some of these young adults had grown up hearing parents' stories of perilous journeys through illegal traffickers in order to escape or of those who did not survive the escape. This second generation had heard of the riots that had engulfed the island and how they had impacted their parents. These were the formative experiences of their families- and as such, part of the lives of these second generation Tamils. The first-hand accounts of the often violent discrimination their parents faced, embedded into them a strong sense of nationalism from a young age. They were constantly reminded of the persecution their parents had narrowly avoided and knew others in Sri Lanka were still suffering" (Nandakumar 2011: 9). Hence, when the fourth eelam war started there was a flood of these young Tamil diaspora to support its countrymen and make the world realize that the Tamils residing in Sri Lankan were in deep danger.

This can be observed by a statement by one of the young Tamil diaspora activist:

"Like other young members of the Tamil diaspora community, I used to feel that the sufferings of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka seemed so far away, and so distant. However, after attending the protests and knowing about the brutality of the war, I now believe I too have a responsibility to my suffering brothers and sisters in the national liberation struggle" (Tamilnet 2009).

Sri Lanka during the Fourth Eelam War

During the time period of 2006-2009, the armed conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the separatist LTTE was once again a dominant factor on the political scene. "The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that both sides had signed in 2002 had begun to fray within a year only and the two parties had not met across the negotiation table since 2003. There were several alleged violations of the ceasefire during 2002 to 2006, among which the year 2005 alone had witnessed more than 300 violations from both the sides. However, the truce was continued to hold until 2006 despite occasional military clashes and targeted assassinations carried out by both sides. Apparently there were signs in late 2005 that indicated an escalation in the

conflict"[1] (DeSilva 2007: 99). Renewed hostilities began in July 2006 when the Sri Lankan Air Force fighter jets bombed several LTTE camps around Mavil Aru.[2] The northern and the eastern provinces, which became scenes of open conflict, were the ones that were badly affected by the tsunami of 2004. "Even though the initial quarter of 2006 continued to receive a significant aid and remittances from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora to help their people out in recovering from the devastations of tsunami, the northern and the eastern province continued to receive only limited diasater assistance due to the government's partial treatment. This had led Prabhakran state that he would not mind going back to the war if the governemnt's attitude remained the same" (De Silva 2007: 100). Continued clashes and differences between the two sides led to several small but significant conflicts and fightings in the north and other parts of the east of Sri Lanka. The war took on an added dimension when the LTTE Air Tigers bombed Katunayake airbase on March 26, 2007, the first rebel air attack without external assistance in history.

Since there were many differences and both sides never willingly came forward to negotiations, in absence of that, the following months saw increased fighting initially in the east which later on had spread to the northern front in the Jaffna peninsula. "By October, it was clear that both sides lacked sufficient military capability to defeat the other in an armed conflict. Therefore, they agreed to meet in Geneva under the auspices of the four powers promoting peace in Sri Lanka that time The U.S., EU, Japan, and Norway" (DeSilva 2007: 103). However, they failed to reach a consensus[3] and the military conflict continued.

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[1] The victory of Mahinda Rajapakse in the presidential election of November 2005 was widely expected to lead to a harder government line towards the LTTE and Tamils' demands of separatism. He was of the opinion that talks with the LTTE would be held only on the condition of a 'unitary Sri Lankan state'. Furthermore, fears of open warfare increased when Prabhakaran stated that the tsunami of 2004 had opened the options of returning to war.

[2] "Mavil Aru (*Mother River*) is a waterway in Sri Lanka that supplies water to some regions of eastern Sri Lanka. The closure by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), of the sluice-gates of Mavil Aru on July 26, 2006, was a crucial turning point in the Sri Lankan Civil War. With the initiation of 'Operation Watershed', the Sri Lanka Armed Forces undertook to wipe out the LTTE. The armed forces launched air strikes with the aim of capturing the waterway and sluice-gates. On August 11, 2006, the Sri Lankan Armed Forces announced that they had gained full control of the sluice gates of the reservoir" (South Asia Analysis Group, 2006: Paper Number 1908).

[3] "In Geneva, both sides seemed to view peace talks as an instrument to restrengthen themselves and gain an advantage over the other. The LTTE insisted on opening up the A-9 road in order to secure

Another major political development in Sri Lankan politics was the Supreme Court's declaration that the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka (donein 1987) was illegal (DeVotta 2007: 104). Most of the Tamil politicians of Sri Lanka alleged that this was an act of the Sri Lankan government to rupture the foundation of the Tamil demands for separation. A month before that, there was another declaration by the Supreme Court which stated that the international treaties (including those on human rights) would not be applicable to Sri Lanka. These developments gave a clear picture of what the Sri Lankan state had been planning against the Tamils in early 2006.

Events in 2006 resulted in the beginning of heavy fighting. It marked the success of the Sri Lankan military in separating the eastern part from the Northern Province (Wickramasinghe 2008: 191). This success was essentially a result of the split within the LTTE. The military kept the Eastern province under its control till the end of 2007.

The year 2007 started with violence and resulted in displacement of thousands in the east of the island. According to the officer of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of IDPs in the Eastern province was 50,136 individuals (UNHCR Report 2007). The Sri Lankan government, however, kept refusing such allegations and remained unwilling to comply with the international requests for impartial inquiries. During this year the government of Sri Lanka kept refusing the international allegations against it and instead blamed the international community of interfering in its sovereignty. The media of Sri Lanka was termed as 'traitors' when they tried to cover the brutalities done by the Sri Lankan Army to the civilians (Wickramasinghe 2008: 194). This year was also marked by an immense increase in the military budget of Sri Lanka which showed that what the Sri Lankan government did to the Tamils in 2009 was strategically planned way back in 2006-2007 and accordingly policies were made. Also, the political influence in Rajapakse's family was growing by this time that promoted corruption and nepotism while ignoring the spiralling cost of living (Wickramasinghe 2008: 195).

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supplies for civilians residing under their controlled areas before it could reach the government controlled areas. On the contrary, the government insisted that supplies be sent by the sea in order to let the supplies bypasse the LTTE areas. Given the impasse, the both sides failed to reach an agreement" (DeVotta 2007: 103).

It was only in the year 2008 that the open declaration of the Sri Lankan army's military campaign against the LTTE in the north came into limelight. "After declaring an end to the ceasefire, the government authorized General Sarath Fonseka to lead nearly 160,000 well equipped soldiers to crush the 10,000- odd LTTE fighters in a conventional ground offensive. On April 23, the army launched an attack on the LTTE's defences in the Northern Province, which resulted in about 185 troop fatalities. Although the human costs of this offensive were high, the army continued making clear inroads into LTTE territory and weakening the LTTE severely" (Wickramasinghe 2009: 60). This resulted in displacement of about 450,000 Tamils from their homeland both internally as well as externally.

"The year 2008 was punctuated by a spate of bombings and political killings across the country, not only in the North and the East" (Wickramasinghe 2009: 61). On one hand, the Sri Lankan army continued to carry their acts of massacre in the North and the East, on the other the LTTE retaliated by continuously targeting Sinhalese ministers and political leaders in the southern areas of Sri Lanka.[4] Several hundred young Tamils had disappeared in the northern and eastern Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government was also accused of indiscriminately bombing the LTTE-controlled areas, including those where civilians resided. Sri Lanka's increasingly dismal human rights record had by mid-2008 antagonized international human rights bodies and other countries as well. Eventually, this led Sri Lanka to lose its seat on the U.N. Human Rights Council in May 2008 (Wickramasinghe 2009: 65). The governemnt's "war for peace" strategy in the north and its revitalization of the political processes in the East did show signs of tackling the LTTE insurgency but at the same time it proved its incapability in handling the root cause of the insurgency. "By claiming that terrorism was the gravest threat facing Sri Lanka, Rajapkse's government had given itself a license to use undemocratic, often brutal methods to govern over the minorities in the country" (Wickramasinghe 2009: 65).

"Political developments in Sri Lanka in 2009 centered primarily around the end of the protracted civil war between the state and the LTTE with the total military defeat of the latter. The final collapse of the LTTE military machine, built over 25 years of war,

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[4] For example, the year started with the assassination of Minister of Nation Building D.M. Dassanayake by a roadside bomb in the town of Jaela, 19 kilometres north of Colombo. On February2, 2008, 20 Buddhist pilgrims were killed in the town of Dambulla in north central Sri Lanka by alleged, but not proven, LTTE militants (Wickramasinghe 2009: 64).

was the main political development in 2009" (Uyangoda 2010: 104). While the war was on its peak during the early and mid-2009, the government of Sri Lanka had assured the Tamils as well as the international community that once it was done with the task of uprooting the 'terrorist organization' LTTE from its territory, it would definitely address the Tamil demands in an appropriate way. This was done in the wake of various allegations and criticism from the international community that the Sri Lankan State was trying to pull out of the problematic contents rather than addressing the problem itself. Hence, a political reform was assured by the Sri Lankan government in order to silence its critics. In this context, a committee, formed way back in 2006, the Tissa Vitharna Committee[5] was given the responsibility to bring about a political solution to the issue and create an all party consensus for it. It was supposed to address the ethnic equation between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka and reform it in such a way that none could claim that injustice was done to them. The committee had proposed in 2008 the implementation of constitutional provisions to devolve power from the centre.[6] However, as expected the Sri Lankan state rejected these proposals and started rendering the committee as irrelevant (Uyangoda 2010: 108-109; Wickramasinghe 2009: 60).

"There were, of course, good reasons from the government's perspective to avoid directly addressing the political aspects of the ethnic conflict through an aggressive state reform initiative" (Uyangoda 2010: 109):

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[5] "President Mahinda Rajapaksa on 11th July, 2006 at the All Party Conference (APC) appointed a committee of representatives of the parties at APC called the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) and mandated it to formulate a draft proposal for Constitutional reform. The President mandated the APRC to evolve a "home grown new constitution" which will provide "a comprehensive approach to the resolution of the national question". This panel of experts after deliberating among themselves produced two reports which were made available to the APRC in December 2006. Based on these two reports the Chairman of the APRC Prof. Tissa Vitharana on 13th August, 2007 presented a draft containing the main features to form the basis of a new constitution. This draft contained 21 Chapters of various aspects of a new constitution and since August 2007 for almost two years APRC discussed each of the chapters separately seeking inputs from political parties through their representatives at the APRC. These discussions finally came to conclusion in June, 2010 (completing 128 meetings) by which time the committee reached consensus in respect of almost all the chapters. And it was agreed based on this consensus that a final report be compiled by the chairman. Accordingly a final report was compiled and presented to the President in 2010 under which the basic problem was addressed to some extent. However, it never got implemented and the President has been thinking over to dissolve the committe itself. (APRC Final Report).

[6] "The 13th Amendment to the Constitution, introduced in 1987 at the behest of the Indian government, creates a system of provisional councils for the devolution of power. The singular provincial council for the Northern and Eastern Provinces has not functioned since 1990. The functioning provincial councils lack the full power and authority provided for them under the constitution including powers concerning land, policing and general law and order matters. Successive governments since 1987 have failed to fully implement these reforms" (Uyangoda 2010: 109).

i. Rajapkasa has been enjoying the power because of the support of a coalition that is hard-core Sinhalese nationalist parties which have been opposed to any kind autonomy to the Tamils.

ii. Since the power holders in the Sri Lankan state come from the Sinhalese parties, they have been so obsessed with the "unitary state" that they refuse to realize that there has been any issue regarding the ethnicity in their country and so far the LTTE is concerned, they considered it as a terrorist organization rather than insurgents.

iii. Since the international community had been pressurizing the Sri Lankan state to take a concrete action to deal with the ethnic conflict, the Sri Lankan state just does not want to give up under the pressure and delaying the devolution of power is considered as a sign of maintaining its sovereignty.

"The Sri Lankan politics reached an unexpectedly dramatic phase in late 2009, when in November, President Rajapaksa announced the decision to hold presidential elections in January 2010, even though his official term did not end until December 2011. Clearly, he wanted to get himself re-elected to a second term with a massive majority while the memory of his government's victory over the LTTE remained fresh in the minds of the electorate. Retired General Fonseka, who headed the Sri Lankan army during the final war against the LTTE, decided to challenge Rajapaksa as the main opposition presidential candidate. Serious differenced developed in the end of 2009 between the president and his erstwhile Defence Chief which had been continuing till date" (Uyangoda 2010: 110).

This year was also marked by a dramatic shift in Sri Lanka's foreign policy as it drifted away from the Western powers and started moving closer to Asian as well as Middle East countries. The main reason for such a shift was that while the Western powers linked their economic arrangements as well as relations with the basic human rights and questioned Sri Lanka on war crimes, on the other hand, the Asian and the Middle East countries kept these at a distance. They didn't link their economic and political ties with the 'internal issues' of Sri Lanka (Uyangoda 2010: 107).

Finally, the eelam War IV ended on 18th May 2009 with the Sri Lanka Army gaining control of the last bit of territory held by the LTTE and with the death of the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. The final few days of the war in the north saw very

heavy fighting and led to Sri Lankan forces being accused of war crimes, which were denied by the government. Some 300,000 Tamil civilians who were trapped inside the war zone and prevented from escaping by the LTTE were caught in the cross-fire during the final phase of the war. "The Rajapksa administration continued its aggressively defensive diplomatic policy toward the West in later half of 2009. On a number of occasions, it reacted angrily to U.N., EU and Canadian attempts to send envoys to Sri Lanka to report on the human rights and humanitarian conditions"[7] (Uyangoda 2010: 108).

Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora's Response to the Final Phase of Eelam War

Since 2006, with resumption of military confrontations between the Sri Lankan Army and the LTTE, hostilities on the island escalated. In the initial years the diaspora community continued with raising their voice in favour of their Tamil people in Sri Lanka. It was only in August 2006, when the Sri Lankan Army had bombed an orphanage school[8], where a number of girls were receiving first-aid training, that the diaspora political activism took another turn and they became the first one to raise voice against the Sri Lankan state (Nandakumar 2011: 7).

"There was an outcry of grief from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community, who along with the Tamil people in Sri Lanka, held memorial events in their respective countries. This solidarity between the Tamils on the island and those abroad has remained resilient since the formation of the diaspora and has been strengthened by travel, communications and interaction during the ceasefire between 2002 and 2006. Events such as this and 'Pongu Thamil'[9] (Tamil uprising) occurred simultaneously

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[7] For instance, in June 2009, Bob Rae, a leading Canadian politician, was deported back to Canada immediately upon arriving at the Colombo airport. Government officials also entered into a bitter public controversy with British Foreign Secretary David Miliband over humanitarian issues, and Human Rights Commissioner Navnithan Pillai was at the receiving end of repeated criticism by Sri Lankan government officials over similar matters.

[8] Known as 'Chencolai Attack', it marked the death of 55 school girls and staff. The Sri Lankan government claimed that they targeted a LTTE training facility, but UNICEF and Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) publically confirmed the target was an orphanage. This attack was the beginning of the steady increase in violence and aggressiveness the Sri Lankan Army executed against the Tamil people.

[9] Pongu Tamil (or Tamil Uprising) is an event that is held in support of "Tamils Right to Self-Determination" and "Tamil Traditional homeland". Pongu Tamil was first organized in Jaffna on

among the Tamils in Sri Lanka and across the world, reaffirming the bond that bound the Tamil nation together despite location" (Nandakumar 2011: 7).

Previous protests had seen many recent migrant youths participating but during the fourth eelam war, a new generation of Tamils had also joined the efforts of supporting the Tamil Eelam. As stated earlier, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora was born out of the events of 1983 primarily. Hence, by the time the fourth eelam war had started these people had well settled, making their family and a permanent source of living in their host countries. Many of these had also got the citizenship in their host countries by 2006. Hence, when the fourth eelam war started, it saw the newer generation of Tamils coming forward in support of their people but in a different way than their parents and grandparents. "Instead of giving an unconditional financial aid to the LTTE, they wanted a peaceful negotiation with the government of Sri Lanka" (International Crisis Group Report 2010). "This generation had grown up during the many years of war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government. They had access to reports throughout the years of key battles, as well as almost daily reports of human rights abuses" (Nandakumar 2011: 9). Having been brought to a new country in their early age, this generation has imbibed their host countries' values and traditions, speak their host country's language with fluency and have been living according to their host states' lifestyle. They remain less hesitant as compared to their parents and elders. They considered themselves a native of their host country and they remain aware of their rights and duties towards their host country as well. However, this hasn't made them forget about their Tamil origin. Being conscious about their Tamil identity and also connecting themselves to their host country's laws, has enabled these new generation Tamil diaspora to bring a new dynamics to the Tamil struggle all over the world. This in turn has reshaped and reformed the manner of their involvement in the struggle of Tamils in Sri Lanka and also there has been an intensification of the zeal to do something for them even if they are miles away.

According to Orjuela (2008), the major *objectives* of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora during the fourth eelam war were:

January 2001 by students of the Jaffna University. The event was organized in response to alleged disappearances, mass graves and abuses under the government's military rule and was designed as peaceful protest. In the recent years some members of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora have also picked up on the notion and it has become an annual event in the countries they reside. In 2008, the event was held in New Zealand, Norway, Denmark, Italy, South Africa, France, Australia, England and Canada (Tamilnet 2009).

- Lobbying their host governments.

- Raising awareness among their host country's non-Tamil population as well.

- Mobilizing the Tamil diaspora towards the formation of an opinion about their homeland.

- Shaping the views of their host government as well as host country's population about matters and issues in Sri Lanka.

- Investing in Sri Lanka with a view towards shaping the political structure and help maintaining the Tamil demand justified.

To fulfil these objectives the diaspora had to opt for a much focussed strategy that would lead them to attain their stated goals. The strategies of the diasporic acts included various actions that supported their objectives.

- **Lobbying the host governments**

The diasporas had been indirectly involved in the war. And since, 9/11 their support to the LTTE, be it direct or indirect was always considered illegal as their host countries had banned LTTE by tagging it as a 'terrorist organization'. Hence, in order to gain the identity of an insurgent movement back, it was necessary for them to pressurize the host government to lift the ban as well as ask the Sri Lankan government to stop the war and save the innocent Tamils in Sri Lanka (International Crisis Group Report 2010). In order to lobby their host government they had to make their positions strong enough in their host societies.

Increased participation in host land's electoral politics

Since the fourth eelam war happened in the post-9/11 scenario and by the end of 2006, approximately every other country had banned the LTTE as a terrorist organization, hence, the diasporas main objective was to get the ban lifted and show the world that the LTTE was misunderstood to be a terrorist organization. It realized that mere protesting against the host land laws would land them in trouble as well. Thus, their main strategy to act towards it was to participate in the politics of their host land and then influence its policies towards both the LTTE as well the Sri Lankan state (International Crisis Group Report 2010: 15; Nandakumar 2011: 8). They understood very well that if they had some things to be done by their host state, they would not be able to do it if they stood against the host government. Hence, the

only way to influence the host government was to create an influential position of themselves by participating in their politics as well. Their main agenda remained getting Tamils elected to office and using electoral clout and money to influence policy makers.[10]

Creation of organizations: British Tamil Forum (BTF)

Formed in 2006, this organization was an initiation of the British Tamils. It aims at the political mobilization of both the Tamil diasporas and the British political establishment, both politicians and officials. Since they have a huge membership (around 10,000), they have managed to organise mass movements at a grand level that could draw the attention of the British government as well as British people towards their cause. On 16th July 2008, the BTF displayed a photo exhibition, sponsored by the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tamils (APPG), which was held in the British Houses of Parliament premises on the anniversary of the Black July pogrom, and marked 50 years since the 1958 riots on the island. "Photos depicted political figures", according to BTF, "responsible for structural and physical violence in the North-East since Ceylon's independence from Britain as well as victims of the Sri Lankan civil war". The event was attended by MPs of all parties, Members of the House of Lords, Former Cabinet Ministers, Mayors, Councillors, University students, and representatives of international & UK organisations. Attendees included three MPs of the Tamil National Alliance - Ms Padmini Sithamparanathan, Jayananthamoorthi and Gagendran, a representative of the Sri Lankan High Commissioner in London, Labour Party MPs Joan Ryan, Virendra Sharma, Keith Vaz, Andy Love and Lord Waddington QC of the Conservative Party. Keith Vaz stated that "in his 21 year career in politics, he had never seen a protest as large as it in London". Addressing the crowd, he challenged "the Indian High Commission to pressurize Colombo to give peace a chance" (Tamilnet 2008).

According to the International Crisis group Report (2010: 15), for the past several years, the Tamil diaspora organizations like the British Tamil Forum (BTF) and Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) have organised Tamil votes for parliamentary

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[10] For instance, Janani Jananayagam, who ran in the June 2009 European Parliamentary elections, received over 50,000 votes, which was more than the combined vote for all other independent candidates in the UK. Jananayagam, a banker and spokesperson for TAG, ran in London where thousands of Tamils saw her as a vote for Tamil Eelam (BBC news report 2009).

candidates sympathetic to their cause. Moreover, the population of the Tamil diaspora in some countries has been so dense that it becomes almost impossible for politicians seeking election to ignore the Tamil issues in Sri Lanka.

As the war escalated, the Sri Lankan Tamils abroad became more and more frustrated at the perceived lack of action by the international powers. There were several protests against the resumption of hostilities all over the world but the majority of protests were carried out in the United Kingdom[11] as the diaspora group there has always been politically more active than the rest of the world.

- **Raising awareness among the host country's non-Tamil population**

Through the several protests[12] and demonstrations the diasporas got an opportunity to vent out their frustrations at the actions of the Sri Lankan government and appeal for help from their host governments and the international community as well. Thus, as the war raged, the outrage of the Tamil diaspora grew across the globe. Almost daily, reports emerging from the war zone cited hundreds of civilians' casualties and the use of chemical weapons. Many Tamils abroad had relatives among civilian casualties. Thus, to raise awareness about the conditions of their homeland, various forms of protests and demonstrations were carried out at several places all around the world which helped them to get connected with both Tamils as well as non-Tamil populations in their host society and understand their viewpoints. Hence, civilian suffering was the main cause for the youth joining the protests.

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[11] In the United Kingdom, there were several protests during the fourth Eelam war, outside Downing Street, Parliament Square, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Hyde Park, attracting thousands of people. The Tamils in the UK gathered, shouted slogans and held signs, urging the British government to intervene and save innocent lives.

[12] "When it was discovered, that the Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapakse was to visit the United Kingdom, just a few weeks later, a mass protest was organised. As the situation in the Tamil homeland deteriorated, the numbers attending the protests grew, with over thousands of people of all ages, from the elderly with walking sticks to babies in prams, attending the demonstration outside the Houses of Parliament in Westminster. The eight hour protest saw slogans chanted through megaphones and placards displayed with pictures of Tamil civilians that had been massacred and scenes from the war. Also a signed petition was handed over to the then Prime Minister Tony Blair" (Nandakumar 2011: 7-8).

Holding processions and road blocks

During the last phase of the fourth eelam war, there were reports that the government of Sri Lanka, in the name of war, had actually been carrying out genocide of the Tamils. The sense of injustice and brutality provided a momentum to the Tamils abroad and they started getting mobilized to protest in their respective homelands through blocking the roads and making their presence felt by the people of their host country as well as the host government. Many scholars have termed this way of protest as 'non-violent civil disobedience' as the diasporas remained calm and their main motive remained to be a peaceful protest demonstration (Tamilnet 2009).

As a part of the protests the diasporas used to rally around in major parts of the city and expressed their anger as well as dissatisfaction with their host government as well as the Sri Lankan government. Evenings were marked by a greater rush and inclusion of the Tamil people into the protests and instead of returning back they used to stay for the entire night or until some concrete actions were taken by the international community against the Sri Lankan state. Banners were held which condemned the act of the Sri Lankan government as well as appealed the international community to not to keep numb on killing of innocent people. Usually these rallies and protests were also marked by the hoisting of the Tamil Eelam national flag and slogans were shouted appealing for help by men, women and children. However, there were in some instances some sort of clashes[13] with the authorities but these clashes could not lower the enthusiasm of the diasporas. Instead, it provided more solidarity and strength to them (Nandakumar 2011: 10).

According to Nandkumar, "Regardless of the differences in their political views of individuals within the Tamil diaspora, they all banded together to make a stand against the killing of civilians in Sri Lanka. They were united in their grief and outrage. The frequency of the road blocks were increasing day by day and it had so

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[13] For instance, in the United Kingdom, when the Tamil diaspora protested and hoisted the Tamil Eelam national flag at the Parliament Square, the police considered them as illegal because under the UK Terrorism Act the Tamil Eelam flag was considered as the LTTE symbol and hence, it was banned. This drew a sharp criticism among the diasporas who stood by the fact that it was not the symbol of LTTE but the symbol of independent Tamil Eelam and by hoisting the flag they meant to support the cause of their independent Eelam. The ban on LTTE was itself something that many protestors disagreed with and they called for the ban to be lifted. The failure of the authorities to understand the distinction between a national flag and symbol of the LTTE made these diasporas isolated and strengthened their resolve even further (Tamilnet 2009).

much impact that the Parliament Square in London was now being called "Eelam Square" by some.[14] What was astounding was that this was not just confined to London. Within days similar protests and road blocks occurred in Oslo, Canada, Paris and many other cities around the world" (Nandakumar 2011: 10-11).

In Norway, Tamil Youth Organization (TYO) organized a meeting in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and handed over a memorandum to Raymond Johansen, the Deputy Foreign Minister and Jon Hanssen-Bauer, the special Peace Envoy to Sri Lanka. Swiss Tamil Forum, a confederation of 26 Tamil organizations, held a procession in Geneva and handed over a memorandum to Phlip, D.O.Brien, the Regional Director, UNICEF. More than 3000 people, including many schoolchildren took part in the 1.5 km procession, which started at the Geneva Main Railway Station 3.00 p.m. and ended at the UNICEF Head Office. Sixty one schoolgirls wearing white blouses signifying their dead counterparts, tied their mouths with black bands led the procession holding candles. Well known Human Rights Activists, Rev. Fr. Immanuel and C.V.Kirubaharan from International Tamil Human Rights Organization handed over the memorandum and explained about the unjust situations in Sri Lanka (Tamilnet 2009).

Diaspora Tamils around the world held protest marches and vigils to condemn the aerial attacks of Sri Lankan Air Force (SLAF) that reportedly killed innocent Tamils in Sri Lanka. Participants urged the international community to intervene to stop the atrocities of Sri Lanka armed forces and paramilitaries against Tamils in the Northeast (Tamilnet 2006). "There were no communications between the protestors in their respective cities, but a sense of solidarity guided their actions. A decision had been made in the hearts and minds of the Tamil diaspora that injustice was being done to their people in their homeland and they needed to take an action for them. The

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[14] "On April 6, 2009, thousand of protestors were present at the Parliament Square and by evening their number had swelled to over 5,000, overflowing the Parliament Square and spilling onto the roads of Westminster, blocking the bridge and surrounding the Houses of Parliament, expressing their outrage at the ongoing genocide in the Vanni region of Sri Lanka. For the next 73 days and nights the British-Tamils continued to protest at the square. The square was constantly full of noise, slogans were chanted throughout the night and silence came only for 1 minute at 9pm everyday to remember those who had died. What was evident to those who were present there almost everyday was that the numbers of people present swelled immensely as the shelling and civilian casualties intensified. On some days, there were reports of chemical weapons being deployed by the Sri Lankan Army, which caused Tamil protestors to rush to Parliament Square. This again caused numbers to grow so much that they once again began to block the roads" (Nandakumar 2011: 10; Press reports at http://news.bbc.co.uk and http://Tamilnet.com).

spontaneity of the protests in London mobilized the global Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora into action" (Nandakumar 2011: 11).

A remarkable thing about these road blocks was that being under the new leadership of the younger generation of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, these protests showed their concerns for their host country's people as well. During these road blocks, while the protestors appealed the people in their host country and the host government for support. They also kept apologizing for causing traffic jams and disrupting the regular routine of their host society. This showed that the younger generation was very tactful in handling these protests as they wanted to assert themselves without bothering their host governments. And eventually, they did succeed in grabbing the attention of the national as well as international media by these kinds of lawful protests where nobody was harmed and people just tried to present their viewpoint and appeal for help. The whole world took note of it and there were talks at international organizations on this issue. This young generation did make a difference in the level of protests as it captured the headlines of the news everywhere around the globe.

Acts of Self-immolation

One of the most critical way of reaction from the diasporas to the last phase of war in their homeland occurred in form of self-immolation acts.[15] In India, at least eight people self-immolated, including a family man and a worker of ruling Congress party. In Malaysia, a Tamil man of Sri Lankan origin also self-immolated himself, calling on US President Barack Obama to stop Colombo's war (Tamilnet 2010). These acts demonstrated the desperation of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora suffering from the helplessness and inability to stop killings. "While self-immolation has long existed in South Asia culture (such as the Buddhist monks who used self-immolation to protest against US involvement in Vietnam), this was the first time that the Tamil diaspora had resorted to such extremes. Those self-immolating were well educated, deeply concerned members of the diaspora community. They ultimately felt they had no

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[15] "In Chennai in January 2009 a 26-year old Tamil activist, K Muthukumar, doused himself in petrol and set himself on fire as an act of protest against the Sri Lankan government and the failure of the Indian government to save the Eelam Tamils. He died after 90 minutes. When asked by a doctor 'why an educated person like himself had committed self-immolation?', he had replied that "several thousands of more intelligent and educated Tamil people were dying" in Eelam and that he "intended to save thousands of lives by sacrificing himself." Muthukumar's death sparked off a series of immolations, mainly in India, but also in Malaysia" (Tamilnet 2009).

option other than to take their own lives, in this extreme and non-violent form of protest. The impact of these events sent shockwaves throughout the diaspora, with thousands attending Varnakulasingham's funeral.[16] However, later on when their host governments failed to take some concrete actions despite the self-immolation acts of the diaspora, the Tamil diaspora came to realize that the people had given their lives in vain, spurring tremendous frustration among the Tamil people" (Nandakumar 2011: 8-9; Tamilguardian 2010).

Boycott campaigns

Tamil activists from Washington D.C. metro area and suburbs engaged in "boycott Sri Lanka campaign." They focused their attention on the GAP and Banana Republic stores as part of the campaign organized by the United States Tamil Political Action Committee (USTPAC) and the 'No To Sri Lanka' teams. Many people had crossed the state border to Virginia to participate in the protest. The protesters made certain that all receptive customers were given a leaflet explaining the objective of the boycott. Young participants made the protest more palatable to the shoppers. They opted for effective ways to send their message to the big-label companies, including Gap, Banana Republic, and Nike that 'ethical shoppers would not tolerate companies doing business with the governments that are gross human rights violators'. The campaign group continued to target Gap and Banana Republic in different locations later on also (International crisis Group 2010: 16; Tamilguardian 2010; Tamilnet 2010).

Hunger strikes

Across the globe, the diaspora Tamils conducted hunger strikes to draw attention to the situation in Sri Lanka and to call for an immediate ceasefire in order to save the civilian population that remained the target of the Sri Lankan government onslaught. As with the protests and marches, youth had taken the lead in the hunger strikes too. Many supporters compared the efforts of the hunger strikers to that of Lieutenant-

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[16] In the West, a British-Tamil, Murugathasan Varnakulasingham, had set himself on fire in front of a United Nations' office in Geneva, and there were reports of atleast two more attempts outside Downing Street in London later that year (http://www.tamilguardian.com).

Colonel Theleepan, a Tamil Tiger commander, who sacrificed his life for his countrymen while fasting in 1987.

The initiative was once again taken by the British-Tamil community when two men[17] began a hunger strike in London in April 2009, wowing not to take food or water until their demands were met. This made the British MPs promise to arrange meetings with the UN, the US and the EU. However, both wowed to return to their fast with no food or liquids if the meetings proved unfruitful.

The hunger strikers demanded that food and medical aid should be allowed to reach the civilians immediately. The diaspora organised ship carrying humanitarian supplies to North-East Sri Lanka. The main demand of the hunger strikers was 'immediate and permanent ceasefire'. They demanded the UN to conduct a referendum on Tamil sovereignty if the international community had any doubts about the wish of the Eelam Tamils and the members of the Tamil diaspora, who at one point of time were forced to leave their homeland due to the military aggression carried by the Sri Lankan state, should be given the right to vote in the referendum (International Crisis Group Report 2010: 21).

David Parajasingham, a spokesman for the British Tamils' Forum, said that he was concerned that the hunger strike would spread. "If our demands for the cessation of the genocide in Sri Lanka are not met, I fear this protest will escalate by others joining them," he said. "In our culture, when people do this, they follow it through. They are not afraid to die" (Tamil Guardian 2009). His words turned into reality soon when the Tamil diasporas all over the world eventually joined in this effort of the diaspora Tamil students in various countries, who sat on hunger strikes to pressurize the international community and governments to open their eyes and look at the genocide that was happening to innocent people.

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[17] Sivatharsan Sivakumaraval, 21, ended his protest after gaining assurances that he could travel to the United States, European Union and United Nations to discuss the plight of Tamil civilians with the authorities. Sivakumaraval said he had agreed to drink water after being promised that he would be able to take part in talks on the plight of Sri Lankan Tamils. His fellow hunger striker, 28-year-old student Prarameswaran Subramaniam, agreed to take liquids but continued his fast next to the Houses of Parliament in London, with doctors monitoring his condition (Tamilnet 2010).

In Zurich, four Tamil youth undertook fast as a protest against the actions of the Sri Lankan government. More than a thousand diaspora Tamils of all ages participated in the protests across the country, with many travelling to Zurich to sit with the hunger strikers and share their emotional burden. In Ottawa, six Tamils, V. Yogendran, M Sivaneswari, 54, K Thulasigamany, 59, Julius James, 34, N Pushparajamani, 46, and N Thaiyalnayaki, 67, also went for a hunger-strike. They had undertaken this extreme form of self-deprivation to highlight the plight of their friends who had been facing a deadly situation in their own country (Guardian 2009).

In Paris, four Tamil youth[18] under the age of 30 sat on fast unto their death. They demanded an immediate action on part of the entire international community to impose ceasefire and stop the genocide of Tamils by Sri Lanka state, immediate provisions for making the humanitarian assistance reach the people trapped in the 'safe zone', a cessation to attacks on civilians using chemical weapons by the Sri Lankan army and a lifting of the proscription on the LTTE. Day and night, thousands from the Tamil Diaspora in France, including mothers, children and elderly, sat with the fasters, taking part emotionally in the protest in the face of lashing rain and the biting cold (Tamileelamnews 2009).

- **Mobilizing the Tamil diaspora for creating an opinion about their homeland**

The main aspect of the diaspora activities remained to keep mobilizing the Tamil diaspora all around the world so as to have a firm ground against the Sri Lankan state. It was realized that until unless the diaspora Tamils were in a significant number, the international community would not pay heed to their demands. Hence, mobilizing and encouraging the diaspora Tamils was an important thing.

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[18] Selvakumar Alfred, 27, Anandakumaraswamy Raviraj, 26, Vigneswaran Varunan, 23 and Shanmugaraja Navaneethan, 26 were the four Tamil youths who continued to fast unto death. They began their fast on 9 April, sitting near the Wall for Peace in Paris near the French Military Academy. Members of Tamil Youth Organization (TYO) in France distributed pamphlets describing Sri Lanka government's genocide of the Tamils to the tourists who visit the Wall for Peace monument from all over the world.

Use of cyber space for gathering support for an independent eelam

Equipped with recent advances in technology, the use of cyber space by the newer generation of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora was used as a powerful tool to gain a firm ground against the Sri Lankan state. As the war turned more ugly and severe, the nationalist feelings got intensified among the diasporas all the more despite the fact that they remained miles away from their homeland. The internet became a primary source of information and communication and provided a connection between the diasporas and the Tamils of Sri Lanka. This wave of nationalism was more evident in those Tamils who had never ever been to their homeland but still their connections remained as strong as the first generation Tamil diaspora.

A website known as 'Thesamnet' was formed in 2007 to highlight the instances of oppresiion in Sri Lanka by the Sri Lankan Army. The Tamil diaspora felt that there was insufficient coverage by the media of the incidents that involved brutal killings of the innocent people. This site also began to function later on as a rallying point where Tamils with different political opinion could share their views on issues such as recognition of a historic Tamil homeland, the Tamil nation etc. (Vimalarajah 2011:).

Use of Facebook

"Facebook was, and still is, one of the main sources of information and ground of activity for many second generation activists. As a social networking site with over 350 million active users, it was very popular among many of the second generation Tamils" (Nandakumar 2011: 12). They posted news updates as they updated their status, which alerted their friends to current events. Another trend that had emerged during the early phase of the fourth eelam war was the use of Facebook profile photos.[19] These people adopted the photos of the civilian casualties as their main profile picture, so that anyone who visited their page would have an idea about what was going on in Sri Lanka. One hugely popular image bore the slogan "Stop Sri Lanka's Genocide of Tamils". This not only showed their sentiments on the war, but also an provided an idea about their political views,[20] and made the common man also

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[19] A profile photo is the main image displayed on any Facebook user's profile.

[20] The most famous member of the Tamil diaspora is the singer Maya Arulpragasam, known as M.I.A., who famously boasted on her first album, "Arular," named after her Tamil separatist father: "Like

aware of the devastating situations in Sri Lanka (Nandakumar 2011: 12-13). Another crucial property of the Facebook that was used to propagate their viewpoint was the user groups.[21] These groups were designed to "appeal as many as possible" and hence, were named as 'Boycott Sri Lanka Now', 'Contact your MP to stop Genocide', 'Shame Sri Lanka' etc.' (Nandakumar 2011: 13).

- **Shaping the views of their host government as well as host country's population about matters and issues in Sri Lanka**

Apart from mobilizing the Tamils part, it was equally important that the entire international community was mobilized in order to make the Sri Lankan government stop the war which was claiming several innocent lives each day. Several organizations were formed which had the main agenda to propagate the Tamil idea about a separate nation and convey it to the entire international community.

Establishing political organizations: Tamil Youth Organization (TYO)

Again, at the initiative of the British-Tamils, the TYO was created. It focussed on mobilizing and raising awareness among the British population, especially those between the ages of 16 and 30. It worked closely with the BTF and focussed on universities where significant number of young people could be mobilized. It was easy for them to convince more people if they were young and their mindset matched with that of the diaspora (Sarvendra 2011: 21).

Tamil Information Centre (TIC)

The TIC was formed with a motive to initiate advocacy and public campaigns on the Tamil issue to promote just policies and procedures by governments and international institutions; disseminate information and works of creative imagination in order to increase public knowledge on Tamil history, culture and contemporary politics;

P.L.O. I don't surrender." M.I.A. explained to her 31,000 followers on Twitter why many Tamils outside Sri Lanka wanted the struggle for a separate Tamil state to continue, writing: "THE WAR IN SRI LANKA IS NOT AGAINST THE TIGERS, ITS AGAINST THE TAMIL PEOPLE!"

[21] Any user on Facebook can create a group and invite as many people as want. This would help their process of spreading some information among all the people they know. Anything posted of the group's page, everybody linked to it would be notified. Also the regulator could send out messages to all its members and would keep updating the members about the latest activity and information about the situations during the war.

provide facilities for research, consultation, advice and community activities (http://www.tamilinfo.org).

Tamil National Council (TNC)

Another political organization to propagate the Tamil issues and accordingly shape the view of the international community was the Tamil National Council. The major work done by this organization was after the war, in 2010, when the referendum was held. This gave the entire international community a clear message that the Tamil nation was a necessity for the Tamils and they ought to support them (http://www.Tamilnet.com).

Sri Lankan Democracy Forum (SLDF)

The SLDF is another organization that became active during the fourth eelam war in the UK and other 12 countries.[22] It stands for global network of human rights and democracy activists committed to promote democratisation and inter-ethnic co-existence in Sri Lanka. Formed in 2002, it has been continuously campaigning for a permanent political solution that would meet the aspirations of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Hence, they have been really important in achieving the objective of the Tamil diaspora to shape the views of the international community (http://www.tamilinfo.org).

- **Welfare Services**

There have been organizations focussing on the development and welfare needs of the Tamils in Sri Lanka since the time the diaspora community was formed. However, its ability to operate was severely limited by war and later by the lack of means through which to directly access those on the island. Still, many groups have manged to get themselves engaged in various ways such as by running their own orphanages, or by funding hospitals or organizations in Sri Lanka that engage in local humanitarian or development work (Berghof Peace Report 2011). 'White Pigeon' remains one of the largest and best known organizations for welfare and reconstruction work. "Initially set up to fund the provision of artificial limbs for those affected by the conflict, the

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[22] Presently there are people connected to the network in the following countries : Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, India, Japan, The Netherlands, Norway, Sri Lanka, United States

organization was also engaged in fundraising for humanitarian needs that led them to have a say in the policy-making process and in raising awareness about the humanitarian needs of the Tamil people among the non-Tamil population" (Tamilnet 2010). "The Medical Institute of Tamils (MIOT) was formed as a vehicle through which Tamil medical professionals could contribute their skills in their homeland during the fourth eelam war. The Tamil Health Organization (THO) was set up to develop the medical infrastructure of the Tamil areas but since May 2009 they have ceased their activities and are now focussing on the immediate humanitarian needs rather than long-term developments" (Berghof Peace Report 2011).

Thus, to conclude we can say that during the Eelam war IV, while the pro-LTTE elements in the diaspora remained reluctant to support the armed struggle, they preferred the Tigers to be fighting for Tamil Eelam. This shows that there was a shift in their strategy to support the Tamil Eelam, rather than a change in the objective itself. The new strategy attempted to carry forward the struggle in a more transparent and democratic way.

Impact of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora activities

The Tamil diaspora's campaign in the UK to expose Rajapakse's agenda has grabbed the attention of the international community successfully. "Sri Lanka's president hoped to enhance his image as an acceptable leader through his remarks at the Commonwealth Business Forum. Rajapakse's visit was therefore the use of diplomacy both as hard power and soft power. As far as hard power went it would indicate to his enemies – especially the influential Tamil diaspora in the UK – that he possessed the means to counter diaspora activity because as Sri Lanka's head of state he was essentially on par with the British monarch. Therefore, Rajapakse went to the UK with an agenda and to use his power to influence certain outcomes. For the Tamil diaspora this meant it had to not only to thwart Rajapakse's agenda, but substitute it with its own. It was a political move by the Tamil Diaspora to prevent Rajapakse from cleansing the public image of himself and his government. And it was done" (Vimalarajah 2011: 21).

"Through their boycott campaigns, the diaspora Tamils explained to the companies as well as the buyers to refrain from buying clothing with 'Made-in-Sri Lanka label'. Many young shoppers were horrified to learn that part of the money earned from garments sale funds the military that has been committing atrocities against the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Many shoppers did not know that Sri Lanka exported over 50% of its garments to US, and that Sri Lanka was forcibly holding 300,000 Tamils in concentration camps. "This is slavery," many shoppers said after reading the handout, according to those present at the protest" (International Crisis Group Report 2010: 16). "The main motive behind these efforts of the Tamil diasporas was to convey a unified message that by conducting business with Sri Lanka's apparel manufacturing industry, both the seller and the buyer indirectly funded a brutal regime that was responsible for doing possible war crimes, and was holding more than 100,000 Tamil civilians in military supervised camps with little or no freedom of movement. The response from the public was very encouraging. Garment exports to U.S. declined by 19.5 percent contributing to overall Sri Lanka's export earnings from garments and textiles to decline by 4.9 per cent to US dollars 241 million by the mid of 2009" (Tamilnet 2009).

The Facebook 'events' also played an extremely vital role in the organization of the diaspora's protests. By organizing protests and advertising them on the internet, they targeted a key demographic. It advertised the protests to potentially millions of people all around the globe, increasing turnout at the protests, which reached 200,000 participants in the UK alone in April 2009 (Nandakumar 2011).

International Community's Reactions to the Fourth Eelam War

"Regional and international powers (notably India, Japan, the U.S., Britain and Germany) were initially somewhat sceptical about the war's outcome when it started in 2006. India and the U.S. appeared to be reluctantly willing to back the Sri Lankan state's war against the LTTE at that time. Japan and the EU were less enthusiastic, even though each upheld the view that the LTTE had to be controlled in light of its unwillingness to explore a negotiated settlement. In contrast, China, Pakistan and Iran were more unequivocal in their economic, military and political support for the Sri Lankan government and its efforts against the LTTE" (Uyangoda 2010: 105). But as

the time passed, the dominance of the Sri Lankan army was evident to all of them. Hence, gradually the support started coming from the international community to Sri Lanka in carrying out the military operation against a universally banned 'terrorist organization' (the LTTE). However, along with this support there came a view of suspicion on the issue of addressing the root cause of the conflict due to which the world had to witness the emergence of a terrorist organization. While, on the one hand, the international community continued to support the Sri Lankan governemnt's military operation, on the other, it kept pressurizing the government to immediately begin devolving powers in order to ensure minority rights so that such a deadly event would not occur again. There were continuous attempts from various government officials of the Western states[23] to convince Rajapaksa to consider an autonomy solution.

The main focus of the international community immediately after the end of the war was (Uyangoda 2010: 105-106):

i. To ensure early settlements of the displaced Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka.

ii. To bring the post-conflict restructuring process (for eg. Distribution of aids and remittances received from the international community by the Sri Lankan state) under the preview of international organization (such as the United Nations, World Bank or IMF) in order to ensure justice for all.

iii. To ensure that such a war would not re-emerge again by ensuring that proper measures were taken by the Sri Lankan government to devolve powers to the provinces.[24]

These concerns for the innocent Tamil civilians emerged in almost every other country but the Sri Lankan state had a different focus at this time. They refused to consider that there was any ethnic issue left as the group raising trouble over the issue of ethnicity and demanding rights was finished and hence, along with them the

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[23] For example, within four days of war ending, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton telephoned Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa to personally "appeal for political reconciliation" and "speedy resettlement of nearly 300,000 displaced Tamil civilians". Clinton also emphasized the need for "post-conflict power sharing" with Tamils (Daily Mirror 2009).

[24] The Indian Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna called on the government to "now address the root cause of the problem of Tamils that will include devolution of powers to all communities". In the same week, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Sri Lanka to stress the urgent need for early resettlement of internally displaced Tamil civilians who were still in detention camps (Daily Mirror 2009).

demand also met its end. This was not at all acceptable to the international community. As a result, against this backdrop, tensions began to develop between the Sri Lankan government and key international players including the U.S., EU and the U.N. over allegations of human rights violations and war crimes.

The criticism of the international community has been that the Sri Lankan state committed "war crimes" against the innocent Tamil civilians. Amnesty international accused the LTTE also of breaking the international law by using civilians as buffers against the army. A researcher for the organisation stated that there were cases where militants had forced people to stay in rebel-held areas to hamper army operations. The United Nations reported more than 20,000 civilians were killed in this recent war (UNHCR Report 2011).

"Stephen Rapp, the U.S. ambassador at large for war crimes issues, called for war crimes investigation on October 2009. His department submitted a detailed report to Congress about the incidents happened[25] during the recent conflict in Sri Lanka. On October 25, 2009 The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations called for an independent, international investigation of possible war crimes committed during the last few months of the war in Sri Lanka. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of the Norwegian Refugee Council reported that the government of Sri Lanka was holding nearly 300,000 displaced people in military-run internment camps under questionable humanitarian conditions" (Tamilnet 2009).

"A special session of the U.N. human Rights Council (UNHRC) was also held immediately after the war was over where the Sri Lankan government was asked to reply to the criticism posed by the Western states. A group of Western states-including Britain, France, Canada, Germany and Switzerland-had called this session of the UNHRC specifically to discuss allegations of civilian killings" (Sunday Times: May 24, 2009). "For its part, the government of Sri Lanka successfully organized a counter-resolution in support of its actions, backed by India, Russia and majority of the Asian, African and Latin American members of the UNHRC. This counter-

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[25] After the International Council of Red Cross, doctors and government officials left the war zone, only the Catholic priests remained with people until the end. One of the priests, Rev. Fr. Mariampillai Sarathjeevan who was leading the refugees to safety, also died in the war zone. The people and the priest did not have food for five days, and exhausted by months of hardship. Unconfirmed reports indicated that the priest was assaulted by soldiers when he approached them for help.

resolution demanded that the principle of non-interference in domestic matters of sovereign states be upheld" (Uyangoda 2010: 106).

Conclusion

The fourth eelam war gave a new framework for the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community to get involved in its homeland affairs. It brought the moderate and uninterested Tamil diasporas, who would have never been part of anything regarding their homeland, into the mainstream of the Tamil struggle. The feeling of isolation and helplessness made their homeland nationalist sentiments even stronger, despite the fact that the international community didn't support them until 2009. The focus of the diaspora activities remained to be the Sri Lankan government's actions over the period of 2006-mid 2009 and what they perceived as the international community's apparent lack of action and mishandling of the displacement and killing of civilians from 2006 onwards.

Like separatist movements in other parts of the world, the armed struggle for an independent Tamil homeland was sustained for years in large part because of support from this passionate, vocal diaspora living outside the country. For years these communities have rallied around the flag of the Tamil Tigers, officially known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Now that the Sri Lankan military's final assault on the L.T.T.E. seems to have finished them as a military force, Tamils outside Sri Lanka are left to figure out how to continue their struggle to stop "war against Tamils" by the Sinhalese majority on the island.

The idea that Tamils in Sri Lanka face annihilation if they do not secure an independent homeland drives many of the most passionate voices in the Tamil diaspora. On the BBC's Global News podcast, Vinothini Kanapathipillai, who is an editor at the Tamil Guardian, argued that "...the end of the military campaign would not bring peace to Sri Lanka because," she said, "the government has been using the war as a pretext to wipe out the Tamil population". Ms. Kanapathipillai told the BBC's Fergus Nichol: "It seems to me that the conditions that created the L.T.T.E. have not changed and therefore, is this the end for the Tamil resistance against what

we see as genocide and oppression? I would argue not" (BBC News 10th August 2009).

The Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas feel that Sri Lankan mainstream politics has been and will continue to revolve around the ethnic issue that has plagued the country since independence. They are pretty much sure that the Sinhalese government will never give the Tamils their full rights. The way the war was led and the way in which it ended and the destruction of the LTTE have deeply affected the Tamils in Sri Lanka and the Tamil diaspora and have shattered their confidence, regardless of whether they were members, sympathisers or opponents of the LTTE. Since the Tamils in Sri Lanka still face hardships, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community is bound to take a role for itself to continue with the struggle in a democratic manner. This means that the Tamil diaspora would continue to be an extremely vital element of their homeland politics, even if the Sri Lankan state refuses to recognize that. The active participation of the Tamil diaspora at the 2009 protests suggested that a new generation has come forward to carry on the struggle.

CHAPTER VI

The Post-war Transnational Role of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora and its Impact on Homeland Politics

Introduction

An oft-quoted global analysis by the World Bank is, "diasporas activities do not increase the risk of new homeland conflicts nor lengthen their duration, but rather raise the level of living conditions in their homeland following a peace agreement" (Collier and Hoeffler 2004: 563). Conversely, there is a wealth of literature focused on the contributions diasporas make to post-conflict reconstruction and development, and policy makers have been keen to 'tap' these financial and human capital resources through the implementation of new policies and programs (Van Hear et al. 2006). Either way, this implies that diaspora activities greatly impact post-accord situations. For international organizations and agencies involved in this context, the central goal is to build a lasting peace, the key to which is reconciliation. This insures that after the peace builders leave, the population will prefer to build a life together rather than return to war. In relation to this goal, it is important also to ask what influences reconciliation in the diaspora as well, and how this is related to the transnational activities they undertake. Taken together, reconciliatory attitudes and transnational activities may be conceived of as the peace-building capability of the diaspora, and both are crucial in order to gauge the impact they have on their homeland politics (World Bank 2006).

Since the outbreak of open war between the Tamil militant groups and the Sri Lankan state in 1983, the Tamil diaspora has been a central actor in Sri Lankan politics. Diaspora contributions provided money for weapons, and Tamil organizations, generally closely linked to the LTTE, provided the political advocacy in Western countries in support of the struggle for an independent state of Tamil Eelam. At the height of the conflict, which claimed over 100,000 lives, the diaspora contributed an estimated $200 million a year to the LTTE. Since the LTTE's military defeat in May 2009, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been in crisis, and striving towards its

reorientation in a much more difficult political context, without any clear leverage in the homeland and with less influence in its various host countries.

According to the International Crisis Group Report (2010), "Post war era has seen that the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been in the state of anger, depression and denial[1] and has been struggling to adapt themselves to the defeat of the LTTE as well as a major setback to their struggle for autonomy." Since the beginning there has been a mixed feeling towards the LTTE, and, after the LTTE has met its end, the diaspora community stands divided on the issue of how to carry forward the movement for their Tamil brethren. There remains a section within the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community which continues to be a staunch supporter of the militant struggle while there is a section among them who support non-violent political struggle. However, the aim remains to be the same: 'their demand for autonomy', as most of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora still believe that the Tamil rights are never coming to reality until there is rule of the Sinhalese in the island.

Post-war Activities of the Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora

The post-war era is marked by an ideological shift within the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community. Even the pro-Tiger elements have now realized that militancy is not an option if they have to save their ethnic kin groups. Hence, their new agenda has been to get involved in political deals with the Sri Lankan state and continue with their struggle for an independent Tamil state through peaceful means. However, it remains unclear as to what these peaceful methods will consist of, but the decision of continuing with their struggle remains intact even after the defeat of the LTTE.

It was the LTTE that coordinated most of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora activism through its umbrella organizations (Fair 2007: 188). For that reason, it is not surprising that the diaspora would feel the need to regroup or remobilise in order to

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[1] Initially, large number of the diaspora community continued to deny that the LTTE's chief, Vellupillai Prabhakaran was dead and they dismissed the images of his corpse as propaganda of the Sri Lankan state to discourage the Tamil movement. They had also continued to deny that the LTTE recruited children forcibly, and targeted the innocent civilians. Evidences of war crimes done by the LTTE during the final phase of the war have been also denied by them. Instead, the suicide bombings that targeted the innocent civilians were justified by the diaspora communities as the "weapons of the weak".

continue the struggle for Tamil Eelam after the defeat of the LTTE. The remobilization of the diaspora group is still an ongoing process, but the foundation has been laid out in the past two years through three major initiatives in the diaspora community: the Global Tamil Forum (GTF); the referendum on the Vaddukodai Resolution of 1976; and the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE). There have been various other activities also through which the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community has been able to raise its voice in support of their struggle for their Tamil people in their homeland, but these three initiatives remain to be the most important ones. "These initiatives were born out of the belief that Tamil politicians in Sri Lanka cannot express their real political views- including continued support for a separate state- and that is up to the diaspora to push the ideas they cannot safely espouse. The immediate aim has been to convince the Western governments to pressure Colombo to negotiate a political deal with Tamils" (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

- *Global Tamil Forum (GTF)*

Immediate end of the LTTE in May 2009 gave a shock to the entire Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community. But July 2009 was marked by the first new initiative from the diaspora community to show their support for the Sri Lankan Tamil community, by establishing the Global Tamil Forum (GTF).

Global Tamil Forum (GTF) was established in 2009 by a number of grass-roots Tamil groups following the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka. It is the largest Tamil diaspora organisation with members drawn from fifteen countries in five continents. GTF is absolutely committed to a non-violent agenda and it seeks a lasting peace in Sri Lanka, based on justice, reconciliation and a negotiated political settlement. According to the official website of the GTF, it is "an independent, international organization adhering to the principles of democracy and non-violence and deriving its strength from grassroots organizations of the Tamil Diaspora that is willing to work in solidarity with Tamils in Eelam and other communities in Sri Lanka to restore Tamils' right to self-determination and democratic self-rule in their traditional homeland in the island of Sri Lanka that would lead to self-sufficiency, sustainability

and equal opportunity to its people, through its political and economic success by engaging the international community" (http://www.globaltamilforum.org).

Based in London, it aims to be a quasi-advocacy and humanitarian organization that is supposed to draw their host governments' attention on the immediate humanitarian concerns of the Sri Lankan Tamils and establish an international, grassroots and youth based, Tamil democratic political organization that would generate constructive changes through Collective Global Tamils. It seeks to:

i. "Alleviate the physical and emotional suffering of displaced and distressed Tamil people in the internment camps and to advocate for their freedom of movement and immediate rehabilitation in their homes,

ii. Bring to justice those who perpetrated genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Tamil Peoples,

iii. Campaign tirelessly, locally and internationally, to remove the occupying forces of Sri Lanka out from the traditional homeland of Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka,

iv. Prevent the colonization of the homeland of the Tamil people by the Sinhala majority community,

v. Promote health, education, culture and economic development of Tamils in Eelam and the Tamil Diaspora,

vi. To use all resources available to the Tamil Diaspora to establish the Tamil people's right to self-determination and their right to re-establish their nationhood which was taken away by force from them by the succeeding colonial powers including the Sri Lankan government,

vii. Help empower Tamil people in Sri Lanka to take control of their destiny and clearly formulate and promote the benefits of freedom for all in the pursuit of

sustainable growth and prosperity in the self-governing nation of Tamil Eelam.

viii. Empower the Tamil society around the world through education, cultural and economic growth from the grassroots with youth and women involvement in all aspects of social activities" (http://www.globaltamilforum.org)

"In order to achieve these goals, the Global Tamil Forum lays its foundation on the principles of emancipation promoted by Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King to oppose the entire edifice of oppression and discrimination through peaceful means and to champion the rights of Tamil and other communities who have been unjustly deprived of their rights and silenced" (http://www.globaltamilforum.org).

Thorugh this initiative the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora was quick enough to declare that its stand was essentially non-violent in nature and it didn't have any intention to follow the footsteps of the LTTE. However, the Sri Lankan government kept on arguing that the GTF was just a 'cover-up' for what used to be the LTTE. Even though there were allegations, the international community welcomed the initiative and on the inauguration several British MPs addressed the diaspora community acknowledging their effort towards a non-violent method of making their demands.

- *Referenda*

Just after the war ended in 2009, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora sought to lead the movement. Hence, "between late 2009 and early 2010, a series of privately funded referenda were held in the Tamil diaspora communities of Norway, France, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands and the United Kingdom, in order to gauge support for an independent Tamil Eelam" (International Crisis Group 2010: 13).

Voting was done on the issue of support for the Vaddukodai Resolution of 1976 which clearly aimed at creation of a separate nationhood for the Sri Lankan Tamils. These referenda were organized by independent elections professionals, but were sponsored by both pro-LTTE and independent organizations (International Crisis Group Report 2010). For example, in Canada the poll was organized by the Coalition

for Tamil Elections Canada, which is headed by Velupillai Thangavelu, the former vice president of the World Tamil Movement, and was known for financing the LTTE during the war (Tamilnet 2009).

In Norway, the referendum was organised by the Utrop newspaper but conducted by independent Norwegian professionals.

In France, the referendum was organised by The House of Tamil Eelam but conducted by French election officers coming from local government councils.

In Switzerland, the referendum was organised by a Swiss Tamil diaspora organisation but conducted by independent journalists and politicians.

In Germany, the referendum was organised by the International Human Rights Association of Bremen but conducted by independent teachers, NGO workers and politicians.

In Netherlands, it was organised by a Dutch Tamil diaspora organisation but conducted by independent election officials.

In the United Kingdom, it was organised by the Tamil National Council but officiated by independent observers, including councillors and Members of Parliament.

In Denmark, it was organised by the Denmark Tamils Forum but conducted by TNS Gallup.

In Italy, it was organised by independent election commission of Eelham Tamils but conducted by the Co-ordination of Non-governmental Organisations for International Development Co-operation, an Italian federation of NGOs.

In Australia, it was organised by the Tamil Referendum Council Australia but officiated by CPI Strategic, an independent body.

"In a full turn out of the diaspora community, 99 per cent of votes favoured the resolution and stood by the decision of continuing the struggle of their Tamil people in their homeland. Almost entire diaspora participated in holding the referenda and later on in other countries also it was held. This was the most significant political development in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community since the LTTE's defeat. The results underscored the vast support for an independent state in the diaspora and the fact that the polls were held when the LTTE's grip on Tamils was at its weakest

since the start of the war adds greater legitimacy to them. These polls have proved that, at least in the short-term, pro-LTTE elements in the diaspora will use non-violent political methods to continue the struggle for Tamil Eelam. The polls were expensive, which clearly proves the potential of the diapora community to raise funds for a separatist cause even without the LTTE. And the relatively high turnout reiterates the fact that they still are willing to come together for their ethnic kin groups and stand as one with them" (International Crisis Group Report 2010: 14).

This form of self-organised democracy received much attention from the media and the international community as well. This referendum[2] indicated that with the end of LTTE, the idea of self-determination hasn't ended. And eventually this action paved the way for the formation of another democratic initiative: the transnational government.

- *Transnational government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE)*

The Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) is a political formation to win the freedom of the Tamil people on the basis of their fundamental political principles of Nationhood, Homeland and Right of self-determination.[3] Established in the early 2010, the TGTE is supposed to be an ambitious attempt to rebrand the LTTE as a non-violent democratic political body in the diaspora community. Strategically invoking Tamil Eelam to mobilize diaspora support, it is supposed to serve as "the highest political entity to campaign for the realization of the Tamils' right to self-determination" (http://Eelaminexile.com/Eelam-in-exile/govt-of-tamil-Eelam/92-a-booklet-on-the-transnational-government-of-tamil-Eelam.html).

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[2] *"*The Referenda process was both inward looking, uniting and mobilizing the disparate Tamil voices, and outward looking, appealing to the international community to prevent the further erosion of the Tamil identity on the island. The tool of referenda was carefully designe and executed to give the diaspora a space to express its dissatisfaction, resistance and its political stance" (Cheran and Vimalarajah 2010: 20).

[3] Today there are twelve national TGTE branches in Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. The TGTE Secretariat is at Rue de la Servette 1, Geneva, Switzerland.

"Originally proposed by KP[4] before his arrest, the TGTE name smacks of a government in exile with a separatist agenda, something its founders insist is not the case. 'The word 'government' was chosen to convey a sense of authority; and it was expected to be more than just a political or cultural organization', said an executive committee member. A January 2010 report published by its advisory committee states the TGTE 'will be formed very much like a transnational corporation or a non-governmental organization (NGO)'. However, the same document also indicates it will be 'parallel to a government' and will establish 'ministries or legislative committees" (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

Since it is impractical for political leaders and people in Tamil Eelam to participate in the TGTE, only the Tamils in the diaspora are elected to the TGTE through democratic elections.[5] The TGTE aims at working hand-in-hand with anyone working for the well-being of the Tamil people in the island of Sri Lanka, including the political and social leaders of the people in Eelam. TGTE undertakes the following tasks:

i. "Uniting all Tamil entities and elements who subscribe to the fundamental tenets of Tamil political aspirations proclaimed in the Vaddukoddai Resolution, which was subsequently endorsed and mandated in the general election of 1977 and in the Thimbu Principles in 1985.

ii. Working in partnership with the Tamil leadership in the island of Sri Lanka, considering that the political policies and aspirations articulated by the Tamil leadership at consecutive elections in 2001 and 2004 were strongly endorsed and, thereby mandated, by the Tamil people, and other groups that support and advocate for the realization of the Tamils' legitimate political aspirations to regain their sovereignty and the right to self-determination;

iii. Articulating positions for negotiations with the Sinhala nation;

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[4] Selverasa Pathmanathan who was generally known as KP, was LTTE's top overseas operative who got arrested in August 2009. He was the head of the LTTE's newly constituted Department of International Relations and also one of the most senior Tiger abroad. After the LTTE's chief Prabhakaran was killed, he was the one who was supposed to take charge of the organisation.

[5] Presently, New York lawyer Visvanathan Rudrakumaran is the acting head of the TGTE's executive committee.

iv. Establishing direct links with foreign Governments and other international organizations;

v. Working for the social, economic and cultural well-being of the more than one million members of the Tamil Diaspora;

vi. Building a political program with the participation of Muslim representatives, taking into account that the diversity of Tamil and Muslim regions has been used as a threat in the past against the realization of the Tamils' right to self-determination; and

vii. Performing such other tasks as may be necessary to promote the interests of the Tamil people in the North-East of the island of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Diaspora liaising with international nongovernmental organizations and international organizations to ensure that the Tamils' physical survival is guaranteed; to stop the sexual violence against Tamil women; to stop the physical abuse of Tamil children by the Sri Lankan government's mono-ethnic armed forces and ensure their speedy reunification with their families; to ensure the return of the thousands of Tamils held in internment camps to their homes and to bring to justice those who have committed genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity" (http://www.tgte-us.org).

"There has been mixed reactions to the TGTE from both the Tamil diaspora community as well as the Tamils residing in Sri Lanka. In the diaspora community, the hardcore supporters of the LTTE, who still believe in the continuation of a military struggle against the Sri Lankan state, remain unsatisfied with the TGTE. They criticize it by saying that it is merely a remote controlled transnational corporation which is under the control of the leaders who have betrayed the entire Sri Lankan Tamil community by adopting a belligerent attitude towards the Sri Lankan state. The Tamils residing in Sri Lanka also see the TGTE as a dangerous organization because it remains at a distance and no Tamils from the country are part of its decision making authority. Hence, they argue that until unless they have suffered the

pain of a war, they might not understand the real need of the Tamils and might not take a just decision on their behalf" (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

Even the host countries of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora have maintained a distance from the TGTE as controversy and confusion has plagued it. Frustrated by the TGTE's vacillation on separatism, one diplomat called it "just another LTTE front and just another example of LTTE double-speak". The United States government has publicly declared that it does not recognise the transnational government despite its democratic overtures. Nobody as such within the entire Tamil community profess to understand what really the TGTE is. Even the executive and advisory committee members have expressed confusion and scepticism (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

However, these initiatives have now shifted their focus from the right to self-determination to other important issue i.e. human rights violations in Sri Lanka. There have been various activities apart from these initiatives on part of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community to bring the real picture of the Sri Lankan Tamils in front of the whole world and get support for their demands.

- *Creating Awareness Regarding War Crimes and "Genocide"*

Most of the activities of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community have centred on making the world aware of the various war crimes taking place in the Tamil areas of the Sri Lankan territory. Aligned with the TGTE and the GTF, the main work of the diaspora group in the post-war era has focussed on collecting evidences on the war crimes and other abuses done by the Sri Lankan military officials on the Sri Lankan Tamils even though the war is over. However, these efforts are non-violent and remain political in nature. "Their basic motive remains to propagate their feeling of 'being victimized' all around the world and gather support and demand justice for their people who are facing human rights abuses in their own country" (International Crisis Group Report 2010: 15).

A positive outcome of this has been various reactions of the western countries against the Sri Lankan government. There have been initiatives in the United Nations for an

investigation through an international bench over these allegations of the Tamil diaspora group which the Sri Lankan state has been avoiding. Due to this awareness there have been immense increase in the level of support for the Sri Lankan Tamils and the world has become more concerned about their safety.

While there have been great impact of this on their host governments as well as rest of the world, there have been rejections also to some extent. Some countries have been claiming that the reports arranged by the Tamil diaspora groups remain biased and might have no credibility. For instance, the TAG[6] and other Tamil activists organized a 'People's Permanent Tribunal' which in 2010 declared that the Sri Lankan government was guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity on the basis of various evidences that included interviews of the victims and eyewitnesses. However, the credibility of this tribunal was always questioned by the western states as they claimed that there was no action or evidence on the crimes done by the LTTE.

- *Political Lobbying by the Younger Generation of the Tamil Diaspora*

The younger generation of the Tamil diaspora has been immensely active in lobbying their host governments in their support for separate nationhood for their kin groups back in their homeland and this participation has increased all the more after the war has been over. Raised and educated in the West and armed with advance university degrees, these young Tamils[7] seem to possess a better understanding of the political processes. For example, "Organizations like People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (PEARL), comprised of American-Tamil students from the elite universities, have been trying since 2005 to influence the U.S. policymakers by using professional

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[6] Also the Tamils Against Genocide (TAG), was blamed for collecting over $500,000 to retain Bruce Fein, a former U.S. Associate Deputy Attorney General in order to get a report compiled, in which the Sri Lankan state was charged with genocide, war crimes and torture. It was reported that the TAG ignored the war crimes done by the LTTE completely and the one which were noticed were also framed against the Sri Lankan state. A U.S. official familiar with the report said, "That (political bias) makes it (TAG) hard to take seriously" (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

[7] Apart from these political formations, a youth organization called Tamil Youth Organization (TYO) also functions transnationally through country based organizations with a person to coordinate its transnational activities. The TYO was formed a decade ago and had played a crucial role in many international capitals in the protest activities between January and May 2009. Post-May 2009, the TYO seems to function with more independence at the country levels and has maintained contacts with the IDPs in Vanni.

advocacy techniques rather than the bullying tactics of other Tamil groups" (http://www.pearlaction.org). They have also been influential enough in order to bring their host governments to pressurize the Sri Lankan government to come to a ceasefire in the early 2009. Further, their demonstrations and protests have been also attracting the attentions of their host governments towards closure of internment camps and demanding the right for Tamils in Sri Lanka to return to their lands.

The visits of these younger Tamils to their homeland during the ceasefire had been the important element in shaping their political activism. The sufferings of their people throughout the war has made some of them reject violence while there remains a section that wish to take revenge by continuing with the military struggle.[8] Hence, there has been a growing divide among the younger Tamil diaspora as well. While some want to move ahead of the LTTE, there are others that see militancy as the only way forward.

- *Boycotts*

Sections of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora are also engaged in weakening the Sri Lankan economy through international boycotts of Sri Lankan goods as well as the termination of the European Union's 'GSP Plus' trade concession.[9] According to Apparel industry sources, the main benefactors of GSP Plus, "the withdrawal of European Union trade benefits increased the costs and eroded their competitiveness. It had an impact on the industry. Over 50 percent of Sri Lankan apparel exports used to

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[8] In the closing months of the war, many young Tamils believed that if they opted for non-violent means, their democracies would be able to bring a ceasefire settlement between the LTTE and the government of Sri Lanka, thus saving thousands of Tamils' lives. However, this did not happened and it demoralised the Tamils abroad making them lose faith in non-violence and seeing military struggle as the only way to get what they demanded.

[9] The GSP+ gives 16 developing countries access to EU markets with preferential conditions in return for implementing international conventions on human rights, labour standards, sustainable development and good governance. Sri Lanka used to gain about 150 million dollars annually due to preferential tariffs, according to trade estimates. The island's clothing industry was the main beneficiary, using the tax breaks to sell to high street retailers in Europe. The member states of the European Union decided on February 16, 2010 to suspend trade concessions under the Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP +) for Sri Lanka because of violations of human-rights agreements (The Economic Times 17th February 2010).

go to the EU. Whatever apparel qualified for GSP Plus, their costs went up by about 10 percent making the industries to bear the extra cost". Loss of the GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) Plus benefits meant Sri Lankan exporters lost duty free access to EU markets and their shipments were charged an import duty of about 9.6 percent. Many factories were forced to close, resulting in large-scale lay-offs of workers. According to data just released by the Central Bank, earnings from apparel exports fell eight percent to 343.5 million dollars in 2009 from the year before (Bandarage 2010).

To conclude we can say that the diaspora network has influenced the international media, academia as well as the international human rights organizations to present their homeland politics simply centring around the ethnic conflict between a Sinhalese government oppressor and a Tamil minority victim. The diaspora had also been lobbying the international community to stop the Sri Lankan government's military offensive against the Tamils in the island. It has continued to mount human rights violation charges against the Sri Lankan government and to demand international support to establish a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka.

Impact of Post-War Diasporic Activities on Homeland Politics

There was a time when the Tamils in Sri Lanka relied on their diaspora groups totally for making their struggle to reach and gather support at the international level. However, things have changed since the final phase of war. The fourth Eelam war was marked by unmatched level of brutality both from the government as well as LTTE's side which had to be borne by basically the Tamils residing in Sri Lanka. Thus, now that the war is over, for them it is the end of brutality from one side at least. However, the government continues with its oppressive policies against the Sri Lankan Tamils. So the basic need for the Sri Lankan Tamils has been the safe life for them and their families in the island rather than a separate state. They are now fearful to take a stand on the issue of separatism as the Sri Lankan military has been controlling the North and Eastern parts of the Sri Lankan territory. Thus, the activities of the diaspora do not find much support in their homeland. Instead, it has widened

the gap between the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora communities.[10]

While the Sri Lankan Tamils do wish for a separate state for themselves, hardly anyone of them, however, is prepared to fight for it. All they want now is peace and hence, are ready to negotiate with the government of Sri Lanka. They are now ready to adjust with the Sinhalese conditions of negotiation so long their lives, culture and lands are guaranteed to them and peace is maintained. In the words of a young Tamil activist, "I think the Tamil people will never go back to taking up arms; no matter how much impatient they get with the government because they have suffered so much from the war that they will never forget. The beating has been that hard, especially from this government. No matter how much angry they get, they just won't have the will power for another armed campaign" (Crisis Group email interview 2010).

Clearly, there exist a communication gap and misunderstanding between the diaspora groups and the Sri Lankan Tamils as they have totally divergent views on the future course of actions since the end of LTTE. Sri Lanka's presidential election on 26th January 2010 gave the cleare example of the emerging dissonance between diaspora and island Tamils. With the split within the TNA[11], the diapora politics abruptly changed (Vimalarajah and Cheran 2010).

With the emergence of TNPF, there were clear cleavages seen in the Tamil diaspora politics as well as Sri Lankan politics. Since there was candidate on behalf of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the diaspora called for a boycott of election on ethical and political grounds, but the sole voice of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the TNA went against

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[10] Diaspora leaders who remain deeply committed to Tamil Eelam have criticized Tamils on the island who express such views as too weak to stand up for their rights or as traitors to the liberation struggle. Some argue that since "within Sri Lanka, Tamils can't articulate their views freely, but outside Sri Lanka they can", it falls on the diaspora to speak in their place. To which a young Tamil activist in Jaffna replies, "Let these people come tell the Vanni IDPs that they are speaking on their behalf for a separate state. They will be physically assaulted for sure" (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

[11] When TNA decided to drop some candidates who were perceived to be closer to the LTTE, there was a split within the party and the formation of a new alliance Tamil Natioanl People's Front (TNPF) took place. This consisted of the Tamil congress and the excluded former TNA parliamentarians.

this decision and supported Sarath Fonseka, who had been the head of the army under whom the massacre of the Tamil was carried out.

The TNA's break with the diaspora angered the latter all the more and they remained dissatisfied with the kind of governance their Tamil people were getting back in their homeland. Their stand of demand for a separate Eelam got all the more strength because they thought that the TNA had ditched their people by surrendering to the murderers of the people who expected them to raise their voice in the island. This political development shows that there was clearly a situation where the Tamil diaspora group wasn't really in touch with the TNA and the Tamils in Sri Lanka as they continued to misunderstand their every action and reacted in just the opposite way.

Although the TNA defeated its counterpart the TNPF, given the low turnout, yet the ideological differences have continued to prevail in the Tamil politics in the homeland as well as within the diasporas as well (Cheran and Vimalarajah 2010). Though there are differences in the ground reality and the political positions between the Tamils residing in Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, it is important to recognize that there is also solid ground for commonalities and similarities. The key component of this commonness in based on the political position of Tamil identity. Despite various issues, the one thing that binds them together is their identity: the Eelam Tamil identity has emerged as an important unifying factor amidst the differences among the actors. A section of the Tamil diaspora funded the election expenses of the TNA and TNPF during the parliamentary elections held in April 2010. This also indicates that even though there have been differences, the leaders in Sri Lanka have recognised that the Tamil diaspora is an essential part of their Tamil identity and Eelam polity. Hence, there remains the possibility of a mutual agreement between the leaders on the ground and the Tamil diaspora community towards working on two different programmes[12] with a common strategy of getting international support for the Tamils' right to self-determination (Sarvendra 2011).

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[12] While the political formations on the ground have willingly or unwillingly dropped the demand for an independent Eelam, the diaspora's main political goal remains to achieve an independent and sovereign state of Tamil Eelam.

Sri Lankan State's Response to the Post-War Diasporic Activities

In order to understand the reactions of the Sri Lankan government it becomes necessary to know about the political conditions prevailing in the Sri Lankan state as it is the political situation of any country which drives its reaction at the international level. Generally, a post-war situation elsewhere presents opportunities for an all-round change. It paves the way for introduction of political reforms; dismantling of the wartime alliance, structures, institutions and policies; reorientation of political culture; ending of alienation of minorities, and adoption of measures for reconciliation. Unfortunately, the developments in Sri Lanka since May 2009 present new realities that appeared negative and quite undesirable (Sahadevan 2011). Hence, a prior knowledge of the developments in Sri Lanka in the post-war era becomes necessary in order to access its reaction to various diasporic activities since May 2009.

- *Sri Lanka in Post-war era*

Political developments in Sri Lanka through 2010 revolved around two options available to the government following the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009- first was to work on reconciliation with the Tamils and secondly, to consolidate the regime under President Mahinda Rajapaksa through both parliamentary as well as presidential elections of 2010. The political agenda of President Rajapaksa preferred consolidation of his regime over the reconciliation with the Tamils. This formed the core of Sri Lanka's political trajectory in 2010 (Sahadevan 2011; Uyangoda 2010).

"The outcome of the 2010 elections gave immense power to Mahinda Rajapaksa as his party swept both the parliamentary as well as presidential elections. The dominant thinking within the regime premised on the assumption that there remained no minority issues that needed to be addressed on a politically urgent basis because the LTTE had been crushed. Furthermore, another assumption that strengthened this thinking was that reconciliation and conflict management should be managed exclusively on the terms defined by the president and his government, and not by any external actors. This resulted in relative weakening of the small and ethnic minority parties which included the Tamil National Alliance (TNA). For such small parties, there remained two options: either to get absorbed by any of the two main coalitions led by UPFA and UNP respectively, or contesting the elections independently which would in turn lead to its own shattering. It also shaped the way the Sri Lankan

government later on reacted towards the Tamil diasporas' and international community's activism" (Uyangoda 2010).

- *Response to the Diasporic Activism*

"There has been considerable debate over the years about whether Sri Lankan Tamils are indeed genuine refugees who have had no choice but to flee potential violence, or economic migrants who are in no personal danger but choose to leave because of financial considerations. The Sri Lankan government has been insisting that most Tamils are economic migrants and that those who wanted to flee violence in the north and east could have found refuge within the country, particularly in the capital with its large Tamil population"[13] (International Crisis Group Report 2010: 10).

The Sri Lankan state has always been against the diaspora's support for the LTTE's struggle for separate eelam. There have been various efforts on behalf of government officials to curb these activities of the diaspora and one of the most successful government in doing so has been the Rajapaksa's administration. Under his rule, various embassies and consultancies were set up in those countries where the Sri Lankan Tamils have found refuge and these worked and till date have been working towards strengthening the Sinhalese diaspora groups and counter the activities of Tamil diaspora. The government has also retained a lobbying and law firm in Washington DC to assist with these efforts.[14] Embassy and consular staff, often with the assistance of Sinhalese diaspora groups, report back to Colombo as well as inform the concerned country officials about the suspected pro-Tiger individuals and organizations. This activity, to some extent, has been misused and has been identified

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[13] In 2009, the Australian government decided to give 'refugee' status to a group of Tamil asylum seekers, to which the Sri Lankan permanent representative to United Nations objected by claiming that those people were just looking for better economic opportunities in the developed countries, hence they should not be given the 'refugee' status (Jones 2009).

[14] "In 2008 the embassy of Sri Lanka in Washington DC retained Patton and Boggs LLP for their U.S. lobbying efforts. More recently, the Sri Lankan government has hired public relations firms 'Qorvis Communications' in the U.S. and 'Bell Pottinger Group' in Britain to promote their post-war achievements and parry demands for investigations into war crimes" (International Crisis Group Report 2010).

to harass the Tamil diaspora groups and their families[15] (Crisis Group interview, Sri Lankan embassy official, London, July 2008).

Even though the LTTE has been defeated, the Sri Lankan government remains to be vigilant to prevent any kind of re-emergence of any militant force and to other potential forms of radicalisation and violence within the diaspora communities. This has made the diasporic activities a negative force in the eyes of the Sri Lankan state. Thus, the political activism of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been seen by the Sri Lankan government as still lingering on LTTE's separatism rather than breaking with it. This has led to eroding its credibility and its ability to help the Tamils in Sri Lanka. It has also given the homeland government an excuse to ignore the legitimate Tamil grievances on the island as well as a motivation to exclude the diasporas from the political negotiation processes.

However, the aftermath of May 2009 has witnessed some initiatives on behalf of the Sri Lankan government, under the pressure of the international community, to reduce tensions with the Tamil diaspora groups, as they have now well realized that the post-war scenario in Sri Lanka will definitely need economic aids, which can be easily extracted from these diaspora groups if differences between them are resolved. Hence, the main reason for the Sri Lankan government is the financial aid of diaspora community and not their zeal to maintain a cordial relationship with the Tamils in homeland as well as with the Tamil diaspora groups. These initiatives include sponsoring the visit of hundreds of expatriate Tamils in Sri Lanka to show them the government's efforts towards improving security and resettling 300,000 displaced Tamils. Visitors, however, came back unsatisfied and sceptical about the future. They were of the view that if Sri Lankan government has to do something for the Tamils, it should be fixing the political structure which has been the foundation of the Tamils' dissatisfaction[16] (Tamilnet 2009).

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[15] Although the Sri Lankan government's efforts have been always directed towards targeting the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora group by providing the Western governments with intelligence on Tiger financing, the law enforcement officials suggest it is more often allegations rather than firm evidence. The information given by the Sri Lankan government doesn't hold much credibility (Crisis Group interviews, Toronto, October 2009).

[16] Other efforts include the establishment of the 'Sri Lankan Expatriate Forum 2009' which remains focussed on encouraging the diaspora groups to invest in their homeland and help towards peace-building measures.

While these governments' charms have changed few minds to some extent, most Tamils remain hesitant. Thus, the attitude of the Sri Lankan government towards the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora communities has not at all been progressive and, instead, has deepened their suspicions and level of distrust in the Sri Lankan state.

Conclusion

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been an important factor in shaping its homeland politics for the past quarter-century. This has been done by its financial as well as ideological support to the military struggle for an independent Tamil state against the Sri Lankan government. Since the May 2009 defeat of the LTTE, the diaspora's hopes to develop a new movement again for its kin group. However, the response of the Sri Lankan government to the Tamil demands in the island will further enhance the role of diaspora in homeland politics. Also, the role of international community in ensuring justice to the Tamil population in Sri Lanka will be the deciding factor for the future course of action of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora.

Thus, the kind of political activism that is seen from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community since May 2009, characterised by a call for the international community to get engaged in its homeland politics and claim for justice and retribution, is very much expected one. As Fair (2007: 184) argued that the diaspora always had a 'three fold message':

1. 'that Tamils in Sri Lanka are innocent victims of the military repression by the Sri Lankan army and of Sinhalese anti-Tamil discrimination;
2. That the LTTE was the only legitimate voice of the Tamils and would have been the vehicle capable of defending and promoting the Tamils' interests in Sri Lanka;
3. That there can be no peace until Tamils achieve their own independent state.

Notwithstanding the apparent shift in the strategy, the goal of an independent Tamil state remains the same. Very few Tamils abroad believe that their people's fundamental rights and security can be guaranteed within the framework of the Sri Lankan state. "Further, the diaspora's sense of abandonment by the West, Colombo's internment of nearly 300,000 Tamils at the war's end and the military's continued

occupation of the north reinforce this belief among separatists and wins new supporters to the cause daily" (Vimalarajah and Cheran 2010: 23). However, the recent activities although significant, will be not that much effective unless there are major shifts in the political strategies on both sides. Although these initiatives attempt to carry forward the struggle of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, it is seen by the international community as the continuation of the LTTE's agenda, only to hope that this time it might be without the guns (International Crisis Group Report 2010: 23).

Although many scholars speculate that with the defeat of the internationally banned organization, the LTTE, the diaspora community has been deeply devastated and lost hopes of any betterment in the condition of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. But then its constant effort in making the world notice the war crimes happening in its homeland brought the Sri Lankan state under the international vigilance to some extent. As a result, in 2010 the release of the internally displaced people who were held in closed camps, has given some hope to the devastated Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora groups that there may be some sort of reconciliation and development after three decades of war. The recovery of Sri Lanka depends on policy making at both the local and international levels and the transformative role of the Tamil diaspora in its homeland affairs can be the only way to guarantee the safe life of the Tamils in the island.

"The success of Sri Lanka's post-conflict development, the stability of South India and continued U.S. and western authority in the Indian Ocean region depend on how well the large Sri Lankan diaspora is engaged in rebuilding the country. Policies are needed to integrate the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora into the processes of reconstruction, rehabilitation and socio-economic development, especially in the war-ravaged northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. While the discourse on conflict resolution in Sri Lanka remains narrowly focussed on political devolution and the adoption of a federal model of government, conflict resolution requires a broader and more integrated approach. The transformation of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora into agents of poltical development and policy-making hence, remains to be a necessary aspect of the healing processes in Sri Lanka" (Bandarage 2010).

The future of the Sri Lankan Tamils as well the diaspora community depends on many uncertain factors. Only two years have passed the end of the Sri Lankan conflict and a major change in the stand of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora can be seen. But

one thing is that it will continue to think and work for its ethnic group in its homeland. Even though the war has ended, the ideology prevails with full strength in the diaspora's minds.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

Diasporas have increasingly become an important factor in national as well as international politics for a variety of reasons. The activities of the diaspora communities have involved social networks and new power relations involving their homeland and host country in such a manner that has profoundly changed the dynamics of the political setting in both homeland as well as host country (Vimalarajah 2011). Scholars such as Camilla Orjuela notes evidence of long-term projections of diaspora interactions which impact upon the host-land and homeland politics. Diaspora communities achieve this through numerous means: the main one being the direct provision of support for warring parties, including financing opposition parties, rebels and other actors. Sources of funding vary in their scope and origins, from direct individual contributions to global business or criminal networks (Orjuela 2008: 446). The diasporas might contribute to development in their homeland in many other ways than by sending remittances alone. For instance, they might contribute to economic growth by setting up enterprises themselves or helping relatives to do so. This is not only a function of remittances, but also potentially implies a beneficial transfer of know-how and competencies, generally known as "brain gain". Besides contributing to economic development, the diasporas can also play an important role in stimulation of political debate, the strengthening of the civil society, the enabling and encouraging of education for the people living in their homeland and, in turn, working for their emancipation (International Migration Institute Report 2006). They raise fundamental questions of how their homeland has handled mobility and the political, economic and cultural issues that they have seen to be of crucial importance (Berghof Peace Report 2011).

In case of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora, we see that its formation as a 'transnational factor' in homeland politics was fuelled by political uncertainties and violence. Hence, there has been a demand for an exclusive homeland from the Sri Lankan Tamils that has got a continuous support from their diaspora communities. It has resulted in various clashes and wars that we can find in the history of Sri Lanka. The war ended in May 2009 with the defeat of the LTTE. Dismantling of the LTTE itself

came as a great shock to the Tamil diaspora community, so is the humanitarian disaster that followed the end of the war.

Hence, in this context, the main objective of the diaspora is to remain involved in homeland affairs. Its role has become stronger and more firm. The main reason for their political involvement has been their perceptions of the sufferings by Tamils in Sri Lanka. Notions of 'injustice', 'people in need', 'human suffering', 'exposing hypocrisy' and 'thirst for fairness' have been the main drivers for the involvement of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in their homeland politics. Their main objective has always been 'achieving the aspirations of the Tamil people' and seeking the 'right to self-determination' for the Tamils.

The nature of the diasporic role in homeland politics has remained focussed on the safe life of the Sri Lankan Tamil community and their strategies has been one of supporting the Eelam demand. "During the three decades of civil war in Sri Lanka, a well-organized Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora had played an important role, maintaining Tamil nationalism, engaging in political work and funding the LTTE, which struggled for the Tamil self-determination in the north-east of the island against the Sinhalese-dominated government" (Orjuela 2008). During the war, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora focussed on financing the struggle of their kin group and draw the international attention towards the aid of refugees fleeing the communal violence on the island. However, as the level of war became more intense, the diaspora organization also evolved its political involvement, thereby promoting the political cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Political and material support from the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora community, particularly during the time when LTTE was active, has been the key to the growth of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka. But after a vengeful Prabakaran carried out the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the popular support for the LTTE dried up particularly in India, leading to a series of proscriptions by India and later on by other western states. And, the Eelam Tamil cause was pushed to the backseat even in political rhetoric.

The Sri Lankan government took advantage of this situation in the post 9/11 period. There has been a continuous efforts from the Sri Lankan government to put the diasporic role and activities at the back burner. There has been a continuous denial of

the diasporic role in resolution of the conflict by the Sri Lankan government. Further, the government suspect the diaspora of contributing to instability in the country.

This, in turn, has led to a rise in the level of discontent among the Tamil diaspora groups. After the first phase of non-violent parliamentary struggle and the second phase of political and militant struggle, now a third phase of non-violent struggle is being led by the diaspora.

The role of Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in its homeland politics has faced many crucial turning points. The 1977 anti-Tamil violence, the 1983 riots in Colombo (which is also known as the 'Black July') and the 2009 large-scale killings of Tamils in various parts of the Northern Sri Lankan territory resulted in intense involvements of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in their homeland affairs. Other incidents that have prompted the diaspora community to act in their homeland affairs are the opening of the Eelam House in 1996 and then its subsequent closure in 2001, the anti-Tamil stand of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces, the signing of the ceasefire agreement in 2002 and then breaking the truce in 2006. Similarly, there have been several incidents that have led the diaspora to restrict their activities in their homeland affairs. They included the proscription of the LTTE after the 9/11 attacks by many Western countries including those who had a big population of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora either as refugees or asylum-seekers. The proscription of the LTTE was seen as not just labelling the LTTE as terrorist organization but the entire Tamil diaspora community had come under suspicion.

In this context, we should make a note of the various other challenges that the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora face in making a strong foothold in their homeland politics:

1. *Contradiction between the new ideas and the old ideas emerging among the diaspora*

With the changed ground conditions in Sri Lanka in the post-May 2009 period, the political configuration in the diaspora community has also undergone a change, with new leaders, concepts and ideologies emerging. There has been a shift in the approach of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora as earlier they focussed on helping the people fleeing the country but now they focus on making the country safe and secure enough for the people to live in there. Hence, the change in the focus has led to some

altercations within the community itself even though the ultimate goal remains the same: to achieve safe nation for the Tamils.

2. *The struggle for leadership and hegemony within the diaspora movement*

The diaspora movement has been plagued by the internal differences regarding the concerns of the 'pro' and 'anti' LTTE factions. Since the post-war period has seen the emergence of a new generation of the Tamil diaspora group, there have been apprehensions among the older generation as to whether the new generation will do justice to the community and lead the movement they had started. The new generation lacks the experience of the deadly decades of war.

3. *The issue of security in host land*

The conflict-generated Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has been feeling particularly persecuted for its political beliefs. Given the frequent confusion as to what constitutes a 'legal' or an 'illegal' action, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has found itself in the legal 'grey zones'. This has created a lot of insecurity and confusion among them and hence, restricted them to act freely to some extent (Berghof Peace Report 2011).

However, one thing is clear that the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora has and will continue to play an important role in shaping the Tamil politics in its homeland. It has come up with the initiatives which give a clear message to the whole international community about its demands and shows clear evidence of the injustice done to the Sri Lankan Tamil community. As a first step, the diaspora Tamils through a referendum held in various countries, have created a consensus called the "Vaddukoddai Resolution" confirming their common goal that was overwhelmingly voted by the Eelam Tamils in 1976 at the end of the 1st phase of the struggle and carried forward by the LTTE leadership. There have been country organisations of Eelam Tamils for coordinating activities among themselves as well as to lobby support for the Tamil cause from foreign governments and peoples. The new concept of a Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (TGTE) has been proposed as an organ of the Tamil Diaspora to take the Tamil cause forward and members have been elected for this government. In the meantime representatives from already functioning country-organisations have come together to form a network, a global organisation to engage the international community for the Tamil cause. A constitution for this global organisation has been

already drafted to work as a democratic non-violent and transparent organization. The inauguration of the Global Tamil Forum within the British Parliament Buildings has signalled the historic role of British-Tamils in this conflict. Hence, all the diaspora organisations now seem to function in parallel directions, having a strategy of their own to achieve the same goal of liberation and freedom for the Eelam Tamils and their homeland.

Another attempt of the diaspora activities focuses on helping their kin groups in having a normal life back. A large number of Sri Lankan Tamils are yet to resume normal lives. The war-ravaged Tamil areas require large scale financial support to bring the people on a par with the rest of Sri Lanka. Hence, various development projects are being taken up in these areas by the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora communities and it will take a few years to be completed. The diaspora community realizes that in the long term, development alone is not going to satisfy the Tamils. Their basic quest for equity needs to be met. Their trust and feeling of security in the government needs to be fully restored. The State of Emergency and the Prevention of Terrorism Act that came into force during the war are still in place. This does not help to increase the confidence level of Tamils.

And since the war is over but not the demand, the diaspora has remained active and has shown its capacity to mobilise effectively many times, especially in the context of the war crimes done by the Sri Lankan state. The more the issue of war crimes has been raised, the more space the diaspora community has gained in their homeland politics. This justifies the first hypothesis that the coercive strategies of the Sri Lankan state and the consequent human rights violations have enhanced the role of the diasporas in homeland politics. The diaspora groups have organized several demonstrations and protests which have drawn the attention of the entire international community towards the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan issue has become an international issue of human rights violations and the sole credit for bringing this to the international forefront goes to the diaspora groups. They have been striving to achieve some notion of justice and establishing opportunities for prosperity for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. It can be observed from the following statement:

"We Tamils, inside and outside the island of Sri Lanka, still want an independent state," Visuvanathan Rudrakumaran, prime minister of the Transnational Government

of Tamil Eelam (TGTE), announced in New York. "And because the war crimes and severe brutality of the Mahinda Rajapaksa government against our people have become well known, our cause is being spoken about all over the world." "The Tigers [LTTE] gave us the dignity and strength to fight. Today, however, the struggle is on the diplomatic plane. We look forward. We are not mired in the past or in speculation about whether the Tigers committed terrorism" (Tamilnet 2010).

Using post-modern concepts of "transnational" governance with direct democratic elements (like Referenda), rights-based and retributive justice approaches (war-crimes and genocide claims), the Tamil diaspora has embarked upon a new trajectory to reshape its Tamil nationalism into a modern, democratic and peaceful form that will make it harder for the international community as well as the Sri Lankan government to ignore. The present role the diaspora has acquired revolves around the continuum of their struggle for legitimacy and visibility, it also gives a new form of expression to the diaspora community that appears to be ready to leave the old dichotomies and nostalgic diasporic memories and grievances and move ahead on the path of peace. This, in turn, justifies the second hypothesis which states that the transnational activism of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora will contribute more to the protraction of the homeland conflict for autonomy rather than promoting its secessionist agenda. The post-war scenario of the diasporic activities is marked by the emergence of a new generation among the diaspora which stands for values like democracy and peace. Their way of involvement in their homeland politics is focussed more on the achievement of a democratic space for the Tamils in Sri Lankan rather than taking a revenge on the Sinhala-dominated society. Their activism involves peaceful protests and avoidance of violent activities. Hence, it is clear that seeing the condition of its brethren in their homeland, the diaspora does not want another war or conflict anymore, nor does it want to attain anything through military means. The diaspora is brought-up in a free and fair environment and hence, it realizes the value of democracy and peace. It is widely recognized that diaspora holda importance for peace and order in the island.

The significance of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora for Sri Lanka can be summarised as the following:

1. Since it has been continuously providing financial support to their families and people in their homeland, the diaspora is able to influence the events in their homeland as well. Yet, its capabilities have to be recognised by the Sri Lankan

government and allow the diasporic leaders to speak on the issue of Tamils in Sri Lanka.

2. The discrimination against the Tamils in Sri Lanka has narrowed their political space in their own country. This in turn, has boosted the participation of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in its homeland affairs through both political as well as economic means.

3. The high level of political activism among the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora indicates that the issue of separate nationhood for Tamils will definitely remain alive even if the main driving force i.e. the LTTE has been defeated. The diasporic groups have been increasing their activities on the economic front (through sanctions and boycott campaigns, apart from increasing the remittances), on the legal front (collecting evidences on war crimes and human rights abuses), and on the political front (by lobbying western governments and the international organizations). Hence, an increased mobilisation is seen on the part of the diaspora as the Sri Lankan government refuses to address the Tamil issues.

The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora will continue to influence its homeland politics even if the Sri Lankan government ignores it. The Sri Lankan civil war has always been strongly influenced by the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora communities all over the world and thus, their influence remains to be an essential part when we talk of any peace process towards peace in Sri Lanka. Thus, the Sri Lankan government should accept the diaspora as an indispensable part of the Sri Lankan politics and should make an attempt to bring them into the mainstream of Sri Lankan politics in order to bring peace and justice in their country. Without the diaspora involvement, the Sri Lankan politics will remain to be highly de-stabilized and the Tamil issue will remain to be a challenge for the country. The inclusion of the diaspora in its homeland politics will definitely bring peace to the country and will be a step ahead towards resolving the Tamil issue in the country.

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