THE LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM: A STUDY OF ITS MILITARY CHARACTER

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "THE LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM: A STUDY OF ITS MILITARY CHARACTER" submitted by Mr Sabil Francis in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. This is his own work.

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

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Dedicated to my Dad

I miss you

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PREFACE

For years now, Sri Lanka has been wracked by civil war, as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fight for an Tamil homeland--Eelam. The group has, time and time again, shown a remarkable ability to mount tremendous military pressure on the Sri Lankan Army, but does not seem to have the military strength to defeat its adversary. From July 1987 to March 1990, the Tigers faced the far more powerful Indian Army, and after bitter fighting, denied the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) a military victory. Now, with the government of Sri Lanka determined to defeat the LTTE, but at the same time finding it an extremely taxing task, the question arises as to what kind of a guerrilla force is the LTTE?

With the LTTE emerging as one of the world's most formidable and ruthless guerrilla forces, it is time to study the nature of the organisation. This study will be a modest attempt along those lines.

The principal objectives of the proposed study are:

1. to place the LTTE in a definite place in the revolutionary spectrum, by analysing it in the light of classical revolutionary doctrine. The basic thrust of the study will be to understand the nature and characteristics of the LTTE: Is it a classic guerrilla force? Or a revolutionary movement? Or an armed cult? Or, is it an entirely unique and new form of insurgent movement?

2. to understand the ideology, strategy and support base of the LTTE: Is the LTTE genuinely popular? What are the tactics that the LTTE employs to achieve victory on the battlefield? What is the structure

of the organisation? What are the arms that it uses? Does the group have its own ideology that differs from other organisations? Here, the actions of the group will be studied both as a response to circumstances and as a result of its makeup.

3. to analyse features that are unique to the organisation as mentioned above, such as the ruthlessness, the cult of martyrdom, the personality cult, the thirst for vengeance, tactics, etc and see how far these affect the conflict. The study will also try to find out why Tamil youth flocked to the LTTE rather than other Tamil groups to avenge the wrongs inflicted upon them by the Sri Lankan state.

There are very few works that study the LTTE as such. Swamy (1994), in a journalist's account, studies the rise of the LTTE and puts special emphasis on the Indian intervention in the conflict (1987-89). Mcgowan (1992) contents that the British, who colonised the island, destroyed the harmony between the two races by ending the monarchy and disturbing age-old feudal and caste equations and that the policies of the Sri Lankan government after 1956 are an expression of Sinhalese consciousness. Dagamr (1994) and Bose (1994) attempt to study the LTTE as a guerrilla force, and examine the reasons for the rise of the LTTE and the attraction of its ideology in the peninsula. They analyse the concept of martyrdom and other peculiar aspects of LTTE ideology such as the cult of martyrdom, vengeance etc.

Ponnambalam (1983) is an attempt to explain the conflict in class terms and to debunk the conflicting versions of history that continue to imprison the two sides. Depinder Singh (1992) and Lt. General Sardesai (1990) that give the military viewpoint of the conflict and are significant in that they provide a wealth of information of the tactics, strategy and

motivation of the LTTE. In the same category are Rajesh Kadian (1990); Major General Shankar Bhaduri and Major General Afsir (1990) both of which give valuable information on the tactics, and the actual fighting that took place between the two forces.

Sahadevan (1995) argues that Prabhakaran, influenced by his harsh experiences of the conflict has consciously developed the LTTE as an organisation that is devoted to the idea of military sacrifice and locates the organisation's ideology in the personality of the leader. Ramachandran (1995) examines the evolution and growth of the LTTE till 1990. The proposed study will try to fill in the gaps in the literature such as (i) the absence of any study on Prabhakaran's personality cult; (ii) the reasons behind the cult of martyrdom (iii) the ideology of vengeance (iv) the patterns of mobilisation and (v) the hierarchy of the organisation. By analysing the LTTE in the light of revolutionary doctrine and classical theories of insurgency it will try to evaluate the outfit as a guerrilla force and see, in the light of the above mentioned unique aspects, where exactly the LTTE comes in the revolutionary spectrum.

Among the aspects that will be analysed are the newer facets of the organisation like the increasing alienation of lower level cadre, the fortress like mentality of the top LTTE leadership, the alienation of the Tamils from the organisation etc. It will also try to as certain what the group that has been driven out of Jaffna now intends to do.

The study puts forward the following hypotheses:

1. The LTTE adheres in many ways to insurgent groups that can be defined as "classical" but has mutated in specific response to the Sri Lankan situation.

2. The LTTE, is an unique guerrilla group because of certain structural components like a personality cult around the leader; the glorification of violence and martyrdom; and the blind thirst for vengeance.

3. The LTTE refuses to take a political approach to the conflict as it sees the conflict as race-war and not an attempt to wring concessions from the Sinhalese. The ultimate goal is Eelam alone, and nothing else.

The study is divided into five chapters

Chapter I: Guerrilla Doctrine and Warfare.

Chapter II: The Military Nature of the LTTE: Origin, base and patterns of mobilisation.

Chapter III:. Ideology, Military Structure and Sources of Arms Supply.

Chapter IV: Fighting for Eelam: Tactics of the LTTE.

Chapter V: Conclusions

While trying to define the concepts of insurgency, terrorism and revolution the first chapter makes an attempt to evolve an analytical framework on guerrilla warfare. This chapter examines the existing theory on the subject of guerrilla warfare and also studied specific insurgencies with an aim to trace the common features in them.

The second chapter begins with a brief introduction into the origins and growth of the LTTE, analysing the social composition of the organisation and the mobilisation patterns of the group. The focus here is on the base of the group and the support patterns. The focus was also LTTE seems to have set off a social revolution in the Jaffna peninsula, especially as the group seems to have given a new found assertion to traditionally marginalised groups like fishermen, artisans, etc.

The third chapter examines the military infrastructure of the LTTE. An attempt was made to understand the command structure of the group and to the sources of arms supply of the group.

The fourth chapter analyses the LTTE's war tactics against the Sri Lankan state, on and off the battlefield.

And the fifth chapter rounds off the study by summing up the arguments and presenting the major findings of the study.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The LTTE is studied as a guerrilla force in the light of the writings of classical theorists, and contemporary thinkers of revolution. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The latter included published material on terrorism, insurgency etc. in general, and on the LTTE in particular. Relevant literature in the motivation and theories of revolution was part of the study and primary sources, including the literature of the LTTE and media reports, were extensively consulted.

Chapter I

The Doctrine of Guerrilla Warfare

The political violence of the 20th century has made terms like terrorism, insurgency, rebellion and militancy a part of the everyday lexicon. Yet there are few words so frequently used that are so difficult to define, especially when used interchangeably. This chapter will therefore begin with an attempt to define the key idea--what exactly is guerrilla warfare.

The word "guerrilla", the diminutive of the Spanish *guerra* (war), stems from the Duke of Wellington's Iberian campaigns (1809-13)[1] when Spanish Portuguese Irregulars or "guerrilleros" helped drive the French from the peninsula. In World War II the word partisan[2] was used, while the term insurgent[3] is a later version.

However, while it is easy to describe guerrilla warfare it is difficult to exactly explain it. And while there is a wealth of description on the subject, there is an abject poverty of definition.[4] Another problem is that there is no

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[1] During this war effectively commanded bands of rebels wrecked havoc on the occupying French by disrupting their lines of communication--by blocking roads, intercepting convoys, and even fighting the enemy in regular battles. The guerrillas who numbered at most 20,000 pinned down some 40,000 French troops. See Owen Connelly, *Napoleon's Sattellite Kingdoms* (London: 1964).

[2] The word partisan also originates from the Iberian campaign. During World War II the term became synonymous with guerrilla and was used to describe the semi-independent bands of rebels that fought Axis forces, especially in Eastern Europe and the Far East. See John Armstrong, *Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Princeton:1964)

[3] Insurgency refers to a protracted armed struggle against state power. Julian Paget, *Counter Insurgency Campaigning* (New York: 1967), p.15.

[4] Literature on the subject tends to take a holistic approach including terrorism, guerrilla war, etc. mainly because there is no clear cut distinction between various forms of political violence. Classifications have been made on the basis of tactics; suffering inflicted; tactics used; goals aspired for etc. See, for example, Martha Crenshaw, ed., *Terrorism, Legitimacy and Power:*

clear cut way of confining guerrilla warfare within a specific framework. Like all other forms of warfare, guerrilla wars also differ across time and place, and respond to the exigencies of the situation.[5] Guerrilla warfare also cannot be seen in isolation from the larger situation, nor does it have a fixed and unchanging doctrine.[6]

But the greatest difficulty lies in this: there is no clear agreement on what exactly constitutes guerrilla warfare, or when one steps across the thin dividing line that divides an act of war from an act of terror. Therefore the basic thrust of this chapter will be this--to analyse the various frameworks that are used to understand guerrilla warfare, and to attempt to construct a framework around which the analytical nature of this study of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam can be based. The basic construction of this chapter is along the following lines:

To begin with a definition of various forms of political violence is given. It is followed by a study of the theory of guerrilla warfare. The chapter then moves on to the principles of strategy. Finally, based on these, the analytical framework is presented.

AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The essence of violence according to Gerald Priestland is "that physical power is deliberately employed with the ultimate sanction of

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The Consequences of Political Violence (Connecticut, 1983), Richard Clutterbuck, *Terrorism and Guerrilla Warfare: Forecasts and Remedies* (London: 1990).

[5] In fact, the very nature of guerrilla warfare is that it is easily adaptable for differing situations. Among the various issues debated is whether it is constructive to begin the attack from the cities and then move on to the countryside (Lenin, Marghiela), or to begin the revolution in the countryside and move to urban areas (Mao).

[6] There has been an attempt to conceptualise the strategy, mode and methods of guerrilla warfare, especially in Marxist thought. However, in practise even Marxist revolutions have differed widely. For a comparative study of revolutions in regions under British colonial rule, see J. Bowyer Bell, *On Revolt: Strategies of National Liberation* (Harvard, 1976), for an understanding of the various debates in on revolutionary strategy in Latin America, see Donald C. Hodges, ed., *The Legacy of Che Guevera: A Documentary Study* (London, 1977).

physical pain, giving the victim little choice but surrender or physical resistance"[7] In most societies there is an implicit consensus on what is a violent act[8] Implicit is the notion is that the state alone has a legitimate monopoly over the use of force. Another aspect is that violence is never approved of an end in itself, it is always instrumental in nature. Thus every kind of violence is a means to an end be it criminal, preventive--as, for instance, the shooting of an armed and desperate criminal to prevent his killing others, or political, in that it tries to achieve a specific political aim.

Political violence is different from other types of violence in that it tries to change the system by force. Every form of political violence has as its desired outcome, if not a sudden, radical and total change in the existing state of affairs, then at least some form of change in the status quo.[9] In this it differs from other kinds of violence as, for example, crime in which the aim is personal gain.

There are varying kinds of political violence. One way of constructing a framework is to conceptualise a definite hierarchy in political violence based on:

I. **Legitimacy of goals**: freedom fighter, rebel, insurgent, terrorist-- a descending order or **ligitimacy of means**. In the latter case, anyone who kills and maims innocents and non-combatants is a terrorist no matter how just or laudable the ultimate aim is. This definition underlines most of the popular writing on the subject.

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[7] Gerald Priestland, *The Future of Violence* ,_(London, 1974) p.11, cited in Adrian Guelke, *The Age of Terrorism and the International System* (London, 1995), p.20.

[8] For example, even in the most primitive societies what is defined as murder is more or less the same as highly advanced societies in the West.

[9] It is to this end that the violence is directed. Depending on the organisation of the violence, a potentially explosive situation can develop.

II. **Extend of Change wrought:** such as agitation, riot, militancy, coup d' eat, revolt, rebellion, revolution etc. in ascending order of importance.

III. **Goals sought:** such as national liberation, autonomy, recognition of separate identity, better concessions, or purely short term goals such as the withdrawal of adverse legislation or to force the government to backtrack on an issue, in descending order of importance.

The Legitimacy of Means and Ends

If guerrilla warfare is defined on the basis of what it seeks to achieve, guerrilla war is then part of a larger picture of political activity.[10] It is an expression of protest against an unjust system. In such a framework, *the distinction between guerrilla warfare and terrorism is thus based on the legitimacy of the regime or existing system.* The tendency to resort to violence is directly proportionate to the ability of the existing system to accommodate change.[11] Thus violence against a repressive regime does not attract the same degree of condemnation as violence in a liberal democracy. In the absence of a system where the ruled are not given the option to choose their rulers, and are deprived of any means to peacefully thwart the actions of those rulers no matter how unjust, then violent opposition to the regime is more likely to win support[12] as the regime itself is seen as illegitimate.

It is based on such an understanding that considers the legitimacy of the goal as the first criteria to decide whether an act of political violence is an act of terrorism, that the aphorism "one man's terrorist is another man's

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[10] Sudha Ramachandran, "Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka: A Study of the Evolution and Growth of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)" (Ph.D.Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, School of International Studies, New Delhi, 1995) pp.1-3.

[11] see Guelke, n.7, pp. 1-51 for a coherent discussion of the various motives behind terrorism. Also, Paul Wilkinson, *Terrorism and the Liberal State* (London, 1986) pp.84-87.

[12] For example, the resistance of the Palestinians to Israeli rule does not invite the same kind of condemnation as the actions of right-wing militias in the United States..

freedom fighter" is based. Thus, the government in a state that has to face armed opposition tries its best to label the armed opponents "terrorists", thus denying them legitimacy. However whether they are actually accepted as such by the outside world is often decided by the extent to which the goal is seen as legitimate and worth striving for.[13]

Another, and far more frequently applied mode of deciding on the legitimacy of an act of political violence is that of the layman's--based on basic human values. Thus while the average citizen views clashes between security forces and militants with a certain degree of equanimity, he or she views the killing of innocents with horror.[14] And the setting off a bomb on a bus is not the same as an attack on a police station or an army barracks. Naom Chomsky takes such an approach when he writes, "There is no real disagreement about defining 'terrorism'". The term refers to the threat or use of violence, generally for political ends, directed at non-combatant civilians."[15]

While such a view is at first sight is fairly straight forward, one comes across major difficulties on closer examination.. The notion that senseless

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[13] One example is the "armed struggle" that the African National Congress waged against the apartheid regime in South Africa until the suspension of the campaign in 1990. Most countries viewed the struggle as legitimate.

[14] This reaction is rather universal, and was evident in the reporting on the hostage crisis in Peru (Dec-Mar.1997). Though the Fujimori regime tried hard to sell the line that it was a mere question of the good against the bad, and that the Tupac Amaru, who had taken over the Japanese Embassy in Peru, were terrorists many newspapers focused on the brutal treatment of Tupac Amaru activists, including the American Lori Brenstien who was jailed for having helped the rebels, and leader Victor Polay in Peruvian jails, as well as the endemic poverty among the peasants in the Andean country. It is also significant that the term "terrorist" was rarely used by the media during the crisis. Instead, most newspapers used the more value-neutral term "rebels". On the other hand, the Oklahoma bombing and the spate of suicide bombings of buses in Israel have evoked widespread revulsion and the media have not turned away from calling these "acts of terrorism."

[15] Noam Chomsky, "International Terrorism: What is the Remedy?", in Raana Gauhar, ed., *Third World Affairs* (London, 1988) p.2.

violence per se is terrorism-- a word that has deep condemnatory value[16]--has deep roots in the values of Western society. As Guelke puts it, "it is inevitable that it should be the liberal principles which underpin government in the West that have shaped the ideological boundaries of the term in practice."[17] It also implicitly recognises that only the state has a legitimate monopoly over force, for based purely on suffering inflicted, no terrorist can surpass a state.

FORMS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE

At the bottom of the scale are agitations, gennerally peaceful or with a minimum of violence.[18] and then comes rioting, which can be considered as a breakdown of the law and order situation but still cannot be classified as terrorism.[19] In both these types the extent of change wrought in the system is minimum, while the former is aimed at getting concessions within the system[20] as for example, the agitation for a separate state in Uttarakhand, compromising the northern regions of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Rioting on the other hand is disorderly, has no specific aim and is more of an

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[16] According to the Oxford English dictionary the terms "terrorism" and "terror" were first used in the English language in 1795, when the horrors of the Reign of Terror in post-revolutionary France were still fresh in the minds of the English people. The OED quotes the conservative Edmund Bruke on the unleashing on the people of "hell hounds called terrorists." See *Oxford English Dictionary: Volume XVII* (Oxford,1989) p. 821. Such pejorative implications are also evident in the insistence of governments to refer to those who oppose them as "terrorists" and in usages like "terror bombing", "telephone terrorism" etc.

[17] Guelke, n.7., p.13

[18] Even if a demonstration has to be dispersed, the state uses a minimum of force, when compared to what it unleashes to quell an insurgency or an armed struggle against the state.

[19] Surprisingly, this is one point where the definition of terror on the basis of the toll it takes breaks down. For example, in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots more than 2,000 Sikhs were killed in the streets of New Delhi, while thousands upon thousands lost their lives in the pre-Partition riots in the subcontinent. Individual terrorist outrages on the other hand rarely claim such a heavy toll.

[20] Agitations can have as their aim purely local issues, such as a demand for the laying out of a new road in a village, or broader aims, as for example the agitation for the withdrawal of the controversial Narmada dam project in the Indian state of Gujarat, or national aims, such as the 1990 anti-Mandal agitation when upper caste students hit the streets in protest against a government move to reserve 27 percent of government jobs for the backward (lower) castes.

outlet for furstration rather than violence that has a specific aim and method.[21]

However, an agitation or a riot is not an isolated event and could lead to insurgency or even a revolution. When there is an hierarchy of political violence, implicit in this is the potential for one stage to lead to another. Thus riots can lead to a guerrilla war or frustrated agitation to insurgency.

Next comes militancy. Ramachandran[22] defines militants as those who wish to change the existing order, and constructs an heirarchy based on the stated goals. Thus militants can be categorised as those who wish to preserve existing privileges, those who wish to bring about reform, and those who wish to bring about revolutionary change within the existing order like the Naxalites (Maoist rebels) in India, and those who completely wish to opt out of the existing system, like the Tamils in Sri Lanka.

Thus, while the political activist wants to bring change in the system by peaceful means, the militant is ready to use, or at least contemplate the use of violence to achieve his aims. One step ahead is the insurgent who wages a protracted armed struggle against the state.

A related form of violence is the coup d'eat which means the sudden take-over of a country by the armed forces. A coup generally has very

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[21] Rioting is generally the letting out in violence,and frustration that has been building up over a period of time.

[22] Ramachandran n.10., p2

limited aims and usually means a mere change in the regime at the top[23] However, it may sometimes have wider aims[24].

While all of the above do not result in radical change by itself, though they might be the first salvo in a revolution, the categories of revolt, rebellion and revolution, imply that the existing order changes, and in the case of a revolution is totally redrawn. A rebellion or a revolt does not bring about the total, complete and irreversible change that the word revolution implies.[25]

In the doctrine and theory of guerrilla warfare, the importance of revolution comes, because guerrilla groups today have, especially in the last generation, tended to launch their revolts under the banner of national liberation rather than confine their aims to a mere change in the existing order of things. Thus separatist movements are not aiming for a mere separation from the body politic, they are aiming at the total overthrow of all existing order and its replacing by one of their own making.[26]

A revolt or a rebellion per se does not lead to a revolution; taken alone a revolt is much more narrower than a revolution. Bowyer, for example,

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[23]As for example in most Latin American and African countries, especially in the 70s and the 80s. There was hardly any difference between the regimes of Milton Obote and Idi Amin in Uganda, who took over in 1971, except for the fact that Amin did a lot more Ugandans to death than his predecessor. Amin's coup was not inspired by any kind of desire to change the system but by a mere lust for power.

[24] An example is the coup by the Egyptian Free Officers under Nasser in 1956. Nasser was not merely seeking the overthrow of the existing regime, his aim was to introduce an era of Arab nationalism and socialism.

[25] The very word revolution implies a sudden, major and often violent alteration in government and in related associations and structures. It is used by analogy in such expressions as the Industrial Revolution where it refers to a radical and profound change in economic relations and social conditions.

[26] For instance, the LTTE in areas under its control has radically changed the age-old feudal and caste equations of Jaffna society, giving traditionally marginalised groups like the lower castes and women greater power than ever before. See Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, *The Tamil Tigers: Armed Struggle for Identity* (Suttgart, 1994). The Chinese Revolution (1949) resulted in a radical restructuring of Chinese society, so too the Cuban (1959), and the Vietnamese (1975)..

defines a revolt as "a coherent, armed rising of sufficient proportion to challenge seriously the existing central authority, but without the capacity to create an alternative authority."[27]

A revolt differs from a revolution in that it is a violent response to an intolerable situation but unlike a revolution the rebels need not have a new vision or an intention to fashion a new society.[28]

The difficulty with the above framework is that it is not able to precisely locate the position of guerrilla war. When exactly does a political agitation attain a militant hue? When does a revolt become a revolution? These are but some of the questions that the above framework fails to fill in.

IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS FOR GUERRILLA WARFARE

Another framework is one that emphasis the role of ideology as the matrix of the revolution. This is a rather philosophical approach. While there are the grand strategies of revolution crafted with care by the theorists of revolution, *the very nature of guerrilla warfare demands that any successful insurgency must have as its key component a capability to adapt to varying conditions.* Even a cursory glance at the course of various revolutions will

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[27] Bowyer, n.6., p.5

[28] Revolts against existing authority is as old as time. One of the most famous revolts of ancient times was the revolt of the Jews against the Romans at Masada in 72 AD. The Jews held out in a fort at the top of a mountain for a period of two years beating back waves of Roman forces until the crack 10th legion was sent to destroy the rebels.They barricaded the fort until the food and water began to give out. Rather than surrender the Jews opted to commit mass suicide. Men killed their families first, and then lots were drawn to decide who would kill the rest and finally commit suicide. Only one family--a mother and two children survived--they had hidden themselves in a small crevice. The Romans stormed the fort, and spared the survivors--so awed were they by the bravery of the Jews. Today, every recruit to the Israeli armed forces takes the oath "Masada shall not fall again." See Rufus Learsi, *Israel: A History of the Jewish People* (New York and Cleveland: World, 1949) pp.234-244.

reveal that guerrilla commanders succeeded only when they adapted the doctrine to the conditions on the ground.[29]

Among the prominent theorists of revolutionary doctrine are V.I. Lenin, Mao-Tse Tung, Ernesto Ché Guevera, Carlos Marighela, Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyèn Giap. It would be instructive to study their varying theories on the course and tactics that a guerrilla movement can take.

V.I. Lenin: from the Cities to the Countryside

Vladimir Iliyich Lenin, adopted the theories of Karl Marx to the Russian situation. He, in accordance with traditional Marxist doctrine saw the urban proletariat as the key to the revolution as the peasants of the country side were too ignorant to mount the revolution. Lenin saw the cities falling to a militant urban proletariat, led by the vanguard of the intellectuals.

He, again in line with traditional Marxian ideas, conceptualised the essentials of a revolutionary struggle as mass, that is, superiority in numbers; simplicity in tactics; command, objective and planned offence as the aims of the struggle; an emphasis on the security and economy of forces, the optimum deployment of forces; and surprise and manoeuvre on the battlefield.

Coming to the concept of "mass" Lenin's conceptualised the determined and well calculated offensive that achieves superiority locally, and then fully exploits such local superiority to achieve the destruction of the enemy.

One can briefly summarise[30] the ideas of Lenin on mass as follows: the elitist idea of the vanguard of intellectuals that would lead the revolution;

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[29] Thus, adapting Leninist doctrine to the Chinese situation, Mao broke with Lenin's dictum that the revolution should begin with a revolt of the workers in the cities followed by the subjugation of the countryside. He reversed the process.

the inevitability of the decisive battle, the primacy of participation in the revolutionary experience to enlighten the people of the stark reality of class struggle; the idea of aligning one's forces for the final and decisive battle; the crucial importance of numerical superiority in the decisive battle; and the idea of the decisive moment coming when the enemy's forces are at their weakest[31] and when one's own forces were at the highest state of morale and alert.[32]

Lenin emphasised the need for an ordered system that compromised the command, objective and the planned offensive. Lenin was not in favour of the loose kind of fighting that characterised guerrilla warfare he calls for "the overcoming of the guerrilla spirit",[33] a unified command at the top,[34] the controlled organised use of mass terror subordinate to the needs of overall strategy,[35] the need for the leadership to gather and organise all the forces

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[30] For a detailed explanation see V.I. Lenin, "Marxism and Insurrection" (September 1917), in *Collected Works*,_ Vol.I, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), pp.421-28, "Lessons of the Moscow Uprising" (September 1906), in *Marx, Engels, Marxism*, a selection of Lenin's works from 1895-1923 (Moscow, 1951), pp.163-71, "The Revolutionary Rise" (1912), in *Collected Works*,_ Vol.I, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), pp.296 -305;"The Boycott" (September 1906), in *Collected Works*,_ Vol.I, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950).

[31] This was part of the Russian experience. Both the Tsarist regime that was collapsed when Tsar Nicholas I abdicated (March 1917) and the Alexsandr Krensky led Menshevik government that the Bolsheviks overthrew (October 1917) were literally on their last legs.Thus at the decisive moment the Bolsheviks had to confront extremely weak forces.

[32] V.I. Lenin, "Marxism and Insurrection" (September 1917), in *Collected Works*,_ Vol.I, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950). These concepts became an integral part of Soviet military doctrine. Thus in World War II, as well as after it, Soviet military doctrine emphasised that if an absolute superiority in men and material could be maintained then success was a near certainty. This aspect was evident in the deployment of Soviet forces in World War II and the reason and rationale behind the massive build-up of conventional forces in the aftermath of World War II--a superiority that NATO tried to neutralise by deploying nuclear forces.

[33] V.I. Lenin, "A Great Beginning" (June 1919), in *Collected Works*,_ Vol.II, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), p.213.

[34]V.I. Lenin, "All Out for the Fight against Deniken" (July 1919), in *Collected Works*,_ Vol.II, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), pp.240-262.

[35] V.I. Lenin, "Lessons of the Moscow Uprising" (September 1906), in *Collected Works*, Vol.I, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), pp.163-71.

for a general attack,[36] and though offence was the best form of defence[37] to be able to retreat if needed.[38]

Lenin also called for the exploitation of the enemy's weaknesses by means of manoeuvre and subsequent surprise.[39] He wrote "...it is our duty as Communists to master all forms (of guerrilla war), to learn how, with the maximum rapidity, to supplement one form with another, to substitute one form with another, and to adapt our tactics" to changing tactics.

To put it in a nutshell, Leninist doctrine stresses on the primacy of the decisive moment, decisive points, economy of forces, concentration at the decisive point, speed, information, command and control, high morale, determination, planned offence and objective, and both strategical and tactical surprise.

Mao Tse-Tung: from the Countryside to the Cities

Mao's basic difference with Marxist-Leninist doctrine was that the revolution should have its roots in the countryside, with the peasants taking over the rural areas, approaching the cities and then capturing them. This was a doctrine that was rooted in the realities of the Chinese situation.[40]

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[36] V.I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done? " (July 1919), in *Collected Works,_* Vol.I, Part 1, (Moscow, 1950), pp.240-262.

[37] V.I. Lenin, "Political Report to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)"(1922), in *Collected Works,_* Vol.II, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), pp. 679-673.

[38] V.I. Lenin, "Speech in closing the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)"(1922), in *Collected Works,_* Vol.II, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), pp. 679-681.

[39] V.I. Lenin, "Lessons of the Moscow Uprising" (September 1906), in *Collected Works,* Vol.I, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), pp.163-71 and "What Is to Be Done? " (July 1919), in *Collected Works,_* Vol.I, Part 1, (Moscow, 1950), pp.240-262.

[40] To quote Mao himself, China was "half colonial and half feudal; it is a country that is politically, militarily and economically backward....a vast country with great resources and tremendous population, a country in which the terrain is complicated and the facilities for communication are poor. All these factors favour a protracted war; they all favour the application of mobile (that is, orthodox) warfare and guerrilla operations." "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War" (1936), in *Selected Works,_* Vol.I (London,1954) pp.178.

Mao also conceptualised a guerrilla war as occurring in three distinct stages:

> **1. The first stage** is for consolidation of the organisation. Volunteers are trained to go forth as agitators and propagandists, and they go forth to enlist peasant support.
>
> **2.** The earlier stage slowly develops into that of limited direct action--**the second stage.** It is marked mainly by sabotage and terrorism aiming at eliminating opposition leaders and gaining arms and supplies for the opposition group.
>
> **3.** Depending on the success of stage 2, **stage 3** is the destruction of the army by largely orthodox forces.

Mao argued for the primacy of politics over the purely military effort[41]. He wrote, "War is the highest form of struggle..."[42] and that the basic aim and principle of war was to preserve oneself and annihilate the enemy.[43]Consequently, the most important factor in any war was the morale of the people, which depended on the material factors and "conscious activity".[44]

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[41] Tse-tung, n.40, p.242.
[42]Ibid.,191.
[43]Tse-tung, n.40, pp.175-253. Also "On the Protracted War" (1938), in *Selected Works*, Vol.II, (London,1954) pp.157-243.
[44] Ibid.p.192.

In other words, while factors of purely economic, political, military and geographical nature were important, the effort was decided by man's conscious and directing activities.[45]

In matters of primacy, Mao had a definite hierarchy. Thus it is to be the Communist Party of China (CPC) nucleated Red Army, the Red Army nucleated mass base and then the mass base nucleated China. For Mao, there was no separation of the people and politics from the army--the army and the party belonged to and were very much a part of the people.[46]

It is from this key concept that the other major elements of Maoist thought flow: the need for rational preparation, which included the scope for the people's army to retreat when the army was hard pressed;[47] attention to the material base (men, material, and environment), which led Mao to call for the establishment of hospitals, the strengthening of local defences, godowns to store food and for the Red Army and the people to be regarded as an integrated system.[48]

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[45] Ibid.,pp.202-206.

[46] Tse-tung, n.40, pp.175-253, also Mao Tse-tung, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War" (1938), in *Selected Works*, Vol.II, (London,1954) pp.244-261. Also "Problems of War and Strategy" (1938), in *Selected Works*, Vol.II, (London,1954) pp.267-281.The importance of morale and its relation to politics, both national and international comes through in Mao's discussion on strategy. He asserts that morale rises from proper relations between Red Army officers and men, and between the people and the army. He emphasises how important it is for the people to be patriotic (1938) if the communist party is to have control over the war effort and reminds them of Dimitrov's conditions for Communist cadres: devotion to the cause, capacity for independent operations, and contact with the masses.

[47] Mao, n.40, 215-22. Mao reflected the idea of Claueswitz that the retreat was a creative period in which the initiative is preserved by the group in retreat and the advancing enemy is induced to commit mistakes.The matter of taking advantage of the enemy's mistakes is a point that is repeatedly raised by Mao. he emphasises the idea of relation of forces, of considering the enemy's weaknesses and one's own weaknesses, of the dependence of strategy on the basis of the relation of the two opposing forces.

[48]Mao Tse-tung, "Why Can China's Red Political Power exist?" (1928), in *Selected Works*, Vol.I, (London,1954) pp.63 -70, p.70, also "We Must Attend to Economic Work" (1933), pp.129-137, p.129 and n.40, p.209.

Mao's doctrine of guerrilla warfare thus has as it's nucleus the people; unlike other guerrilla organisations that stressed the need to inspire the people by "revolution by deed"[49] in Maoist doctrine there is no separation of the people from the guerrillas. As he wrote,

> "The concept that guerrilla warfare is an end in itself and that guerrilla activities can be divorced from those of the regular forces is incorrect....in sum, while we must promote guerrilla warfare as a necessary strategical auxiliary to orthodox operations, we must neither assign it the primary position in our war strategy nor substitute it for mobile and position warfare as conducted by orthodox forces."[50]

Other important aspects of Maoist doctrine are, the dialectical methodology in the establishment of strategy[51] thus emphasising the weaknesses and strengths relatively of oneself and the enemy; the use of the rational method in general preparation and planning,[52] something that was very much evident in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) tactics during the anti-Japanese resistance movement (1937-45) and the Chinese Civil War (1945-49) at the end of which a victorious PLA swept into Peking.

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[49] The basic principle behind anarchist acts of violence was that actions such as the assassination of U.S. President William Mckliney in 1901 were "propaganda by deed". At the end of the 19th century the description "terrorist" began to be applied specifically to the strategy of political assassination that was employed by Narodnaya Volya, a Russian anarchist organisation, against the Tsarist regime, particularly the "blow at the centre"--the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in March 1881. see Guelke, n.7, pp.3-5.

[50] Tse-tung, n.40, p.

[51] Tse-Tung, n.48, pp.157-59.

[52] Mao Tse-tung, "The Struggle in the Chinkkang Mountains" (1928), in *Selected Works*, Vol.I, (London,1954) pp. 71-101, also n.40, pp.187-198, "On Practice" (July 1937) pp.282-297, and "On Contradiction" (August 1937) pp.298-338. Mao emphasised the disordered situation in the Opposition and chastised the CPC for the mistakes in the Chinkkangshan campaign, which he said stemmed from the lack of an ordered, disciplined, unified system, and a lack of rational methods of operation. Mao disparages the "roving insurgent" and reviles adventurism--seen in looting, lack of discipline, lack of activity, adventurism of all kinds. Noting the concept of the permanent offensive he recognises the contradiction in the term.

Other aspects of the Chinese system are the militia system[53], the concept of "mass" both in the sense of concentrating forces in mass attacks to overrun a position[54] and in the sense of aiming for overwhelming superiority in manpower to ensure that the final objective is won.[55]

Maoist Doctrine in South East Asia: Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyèn Giap

Vietnam is a country that witnessed more than half a century of savage war, first against the French, then the Japanese, then the French again, the Americans and finally the Chinese. In this crucible of revolution some of the finest moments of guerrilla warfare were shaped. This part of the chapter will study the guerrilla warfare in Vietnam from the standpoint of guerrilla war, and examine how Maoist doctrine was applied to Indochina.

Dau tranh is Vietnamese for struggle, and *dau tranh* for those who fought in Vietnam was an awesome, dramatic and total experience.[56] The leader of the Vietnamese revolution, Ho Chi Minh and his supreme commander Vo Nyugén Giap saw the conflict as total. Following Maoist

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[53] This is a favourite Marxist theme. Engels theorised that the increasing military adventurism of the states would lead to a time when the people, armed, would rise replacing standing armies with their own system--socialism. Frederick Engels, *Anti-Duhring,* (New York, 1939) trans. Emile Burns org. pub.1878, pp.188-89. Lenin favoured the militia over the standing army, but wanted that the militia be actually a truly proletarian militia and not subversient to another class. V.I. Lenin, "The War Programme of the Proletarian Revolution" (1916), in *Collected Works,* Vol.I, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950) pp.569-82.

[54] Human wave attacks have always been a favourite with the PLA. To the dazed incredulity of United Nations forces in Korea, the Chinese would literally overrun a small position with sheer manpower and persist in doing the same in the case of larger positions inspite of enormous casualties. Geer cites the example of an attack against Fox Company, 7th Marines, at Toktong Pass in the retreat from Yudam-ni. The Chinese left 2,000 dead around the Marine position--defended by 200. Andrew Geer, *The New Breed,* (New York: 1961) p.298.

[55] The People's Liberation Army is the world's largest with over 10 million men under arms.

[56] For the Vietnamese, the war dislocated their entire way of life. For American soldiers in Vietnam, in an entirely alien place, largely forgotten at home as the U.S. never officially declared war, the Vietnamese experience was so total that very few were able to emerge unscathed. 50,000 U.S. soldiers died in Vietnam. More than that number of Vietnam veterans committed suicide. Those who went there could never really again settle into American life.

doctrine they too did not see the political struggle as separate from the military struggle. Giap wrote:

> The People's Army is the instrument of the Party and of the revolutionary state for the accomplishment, in armed form, of the tasks of the revolution. Profound awareness of the aims of the Party, boundless loyalty to the cause of the nation and the working class, an a spirit of unreserved sacrifice are fundamental questions for the army, and questions of principle. Therefore the political work in its ranks is of the first importance. *It is the soul of the army.*[57]

Giap adopted Mao's **three-stage conceptualisation** of guerrilla warfare by adding two preliminary stages of his own--the "psychological warfare stage", when a base was established among the people using propaganda and political warfare and the discontent among the people channelled into political activity, centred around the individual and clandestine. In the second phase, the small-unit phase comes the basic organisational work, the formation of vertical and horizontal associations and the creation of armed propaganda units who would fire only in self defence and whose chief duties were agitation and propaganda work. Giap felt that only then could the three stages of revolt as seen by Mao begin.[58]

Giap adopted the **first stage** of revolution, when the guerrillas on the run trade land for time, possible only in a vast sparsely populated country like China, to the Vietnamese situation. The Viet Minh strategy on the other hand was to stress on organisational aspects, and had as its primary strategy

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[57] Vo Nguyén Giap, *People's War, People's Army* (Hanoi, 1961) p.47.

[58] See Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organisation and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Massachusetts, 1966), pp.31-56. Also see Bernard.B Fall, *The Two Vietnams: A Political and Military Analysis* (London, reprint, 1984) pp.104-169. For a purely strategic account of the conflict see Harry J. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New Delhi, 1992).

phong ve "objective defense." Cadres built the hard core in a safe area--the cadre then trained recruits of three to five men (never more than 50) into operating units. Later in this state larger units where created in a co-ordinated manner and rear bases, called "liberated areas" were carved out. Giap, like Mao emphasised on keeping the forces intact, therefore Giap's favourite tactic was the ambush, which allowed his forces to select time, place and enemy. Mobility, offensive operations and constant activity were stressed.[59]

In **the second stage**, the level of conflict is escalated and is a war of movement--*van dong chien*--marked by combined armed and political struggle and instead of conserving strength, as in the first stage, the tactic is to engage the enemy in a vicious war of attrition.

This was the time to switch from guerrilla warfare to mobile warfare which came in between conventional and guerrilla warfare. Giap defined mobile warfare as "a form of fighting in which the principles of regular warfare gradually appear and increasingly develop but still bear a guerrilla character."[60] The basic tactic in this stage was to have a series of engagements with the enemy, strategically a series of carefully timed, integrated campaigns, tactically a series of increasingly bolder hit-and-run tactics such as attacks on outposts, convoys and military targets.[61] It is also in this stage that the party adapts the policy of political assassination[62]

In the **final stage**, which marks the beginning of the end, and is called the front assault stage, the attack against fortified positions stage--*cong kien*

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[59] Pike, n.58., p. 37.
[60] Giap, n.57., p.45.
[61] Pike, n.58, pp.38-42.
[62] That the tactic was effective was revealed by President John.F. Kennedy in a speech he made before a joint session of the House of Representatives and the Senate on May 25, 1961. "(The fighting)...is done...by guerrillas striking at night, by assassins who have taken the life of 4,000 civil officers in the last 12 months in Vietnam..." Quoted in Pike, n.58, p.33.

chien or the counteroffensive--*phan kong*--or the conventional warfare stage when Giap deployed all the forces at his command. That the strategy succeeded was proved when the North Vietnamese army marched into Saigon in 1975.[63]

Evaluation of the Framework

The difficulty of the above ideological blueprint lies in this: it conceptualises a theory of revolution and then assumes that this is universally applicable. What many theorists forget is that revolutions too are products of time and place. Thus the theory that the revolution should begin in the cities was a product of a specifically European post-industrial culture.[64]

Ironically, the first communist revolution took place in the most backward nation of Europe--Russia--the result of Lenin's adaptation of Marxian orthodoxy to the conditions prevailing in Russia. Leninist thought also cannot be transferred per se to another country. For example, the concept of the "decisive moment" when the revolution would triumph was the outcome of the Russian experience. The Bolsheviks had to confront an extremely weak centre--first a monarchy on its last legs[65] and then the fragile Menshevik regime of Krensky. However, when confronted with a strong centre, the concept of the decisive moment is meaningless--this was the

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[63] Pike, n.58, p.39-43.

[64] Karl Marx wrote that the revolution will take place in the advanced capitalist societies of the West. It is significant that he had written his tome on the basis of parliamentary reports of the wretched conditions of British workers. He also wrote most of Das Kapital in the London library.

[65] The enormous Russian losses in the First World War had already weakened the capacity of the Tsar to crush any revolt against him, as he had done on January 22, 1905, "Black Sunday" when Cossack troops fired into a large crowd of workers led by the priest Georgy Gapon, who had marched to the square in front of the Winter Palace. Several hundred were killed and sympathetic uprisings throughout the country forced the Tsar to issue a manifesto that promised to convoke a national parliament. But in 1917 Russian troops were shooting their officers and mutinying all along the Eastern Front. See Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China* (Cambridge: 1979)

case in China and Vietnam, where only a strategy of protracted guerrilla warfare could weaken the enemy.

Even in countries that had many similarities, like Vietnam and China, this was the case. Giap had to adapt Maoist to the situation in Vietnam as the above discussion shows. Thus to study the doctrine and idea of guerrilla warfare one cannot confine oneself to the narrow frames of ideology.

THEORY TO PRACTICE: GUERRILLAS ON THE FIELD

This part of the study shall examine the actual tactics that guerrilla groups have used on the field of battle. Ramachandran distinguishes between the guerrilla and the terrorist on the basis of tactics, saying that guerrilla warfare consists of "irregular military operations "based on mobile tactics used by small, lightly armed groups who aim to harass the opponent rather than defeat him in battle"[66], while the terrorist resorts to "disproportionate, apparently random, but deliberately symbolic violence by incumbents and insurgents to achieve their goals."[67]

At the outset some broad generalisations can be made based on tactics. Guerrilla warfare is marked by small-scale, limited action in tandem with a larger political-military strategy and against orthodox military forces;[68]

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[66] Ramachandran, n.10., p.1

[67] ibid.,p.6.

[68] Guerrilla warfare is considered as a weapon of the strong against the weak, resorted too when the state has at its command enormous power. Examples of such insurgencies are the anti-colonial struggles in the Third World, especially the Vietnamese struggle against the French 1946-54, and the Algerian War of Independence, 1954-62. The idea that guerrilla warfare is a weapon of the weak is a recurrent theme in Marxist writing on the subject, and is supported by authors such as Crenshaw, Schmidt and John Walton who see terrorism as a response to violence by the state. See Crenshaw, n.4, pp.394, and John Walton, *Reluctant Rebels: Comparative Studies of Revolution and Underdevelopment* (New York, 1984) pp.49-54 For dissenting views see Adrian Guelke, *The Age of Terrorism and the International System* (London, 1995), pp. 35-51.

Guerrillas have no uniform[69], are unconventional in arms, lack formal supply lines[70] and employ highly unorthodox tactics including terrorism, bombings, psychological warfare such as hostage-taking, sabotage etc.

Such an approach, however, turns a blind eye to the act that there are such clear distinctions when it comes to warfare. Guerrilla warfare, as Carl von Clausewitz says, aims at wearing down the enemy to such an extent that he loses his will to fight. In this, it differs from orthodox warfare in which the aim is to defeat the enemy on the battlefield, if not destroy him.[71]

It is a weapon of protest employed by the weak against the strong to rectify real or imagined wrongs levied on a people either by a foreign invader

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[69] This is one of the factors that distinguish guerrillas from a regular army and make it difficult for security forces to distinguish between the two. This is one major reason for human rights violations when troops under fire go berserk and attack innocent civilians among whom the guerrillas take refuge. The Vietminh irregulars, for example, wore no uniform in contrast to the regular forces of the North Vietnamese army. See Douglas Pike, *Vet Cong: The Organisation and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Massachusetts, 1966), pp.150-65.

[70] Supply lines for a guerrilla army are wide and varied. Thus the Jews fighting against the Arabs in Palestine, and bound by the British blockade, received arms through illegal airlifts, pilfered them from the British, or smuggled arms into Palestine on board ships in which the they were cunningly concealed. For example, Xiel Federmann, the Haganah arms agent in Europe chartered a Danish freighter, concealed a huge shipment of arms in crates marked Istanbul, put them in the ship's hold and dumped 40 tons of soft coal over it. He then curtly informed the captain that the coal was bound for Tel Aviv, implying that if he did not want to go there first, then he could unload it himself piece by piece once the ship docked in the Turkish capital. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, *O Jerusalem* (New Delhi, 1985), pp.152-55.

[71] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* , edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey, 1976).Clausewitz was a Prussian officer who lived in the 18th century and based his treatise on the basis of the total warfare that Napoleonic battles had introduced in the European theatre of war.

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or the ruling government.[72] Sometimes, like the LTTE, bands of rebels develop into an orthodox insurgent army that fights set-piece battles.[73]

A NON-IDEOLOGICAL TEMPLATE OF REVOLUTION

Just as it is possible to construct a framework for the study of guerrilla warfare and doctrine based on the theories of revolution it is possible to construct a framework based on the **events and tactics** that various revolts have adopted. This part of the chapter will try to do this.

Motivation

The first pre-condition for a successful revolt are people who are willing and ready to revolt. An though there is a wide spectrum of literature on the subject of motivation for a revolt, it is at best confusing at worst confounded. The explanations for terrorism and guerrilla warfare range from the idea that the armed struggles that took place in the 1960s and the 1970s were part of a massive conspiracy,[74] by the Soviet Union and other satellite nations, to launch guerrilla wars throughout the globe to get over the nuclear stalemate, to the idea that terrorists and guerrillas are pathological.[75] Other explanations include the idea that terrorism and guerrilla warfare are the product of the increased alienation in urban societies where the anonymity of the city make

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[72] The motivations for guerrilla warfare are wide and varied. They can range from a desire to change society radically (Chinese Revolution) to a desire for a certain ethnic, religious or linguistic group to secede(Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka, Irish separatism in Northern Ireland, and Basque militancy in Spain).

[73] Other examples like the PLA and the Vietnamese National Liberation Front, that had its genisis in the Viet Minh have been dealt with before.

[74] For example, Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network: The Secret War of International Terrorism* (New York, 1991), the ideas of the State Department and the U.S. establishment epitomised in the speech that Kennedy made, quoted in Pike., n.58, see n.79 "Yet their (communists) aggression is more often concealed than open. They have fired no missiles and thier troops are seldom seen.They send arms, agitators, aid...to every troubled area."

[75]An underlying theme of newsreports and movies that stress that terrorism is the product of sick minds--without going into the reasons why.

it possible for small groups to strike at will[76] or that mass participation in politics concomitant with modernisation has brought about the democratisation of violence and that terrorism is a concomitant of the process.[77] or that terrorism is an act of revenge for the state's terror.[78]

Recent literature on the subject of motivation has tended swing towards the view that the peasant is the key to revolution.[79] This, just like the earlier myth that revolutions were the handiwork of small professional groups obscures the fact that professional revolutionaries cannot make the revolution. A revolution can succeed only when revolutionaries are able to co-ordinate the grievances of the populace, irrespective of their class background. That is, "revolutionary outbreaks and seizures of power are often carried out through by coalitions, alliances or conjunctures of struggles that cut across divides between urban and rural areas and among different classes and ethnic groupings"[80].

Most communist revolutions in third world have succeeded only when they harnessed the latent power of nationalism and waged war in the name of national liberation rather than class struggle.[81] No matter what the level of indorcination, a people are more likely to revolt if they find that primordial identities like ethnicity threatened rather than in the name of class struggle.

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[76] Such an implication was evident in the media coverage of the Ahur Shimi, a fanatic religious cult, which set off the nerve gas sarin in a busy Tokyo subway last year.

[77] For example, see Guelke, n.7.,. He says that in societies where sharp ethnic divisions exist, and the breakdown of age-old equations and relations, "the process of democratisation and of liberalisation is often fraught with the danger of intercommunal violence." p.44.

[78] Crenshaw, n.4.,She also divides the motives into enabling factors, such as the existnce of aircraft wich makes the terrorist act of hijacking possible., and motivating factors such as the desire for revenge.

[79] For an account of the role of the peasant in the classical revolutions--French, Chinese, and Russian--see Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparitive Analysis of France, Russia, and China*, (Cambridge, 1979).

[80] Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol, "Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World", *Politics and Society*,, Vol.5, No.3, August 1986.

[81] The Algerian, Vietnamese and Chinese revolutions were just as nationalistic as they were revolutionary.

Another important aspect is that there should be an "immediate benefit". Thus while it is highly difficult to get a peasant to support such vague notions like class struggle or an utopian socialist paradise it is far more likely that he would join or at least assist a rebel outfit if he can be assured of an immediate benefit. Thus in India, for example, Naxalite outfits have upto 30 percent women members--some in higher positions. The same is true of the LTTE. women members of the LTTE enjoy a status and position in the organisation that they would not have been able to attain, otherwise in traditional Tamil society.[82] Popkin, speaks of "local goods and goods with immediate payoffs;"[83] In addition to the promise of eventual liberation, most revolutionary groups have one or other kind of immediate payoff, that attracts members.[84]

The broader reasons as to why men rebel still remain a source of mystery. For example in the Algerian revolution the motives of members of the FLN were varied. They included a perceived threat to Algerian Muslim culture from French Christian culture, extreme nationalism, a question of honour--for example, some Berbers, among whom possessing a gun is considered a mark of manhood, cited the resentment of French laws that prohibited non-Europeans from possessing guns as the main reason. Other reasons included torture of a loved one at the hands of French forces, or underlying resentment at the economic and social inequality between the *pied noirs* (French settlers) and the native Algerians.

Other factors that have led to rebellion are that it is a weapon of the weak, that it is resorted to as a result of general alienation that is brought

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[82] See Rabi Ray *The Naxalites and their Ideology* (Oxford, 1987), Dagmar, n.26, Anna Brenchley, "Lady Macbeth in the Jungles of Eelam" *Frontline* February 23, 1996

[83] Samuel P. Popkin, *The Rational Peasant*_ (Berkeley, 1979) cited in Goodwin and Skocpol, n.80, p.495.

[84] Naxalite groups, for example, offer regular meals and protection from immediate oppression from the local landlord and the police.

about, or that it occurs when a society comes into conflict with assumptions that challenge its fundamental tenets.[85]

Strategy and Tactics

The key difference between a conventional army and a guerrilla army is this: while the former aims not only at the defeat but also at the destruction of the enemy, the latter aims at harassing the enemy until a regular army can be built or the enemy is subjected to a combination of economic, political, military and psychological pressure that he has no option but to quit.[86]

The prime factor that decides success or defeat in warfare is the strategy that the is adopted both on and off the field of battle. This is true of both conventional and guerrilla warfare. The field manual of the U.S. Army conceptualises the aim of any war as follows:

> Every military operation should be directed towards a clearly defined, decisive and attainable objective. The ultimate military objective in war is the destruction of the enemy's armed forces and his will to fight.[87]

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[85] This was evident in the Iranian Revolution. The sudden flow of oil wealth into the country and the increasing Westernisation of the elite shook the foundations of a deeply conservative society. It is significant that the Iranian people revolted when they were richer than any other time in their history. Also significant is that many women actually supported the fundamentalist Ayatollah Khomeni and rejected the Shah.

[86] For example, the Allied forces in World War II were unwilling to accept anything other than the total and complete destruction of Nazi Germany--a aim that the 1943 Casablanca Conference embodied when it called for "unnconditional surrender". On the other hand the FLN in Algeria, the Viet Cong in Vietnam and the EKOA in Cyprus had limited aims--to dislodge the occupying power, but not his complete and total destruction.

[87] Field Manual of the U.S. Army, 100-5, 19 February 1962 p.46 quoted in Summers, n. 75, p.93.

To attain the objective is thus the ultimate objective of war. The **Principles of War** can be defined as *Objective, Offensive, Mass, Economy of Force, Manoeuvre, Unity of Command, Security, Simplicity and Surprise.*[88]

Objective: This includes both strategic and tactical aims. *Strategic* objectives are the larger and the ultimate aim, the destruction of the enemy. *Tactical* objectives are defined as the shot term objectives which should be clearly defined, decisive and attainable, and which lead to victory. Thus while the attainment of Eelam is the strategic objective of the LTTE, the recapture of the Jaffna peninsula from the Sri Lankan army and the thwarting of Operation Jaya Sekuru ("Sure Victory") are its tactical objectives.

Offensive: In a nutshell, the *offensive can be defined as the need to seize, retain and exploit the initiative.* To win eventual victory the prime mode of the army should be offensive. Though a defensive mode is acceptable as a temporary phase, only an offensive army can capture or hold the initiative, achieve results and maintain freedom of action--to put it in a nutshell the enemy must be forced to *react* rather than *act.* In the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 the Israelis early on realised that the key to victory lay in hanging on to Jewish settlements in Arab areas and Jerusalem. Once they did this, the Arabs were forced into the defensive mode of trying to dislodge the Jews.[89]

Mass: This refers to the *ability to concentrate combat power at a specific place and time.* It also has two aspects--the *strategic* and the *tactical* with the former referring to the extent to which one is willing to sacrifice to attain the objective. Underlying this aspect is the need for planning, the ability to move forces so that maximum pressure can be brought to bear on the enemy. An ideal commander combines the elements of combat power in a

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[88] Chapter III, Field Manual of the U.S. Army, pp.100-01, *The Army*, 14 August 1981 (Washington D.C.; USGPO, 1981. Appendix, " The Principles of War and the Operational Dimension" Summers, n.58, pp.196-206.

[89] Collins and Lapierre, n.70., pp.440-462 that describe the defence of Jerusalem.

manner and time of his choosing at the decisive moment. The main problem for a guerrilla commander is usually that he opposes a superior force.

T.E. Lawrence,[90] had to face a Turkish force that was five times the size of the tribal army that he could muster. His tactic, therefore, was to attack the Turks along their weakest links and then with his horsemen vanish into the desert night. Mao and Lenin too emphasise the need of concentrating the maximum forces at the weakest of links.[91]

Economy of Force: The principle of *allocating minimum essential combat power to secondary efforts.* At a *tactical* level this means that the commander of forces should deploy minimum means in areas other than where the main decision is sought. Economy of force tactics include delaying, retreating; defending, attacking and also deception tactics.[92]

Manoeuvre: The basic idea in this is to *place the enemy in a position of disadvantage by the flexible application of combat power.* In a strategic sense this has three related dimensions--*flexibility, manoeuvrability,* and *mobility.* In a tactical sense this calls for a concentration or dispersion of forces in a way that is designed to place the enemy at a disadvantage and achieve the maximum results with a minimum of disadvantage. At all levels this strategy calls not only for fire power and movement, but also for flexibility of thought, plans and operations, and the considered application of the principles of mass and economy of force.

Unity of Command: *For every objective, there should be unity of effort under one responsible commander.* In the tactical level, this means the employment of military forces in a manner that develops their full combat power. Unity of command requires that there should be a common goal and

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[90] T.E. Lawrence was send by the British to Arabia, to provide direction to the Arab tribes who rose in revolt against the Ottomans during the First World War.

[91] See above, Mao and Lenin both conceptualise the theory of mass.

[92] Such as the use of comouglage, feigned retreat, fall back etc.

means the direction and concentration of all forces towards that goal. Co-ordination can be achieved in two ways: the first is to invest a tactical commander with all powers to direct and co-ordinate all forces engaged in pursuit of a common goal, the second to depend on co-operation between the various groups on the field. Guerrilla forces usually engage in the latter, though in some like the LTA or the various communist insurgent groups the sense of hierarchy is very strong. A lot depends on the kind of insurgency; for example while Guevera argued that the guerrillas should live and eat together in a common *foco* (commune)[93] he visualised a loose-knit command structure.

Security: This refers to the tactics that a guerrilla unit adapts to protect and husband its combat power. Security depends on the measures that a unit takes to protect itself from surprise, observation, detection, interference, espionage, sabotage, or annoyance. Security can be achieved by the maintenance and establishment of protective measures of hostile acts or influence; or it may be assured by deception operations that are designed to confuse enemy attempts to interfere with the force being secured.

Surprise: This is one factor that can make or break a guerrilla army. *Surprise means going against an enemy army at a time or place in a manner that he is not prepared for.* The key factor is that not only must the enemy be unprepared but also that he become aware of the attack too late to react effectively. Factors that contribute to the surprise element include, speed, alacrity, employment of unexpected forces, effective intelligence, deception operations of all kinds, variations of tactics and methods of operations and operations security.

Simplicity: In both the *strategic and tactical dimension,* guidance plans and orders should be simple and direct as the attainment of the objective will

[93] SeeHodges (ed) n.5, pp.45-54.

allow. On the field it is easy to attain a simple plan but difficult to achieve complicated ones or as the field manual of the U.S. army puts it, "Other factors being equal the simplest plan executed promptly is to be preferred over the complex plan executed later."[94]

APPRAISAL

As the above discussion shows, while there is a whole corpus of literature that tries to conceptualise guerrilla warfare, in reality rarely has there been a text-book revolution. Every insurgent movement had mutated in accordance with the ground reality. However, insurgencies or guerrillas that have been inspired by a single ideology, for example Marxism, tend to have common characteristics. *Thus one comes to the conclusion that while there can be classic guerrilla doctrine, there is nothing like a classic guerrilla force.* This is the framework that the LTTE, which claims to be socialist, will be examined against.

Based on the above discussion the focus of the framework of the study will be at two levels. While **level A** will study the tactics of the LTTE it will constantly refer to the theoretical works on the subject. **Level B** will be an attempt to compare the LTTE with the actual practise of guerrilla warfare. Along with this a study will be made of the military character of the LTTE. All will be woven together in the narrative.

[94] Quoted in Summers, op.cit, n..58 p.204.

CHAPTER II

The Military Nature of the LTTE: Origin, Base and Patterns of Mobilisation

This chapter will study the LTTE as a guerrilla organisation. It will start with a brief introduction of into the origins and growth of the LTTE. It will then go into a detailed examination of the social composition of the organisation and mobilisation patterns of the group. The focus here will be to understand the organisation in terms of both its class and caste character.

War, wrote the writer and historian Clausewitz, was a continuation of policy by other means, and in this sense the LTTE is an organisation that was born out of the frustration that the Tamils felt as their attempts to change the system by means of constitutional measures failed. Why did the Tamils lose faith in constitutional democracy? Why did the island that did not witness a protracted anti-colonial struggle against the British become the scene for one of the most bitterly contested of all ethnic struggles in the contemporary world? These are the questions that the chapter will try to answer.

Several attempts have been made to understand the militancy of the community in the island. They range from the idea that the Sinhalese Tamil antagonism is based on inherited prejudice and hatred[1] to that it is the consequence of policies followed by the Sri Lankan government after 1948, when the British left.[2]

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[1] Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia* (Washington and London: 1988).

[2] Statchi Ponnambalam, *Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle*, (London:1983).

Some scholars have linked the sharpening of ethnic conflict to the dissolution of feudal institutions under the impact of colonialism.[3] while others say that the conflict came about when the ruling class in Sri Lanka tried to turn away the attention of the working classes--both Tamil and Sinhalese--from the exploitation that they faced--to such extraneous considerations like the ethnic conflict.[4]

However, what is clear is that Tamil militancy was not a sudden phenomenon and grew out of the alienation that the Tamils felt from the ruling system, a system that gradually squeezed them out of the pre-eminent place that they had occupied in the island's life. Ramachandran[5] argues that the role of the Sinhalese state had a major role to play in the rise of Tamil militancy, as the aim of Colombo was never to create a multi-ethnic state but to create a Sinhala state and nation. The reluctance of the Sri Lankan state to concede at least a modicum of power resulted in the Tamil populace taking resort to armed struggle as an alternative form of discourse and "dialogue" with the state.

Another aspect that made it easy for the Tamils to fight the Sri Lankan state was that the Tamils occupy contiguous areas on the island. Therefore, they found it relatively easy to fight for a separate state. *One major argument of this study is that rather than seeing the conflict as a challenge to the established order in Sri Lanka, the conflict is, to the protagonists, a continuation of age old conflicts.* To understand this mentality which is very prominent in the thinking of the main force of the Tamil militancy, the

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[3]Jonathan Spencer (ed), *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict* (London and New York: 1990), p.3. The book goes into the question of the construction of alternate and opposing histories and identities by the major ethnic groups on the island--the Tamils and the Sinhalese.

[4] Ponnambalam, n.2.

[5] Sudha Ramachandran, "Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka: A Study of the Evolution and Growth of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)" (Ph.D.Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, School of International Studies, New Delhi, 1995) p.70.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, (LTTE), it is essential to have an understanding of the island's past.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This part of the study will give a brief account of Sri Lankan history. The focus of the study will be on three aspects: one, on how the island's history has been constructed, two, on actual instances of Tamil Sinhala conflict on the island, and three, on how the Tamils were pushed to the sidelines, especially in the post colonial Sri Lankan state. The chapter will look into specific legislation and events that resulted in such a situation.

It is significant that there is not much evidence of ethnic clashes in ancient times or even during the colonial period. In fact, during colonial times clashes were more on religious lines with Sinhala Catholic pitted against Sinhala Buddhist, or Muslim against Tamil Hindu.[6] It is only later, especially after 1956, that an ethnic identity becomes important. The study will therefore try to understand the "making of the ethnic identity" in Sri Lanka, to paraphrase an expression of the English historian E.P. Thomson.[7]

The Classical period (C.200 B.C.-A.D. 1500)

The two main periods in the history of the island which the Sinhalese glorify are the Anuradhapura period (457 B.C. to A.D. 769) and the Polonnaruva period (1017 A.D.-1235 A.D.). During these periods there were frequent invasions from South India, which is crucial to the Sinhala reading of

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[6] Spencer, op.cit, n.3, p.10

[7] E.P. Thomson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London:1972). Thompson rather than accept the Marxian dictum that the working class is automatically pitted against the bourgeoisie and the capitalist class, studies how the consciousness of belonging to a particular class, was actually "made", by plays, games like soccer which grew in opposition to aristocratic games like cricket.

history.[8] This constant 'Tamil-Sinhala' conflict between the island and the mainland, lies at the heart of the Sinhala fear that they will be swamped by South India.

From 1200 A.D.-1505 A.D a series of invasions from South India led to a drift of Sinhalese power to the southwest and the establishment of a Tamil kingdom in the north of the island, dividing the island into two ethnolinguistic areas, with the Tamils concentrated in the northern and eastern areas of the island. Jaffna as the capital of the Tamil Hindu kingdom became the seat of a Tamil Hindu culture similar to Tamil culture on the mainland. This was crucial as the two ethnic groups henceforth had separate territory--"traditional homelands"--the first prerequisite for a nation state.

Colonial Power in Sri Lanka

The island was first conquered by the Portuguese and then the Dutch. The major consequence of Dutch rule in Sri Lanka (1658 A.D to 1796 A.D.) was that they coded the customary law-- of the Tamils in Jaffna--*Thesavalamai*--in 1707, thus giving de jure recognition to the separate customs of the community and emphasising their seperation from the Sinhalese.

The British in Ceylon 1796 A.D. to 1900 A.D

The British East India company's conquest of Sri Lanka, which it called Ceylon, occurred during the wars of the French Revolution. When the Netherlands came under French control the British began to move into Sri Lanka from their base in India. The Dutch surrendered the island in 1796,

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[8]For example, the 10th century saw a weakening of the political and military power of the Sinhalese. Taking advantage of the situation, the Cholas, who ruled in South India, hostile because of the Sinhalese alliance with the Pandyas attacked, and occupied the kingdom in 993 A.D. Rajarta was annexed as a province of the Chola empire. The Chola conquest of the island was completed in 1017 when the Cholas seized the southern port of Ruhuna.

Ceylon was made a crown colony (1802) and Kandy integrated with the rest of the country after the British suppressed a popular rebellion in 1818.

The main contribution of the British is that they laid the foundations of the political system by which Sri Lanka was to be ruled in the future. An idea of the way in which the British saw the island is given in the Cleghorn Minute of 1799. In a report to the authorities in Whitehall the British colonial secretary, Sir Hugh Cleghorn wrote:

> Two different nations, from a very ancient period, have divided between them possession of the Island: the Sinhalese inhabiting the interior in its Southern and Western parts from the river Wallouwe to Chilaw, and the Malabars who possess the Northern and the Eastern districts. These two nations differ entirely in their religion, language and manners.[9]

From this it is evident that the way the *colonial authorities looked upon the people of the island was as a collection of various races. The entire colonial edifice of law and legislation was based on this premise.* Thus, the seeds of dissension in Sri Lanka were sown by colonial policies that defined the islanders only in racial terms.

The most important contribution of both the British and the Dutch--for good or bad--was that *they unified the island and brought both the regions, the Tamil dominated North and the Sinhalese dominated south, under one system of government.*

In 1833, the British introduced a series of reforms that systematised the early changes that they had brought about. Sri Lanka was brought under a single administrative and judicial system. They reduced the autocratic powers of the governor and set up Executive and Legislative councils to

[9] Nissan and Stirrat, in Spencer, n.3, p.23.

share in the task of the government. And they made English the language of government and the medium of instruction in schools.

The shortage of labour in Sri Lanka made the British bring coolie labour from the mainland under indentured contracts beginning in the 1840s. The need for a permanent labour force in the plantations led to the British settling the Tamil labourers they brought on the estates, creating a class of separate stateless labourers.[10] Being poor and living in an economically backward region, the Tamils, incluluding the Indians, took to colonial education in English, later entering the bureaucracy in large numbers. This gave them a headstart in the economic and political life of the island and is the basis of the allegation that the Tamils enjoyed an unfair advantage in the colonial and post-colonial era. However, other innovations such as the introduction of mass politics, electorates and universal franchise on the island worked against the minorities as these depended on the numbers that a community could muster.[11]

In the legislative field the British, by giving legal recognition to such categories as "Kandyan law", as well as creating political representation on a racial basis, laid the foundations of a polity that depended on race. Thus, for example, nomination to the Governor's legislative council was on the basis of race--one low country Sinhalese, one Tamil, one Burhger, one Moor and one Kandyan.[12] *The deepest legacy of colonial rule in Sri Lanka was*

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[10] The Indian Tamil labourers form 5.5 percent of the island's population and since they live in the Sinhalese majority areas have not been as vociferous in support of separatism as the Sri Lankan Tamils who compromise 12.7 per cent of the population. K. Sivathamby, "Some aspects of the social composition of the Tamils of Sri Lanka", in Social Scientists Association ed., *Ethnicity and Social Change in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: 1984), pp.121-45. For an exposition of the position of the Indian Tamils on the struggle in the Tamil areas, see V. Suryanarayanan, "Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka", in Urmilla Phadnis and others, eds., *Domestic Conflicts in South Asia* (New Delhi: 1986). Vol.2, pp.129-30.

[11] See S.J. Tambiah, *Ethnic Fatricide and the Dismantaling of Democracy* (Chicago:1986)

[12] E. Valentine Daniel, "Afterword: Sacred Places, Violent Spaces," in Spencer, (ed.) n.3, pp.231-36.

that colonial theory and practice ensured that the races on the island would be able to think of themselves only in racial terms and no other.

One major difference between political development in India and in Sri Lanka, is that while in India there was a concerted anti-colonial anti-imperialist struggle, nothing of the kind happened in Sri Lanka. The struggle in India was to become the basis of the Indian nation[13] The protracted struggle in India, led to what Prof. Chandra calls a process of the "nation-in-the-making" the difficult task of convincing the Keralite and the Punjabi, the Bengali and the Gujarati, that despite their differences of caste and class, region and religion, race and language, they shared a common Indian identity.

On the other hand, in Sri Lanka, independence came to the island, when the British, at the setting of Empire, decided to leave.[14] And again, the political process on the island was set in motion not by any struggle against the colonial power, but by the colonial power itself when it decided to allow universal franchise in 1931.[15] Thus in Sri Lanka, the aim of politicians in the beginning itself was mobilisation, "not in order to forge the widest possible alliance against the colonial ruler, but instead in order to win over sections to support their own particular candidature."[16]

As the Sinhalese could not forge a common anti-colonial front they had to fall back on the creation of an identity, based on ancient texts--an identity based on race and religion. The result of this was the creation of a nationalism that was based on the ancient creed of Buddhism and Sinahalese nationalism. Even an authority on the subject, de Silva says, "one sees the Buddhist revival...as an integral part of the recovery of national

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[13] Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence.* (New Delhi:1988)

[14]Many of the island's English speaking elite, hoped against hope that there would be no British withdrawal from the island, at least for strategic reasons.

[15] Daniel, n.12, in Spencer ed., n.3, pp.1-15.

[16] ibid., p.9.

pride....The new Buddhist revivalist was indeed the old missionary writ large."[17]

Sinhalese nationalism was personified by the Buddhist monk Anagarika Dharmapala, an unabashed advocate of outright Sinhala-Buddhist domination of the island. Hi version of nationality excluded the non-Sinhalese identity. In fact, it looked down upon them. Thus Dharmapala, who was against all things foreign wrote,

> "We do not find fresh fields to increase our wealth....Tamils, Cochins (Indian Tamils), Hambarakarayas are employed in large numbers to the prejudice of the people of the island--sons of the soil....*who belong to a superior race.*(emphasis added).[18]

Such an exclusivist definition of Sinahalese nationalism had its reaction in the Tamil assertion and version of Sri Lankan history. The Tamil version of the islands' history argues that the Sinhalese "never possessed an all-island view and gave no Sinhala name to the island as a whole."[19]; that Anuradhapura was actually founded by Tamil kings. It also emphasises that instead of being marauders as represented in the *Mahavamsa*, the Tamils were actually brought to the island by Sinhalese kings who frequently depended on the South Indian kingdoms of the Cholas, the Cheras and the Pandyas for mercenaries to preserve their throne against fellow Sinhalese challengers.[20]

Such an interpretation of history glosses over several facts. It automatically assumes that ever since the dawn of time the two ethnic groups have been separate; that they defined themselves in a nationalism

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[17] de Silva, n.7, p.373.
[18] *Supra*, Ananda Guruge (ed.), pp.515-516. Quoted in Ponnambalam, n.2, p.48.
[19] ibid., p.230.
[20] Ponnambalam,n.2, pp.229-259.

that was based on ethnicity; that the other side--Sinhala or Tamil--is barbaric and aims at only the destruction of the other side; that present day concepts like identity and race are applicable to the distant past[21] and that there is a continuity between the fighting at present and those in ancient times.

Not only is such an history simplistic it also goes against actual historical evidence. For example, the Kandyan kingdom--labelled the last stronghold of Sinhala nationalism against an advancing colonialism--was actually ruled in its last days by a dynasty of Tamil speaking kings, the Nayyakars from Madurai in South India.[22] and in the glorious era of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruva kingdoms there is inscriptional and archaeological evidence of a strong Tamil presence, and even of Tamil soldiers guarding the shrine of Sinhala Buddhism--the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy.[23] And in Jaffna-the stronghold of the Tamils then and now-there is archaeological and inscriptional evidence of a Sinhalese presence in the area.[24]

Inter-ethnic Relations in the Colonial Period

Sinhalese Tamil differences were sharpened by the granting of universal adult franchise on the lines of territorial representation as demanded by the Sinhalese, rather than on communal electorates as demanded by the Tamil community; the creation of a pan-Sinhalese

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[21] Race and ethnicity are late Victorian age concepts--the fallout of Social Darwinism, a science that held that the "survival of the fittest" theory of Darwin was applicable to human beings defined in racial terms. It is interesting to note that in ancient times such a concept did not exist. For example, there is no mention in ancient literature of whether the Roman Emperor was an European or African.

[22] See Elizabeth Nissan and R.L Stirrat, "The Generation of Communal Identities", in Spencer (ed) n.3, pp.19-44.

[23] ibid. p.36

[24] ibid.40-42. There are reports that the LTTE and other Tamil militant groups are doing away with such "uncomfortable" evidence.

ministry (1936) and the increasing inter-ethnic competition for government jobs and technical posts in the wake of the growing Ceylonisation of the services in Sri Lanka. The majority Sinhalese resented the fact that the better-educated Tamils held a disproportionate number of seats. But as long as the colonial cake was big enough there was little conflict. It was only when it began to shrink in the 50s that ethnic differences sharpened.

THE SHARPENING OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN POST-COLONIAL SRI LANKA

The Sinhalisation of the State

At the root of the ethnic conflict in the island, is the process of Sinhalisation of the state. Rather than opt for a multi-ethnic polity, the Sri Lankan state, by a series of policies[25] beginning 1956, began to emphasise the "superiority" of the Sinhalese. This alienated the Tamil minority and conflict was inevitable. But, as the above discussion shows, the assertion of a Sinhalese identity was inevitable as Sri Lankan nationalism was built around the assertion of ethnic identity. The following discussion will briefly summarise the major events in post-colonial Sri Lankan history.

In the debate on the new constitution, D. S. Senanayake, the leader of the state council and president of the Ceylon National Congress (CNC), urged the Tamils and other minorities to accept the communities and to accept the Soulbury constitution:

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[25] See Ramachandran, n.5., pp.24-65; Satchi Ponnambalam, *Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle* (London: 1983) S.J. Tambiah, *Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy*, Chelvadurai Manogaran, *Ethnic Conflict and Reconcilation in Sri Lanka* (Honolulu: 1987), W. Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (Princeton: 1960) Sumantra Bose, *States, Nations, Sovereignty: Sri Lanka, India and the Tamil National Movement* (New Delhi: 1994) among others for a representative sampling of literature on the subject.

> Do you want to be governed from London or do you want, as Ceylonese, to help govern Ceylon?...On behalf of the Congress and on my own behalf, I give the minority communities the sincere assurance that no harm need you fear at our hands in a free Lanka.[26]

The motion was passed by 51 votes to three, with two Indian Tamils and one Sinhalese voting against. *No Sri Lankan Tamil voted against the motion.* As the Tamil leadership unanimously accepted the constitution, Senanayake was able to press for independence which was granted on February 4, 1948.

The weakness of the Soulbury constitution was that it had been designed for a state of self-evolution prior to the granting of dominion status and full independence. Hence, though the Soulbury constitution did contain provisions like Article 29 (2) that protected the minorities and did also provided weightage in representation, there was no strong legal backing to the constitution. Ponnambalam evaluates the Soulbury scheme, "Because of this constitutional hiatus,....independence was achieved, in effect, only by the Sinhalese and not the Tamil people."[27]

The process of marginalisation of the Tamil community began soon after independence in 1948. The Ceylon Citizenship Act No.18 of 1948, with its emphasis on ancestorship rather than birth as the basis of citizenship, effectively cut out the Indian Tamils, may of whom still maintained strong links with the mainland. Senanayake dealt the final blow with the Ceylon (Parliamentary Elections) Amendment Act, No.48 of 1949, which prohibited non-citizens to vote.

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[26] Ponnambalam, n.2, p.65.
[27] ibid., p.67

The disenfranchisement of Indian Tamils led to a loss of seven seats in the House of Representatives in the 1952 elections, while Tamils could not affect the outcome in 14 more. Sinhalese representation went up from 68 to 75.[28] Among other casualties of this legislation was the growing solidarity of Sinhalese and Tamil workers, who were gradually forging class unity as evidenced in the 1947 elections,[29] and the safeguards provided for the minorities in the constitution.

The process of Sinhalasation continued relentlessly. Sinhalese were encouraged to settle in the north and the east, areas that the Tamils considered their traditional homeland ('50s). The major fallout was an increase in Sinhalese seats in parliament far in excess of what they were entitled to, thus effectively nullifying the voice of the minorities.[30]

The biggest blow came when Sinhala was declared the only national language (1956)[31] meaning that all government servants had to either know Sinhalese or pick it up in a stipulated time--a move that effectively curtailed Tamil chances of prized government employment; and moves were made to concentrate political and economic power in Sinhalese hands. *This was the turning point that marked the transformation of the concept of nationalism in Sri Lanka.* Abandoning the concept of a multi-lingual multi-ethnic state and the delicate balance of political forces that the western-educated elite who had taken over in 1948 had striven to nurture, the new nationalism equated Sinhala nationalism with Sri Lankan nationalism. Thus,

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[28] A.Jayaratnam Wilson, *The Breakup of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese Tamil Conflict* (Hyderabad: 1988) p.35, cited in Ramachandran, n.5, p.32.

[29] The Indian Tamils had voted in 1931 and 1936, and in the 1947 elections they elected eight Tamil MPs, all belonging to the left-oriented Ceylon Indian Congress (CIC). Overall the tendency of the plantation workers was to vote left. Ponnambalam, n.2, p.78.

[30] For example, in 1977, the Sinhalese had 137 seats in Parliament, when compared to that of the minorities--31 seats. See Wilson, n.22, p.35.

[31] One of the best works regarding the background to the victory of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, on a platform of linguistic nationalism in 1956, is Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a new Nation* (Princeton: 1960)

the Buddhist faith and the Sinhala language became the cornerstone of Sri Lanka.

Naturally, such a narrow definition of nationalism had its reaction from the Tamil side. In its first national convention, as early as 1951, the Tamil Federal Party asserted that the

> "Tamil speaking people in Ceylon constitute a nation distinct from that of the Sinhalese by every fundamental test of nationhood"[32]

And the convention stressed the "separate historical past" of the Tamils--a theme that runs through all the literature of Tamil separatism. 1956 defined one language, and two nations. Or as M. Sivasithampuram, of the Tamil Congress put it pithly, "One language, two countries; two languages, one country."[33] Nascent Tamil nationalism crystallised around the language question and the Federal party which took up the issue. Other forms of discrimination included the setting up of industrial units in only Sinhalese areas, the diversion of all foreign aid to the Sinhalese south, and policies guided by an increasingly Sinhalese state that resulted in an increase of poverty and unemployment in Tamil areas.[34]

DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Discrimination in the field of employment:

The biggest blow to the Tamils came with discrimination in education and employment. As the Tamils came from relatively barren

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[32] Quoted in De Silva, K.M,. *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: 1981) p.513.
[33] Quoted in Ponnambalam, n.2, p.101.
[34] For example, in the 1981 Central budget, capital expenditure in the Jaffna district was only Sri Lankan Rs.260 million i.e., 2.6 percent of the national capital expenditure of Sri Lankan Rs. 9 billion. Ramachandran, n.5, p.38.

areas and had a culture that emphasised education over everything else, such discrimination hit at the very root of the Tamil existence.[35] With children taught in their mother tongue, Tamil children were at a disadvantage as a knowledge of Sinhalese was essential for any kind of official employment. Defiant Tamil parents, even though they could choose the medium of education, refused to teach their children in Sinhala, unless Tamil was made an official language. This led to a gap between the younger generation of Sinhalese and Tamils. For example, at independence, of 82,000 Tamil employees the percentage of Tamils was 30 percent. In 1970, though recruitment had expanded rapidly to 225,000, the percentage of Tamils was 6 percent.[36] The decline can best be represented by the following table:[37]

Table: 2.1

Employment of Tamils in government service, 1956, 1965 and 1970 (in percentage):

Type of Service	1956	1965	1970
Ceylon administrative service	30	20	5
Clerical Service	50	30	5
Professions	60	30	10
Armed Forces	40	20	1
Labour Forces	40	20	5

[35] Ponnambalam, n.2, pp.169-180.
[36] ibid.,p.174.
[37] Taken from Ponnambalam, n.2. p.174.

Tamil recruitment to the state and industrial corporations became virtually nil as a result of the "Sinhala only" policy. For example, the Ceylon Transport Board, the biggest employer in South Asia, recruited 52,000 employees upto 1970. More than 98 percent were Sinhalese.[38]

Discrimination in the Field of Education

Discrimination was rampant in the field of education also. The 1962 J.E. Jayasuriya commission report that recommended the creation of quotas based on the religious composition of the country was the first step. The *swabhasa* (education in own language upto the secondary level) policy also gave the Sinhalese an added advantage as a knowledge of Sinhala could get one a government job.

Sinhalese students however were underrepresented in the science streams, including the prestigious medical and engineering courses, as admission was through an open competitive exam held in the English language. To balance this, the government adapted the policy of standardisation. This meant fixed lower qualifying marks for Sinhalese students for admission to higher courses. The government argument was that only such a policy would ensure that the Sinhalese got seats in proportion to their percentage of the population.[39] Table 3.2[40] summarises the effects of this policy

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[38] Ibid.,p.176

[39] Sri Lanka, Ministry of State, Department of Information, Overseas Information Series, No. 7, *The Truth About Discrimination against Tamils*, Colombo, (7 November, 1983) The government argument was that the Tamils, though they constituted only 12.6 percent of the population occupied 40.8 percent of the university seats.

[40] C.R. de Silva, "Weightage in University Quotas: Standardisation and District Quotas", in *Modern Ceylon Studies*, Vol. 5, 2, 4 July 1972. Quoted in Ponnambalam, n.2, p.176.

Table 3.2

Marks required for university admissions in 1971:

Subject	*Sinhalese Students*	*Tamil Students*
Medicine and Dentistry	229	250
Physical Science	183	204
Bio-Science	175	184
Engineering	227	250
Veterinary Science	181	206
Architecture	180	194

Other discriminatory policies that were put into effect included: standardisation in 1973; standardisation and district quotas in 1974; standardisation and 100 percent district quotas in 1975; and standardisation and 70 percent on marks and 30 percent on district quotas in 1976.

The effect of the discriminatory policies can be gauged by the above table, which gives an idea of how brilliant Tamil students were sidelined by the discriminatory policies of the Sinhalese state. In subjects like dental surgery, veterinary science and agriculture the denial of places to Tamil students was even greater.

The quota system had immediate and tangible benefits for the Sinhalese. Thus, for example, the share of Sinhalese in Engineering courses shot up to 73.1 percent and for medicine to 58.8 percent while the Tamil

share dropped to 24.4 percent, after the application of the 1973 standardisation law. See Table 3.3.[41]

Table 3.3

Percentage of Tamil students in science streams

Subject	1970	1973	1975	1976	1978
Engineering	40.8	24.4	-	13.2	-
Science	35	-	-	-	15
Medical	50	37	20	20	-

The above measures led to a whole generation of Tamil youth taking to arms as they became unemployed. As C.R. de Silva puts it, "the question of university admissions is clearly one which mobilised the youth in Jaffna and prodded the Tamil United Liberation Front to declare in favour of a separate state.[42]

The continued opposition to any form of regional autonomy, even to the limited extent, for the Tamil areas[43] ensured the unitary character of the state and choked off moderate means to address the grievances of the Tamils. The pressures of maintaining an unitary state led to an increasing

[41] Tabulated from data in Ponnambalam, n.2, p176.

[42] C.R. de Silva, "Weightage in University Quotas: Standardisation and District Quotas", in *Modern Ceylon Studies*, Vol. 5, 2, 4 July 1972. Quoted in Ponnambalam, n.2, p.176.

[43] The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact, 1957 for instance provided for the creation of regional autonomy to Tamil areas through the creation of directly elected regional councils. It was abrogated under pressure from Sinhalese-Buddhist extremists.

degree of centralisation of power in Sri Lanka. *This meant that moderate means of protest were blocked to the Tamils*

The legitimacy of the regime itself came under question, when Parliament was extended through a legislative fiat in 1972, and elections were circumvented through the use of referendum in 1982. The army, by the '60s was mono-ethnic and powerful and regularly went on rampages against the Tamils, while influential sections of Sri Lankan society regularly let off violence that bordered on pogroms of the Tamil populace.

To add to all this was extremely harsh legislation such as the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). As all this legislation was aimed primarily at Tamil separatism, it enforced the identity of Tamils vis-à-vis the Sinhalese. Ironically, Sri Lanka was spiralling into a trap of its own making. *Violence invited repression, which in turn led to more separatist violence, which led to more evn more repression.*

Tamil Response: the assertion of a separate identity

The Tamil response to such blatant discrimination that denied them jobs and education[44] was at first to try and work within the system by "**responsive co-operation**" with the regime at the Centre (1948-55), with the voice of the Tamils, the Sri Lanka Tamil Congress (TC), joining the United National Party government under D.S. Senanayake.

The TC's co-operation with the disenfranchisement of the Indian Tamils led to a split in the party. Two members of parliament, S.J.V. Chelvanayakam and C. Vanniasingham, resigned from the TC to form the Federal Party in 1949. The party, which by 1956, became the dominant political party of the Tamils, marked the *beginning of Tamil political activity*

[44] For example, the percentage of Tamils in the armed forces fell from 40 percent in 1956 to 4 percent in 1980. Ramachandran, n.5, p.38.

based on Tamil identity. On resigning in 1949, over the citizenship issue, Chelvanayakam had thundered prophetically:

> "Today it is the Indian Tamils. Tomorrow it is the Sri Lankan Tamils who will be axed."[45]

However, the FP was able to win only 2 out of 15 seats it contested in 1952.

The next stage, after the passing of the "Sinhala Only" law was **protest in the opposition** (1956-65). The FP won 10 out of 15 seats in the North and the East in 1956, calling in its April 1956 election manifesto for a Swiss-type cantonal set-up in which the Sinhala and Tamil areas would be a collection of cantons. In August at its Trincomalee session, the FP demanded the establishment of one or more Tamil linguistic states incorporating contiguous Tamil majority areas within a federal set-up. The shift reflected the increasing alienation of the Tamil people. From April to August, there was the passing of the language bill, the violent suppression of peaceful protest--*satyagraha*--at Galle face, and race riots. Anton Balasingham, LTTE ideologue, speaking of the brutal suppression of the peaceful protest in front of Parliament, June 5, 1956, writes:

> "...the violence of the oppressor silenced the non-violence of the oppressed; the armed might of Sinhalese chauvinism crushed the *ahimsa* (non-violence) of the Tamils. This historical event marked the beginning of a political experiment that was crucial to the Tamil national struggle, an experience that taught the Tamils that the moral power of non-violence could not consume the military

[45] Ponnambalam, n.2, p.78.

power of a violent oppressor whose racial hatred transcends all ethical norms of humanness and civilised behaviour."[46]

The Tamils then moved on to **moderate peaceful protest** (1965-68). This phase was marked by a short-lived coalition with the ruling UNP, (1965-68). In the early 1960s, underground groups like the *Pulip Patai* (Tiger Army) emerged. This group was suspected to be linked to the FP.[47] However, there was still little support for separatism among the Tamils. Suntheralingam, a candidate who advocated the creation of a separate state for the Tamils, was defeated in the elections of 1960.[48] The FP, in its manifesto for the 1970 elections, asked the Tamils to refrain from voting for any party that advocated the division of the country as this would benefit neither the country or the Tamils.[49]

However, an indication of loss of support that the FP was facing is indicated by the election results of the 1970 elections. Though it won 13 seats of the 19 it contested, it was able to secure only 4.96 percent of the total votes polled--the lowest since 1952. Two FP stalwarts, party chairman S.M. Rasamanickam from the eastern province and deputy leader E.M.V. Naganathan were defeated.[50]

The period 1968-72 saw a **slide into militant tactics** (1968-72). In the 1970s, as the Sri Lankan state tried to emphasise the Sinhalese Buddhist character of the island, there was a corresponding reaction from the Tamil side. The sweeping victory of the United Front (UF) in the 1970 elections deprived the Tamil parties of their balancing role in parliamentary politics.

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[46] Anton Balasingham, "Liberation Tigers and Tamil National Freedom Struggle" in LTTE, *Towards Liberation: Selected Political Documents of the LTTE* (n.p: September 1984), p.38.
[47] M.R. Narayana Swamy, *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* (Delhi: 1994), p.24.
[48] Ramachandran, n.5, p.48.
[49] ibid., p.48
[50] Ponnambalam, n.2, p.154.

Mrs. Bandaranaike formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP)-Lanka Sama Samaj Party (LSSP)-Communist Party (CP) combined United Front coalition government. Arrogant in victory, a new constitution that made Sinahala the national language and gave Buddhism the foremost position in the state, was enacted.[51] And Article 8 and 11 of the Constitution formalised the subordinate status of Tamil.

Two days after the constitution came into effect the FP, Tamil Congress (TC), the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC), the *Eela Thamilar Otrumai Munnani* and several Tamil youth and student organisations met at Trincomalee on May 14, 1972 and formed the Tamil United Front (TUF). For the first time since 1949, the language demand--parity of Tamil with Sinhalese--was considered the core issue. The Tamils were also inspired by the formation of Bangladesh, where language had led the Bangalese of East Pakistan to rise in revolt and successfully secede from Pakistan.

In 1970, the "Standardisation" law (see above) dealt the unkindest cut yet and the Tamil mood moved from one of peaceful protest to violent defiance.

It is from this time that Tamil militancy, began to take an armed form. In 1970, Tamil youth formed a band of militants, *Tamil Manavar Peravai* (TMP) under the leadership of Sathyaseelan, which broke up when the leaders were arrested.[52] There were persistent rumours that the TMP and a related organisation, the *Tamil Ilainar Peravi* (TIP) had links with the TUF. 1972 saw a sharp increase in the incidents of violence with Tamil politicians being the targets.

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[51] Article 6 of the new constitution stated that "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism. *The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka* (Colombo: 1978).

[52] For an account of early militant groups among the Tamils see Swamy, n.41, pp.25-29.

The significance of this period in the history of Tamil militancy and nationalism is that the Tamil people swung decisively towards open support for separatism. Tamil militancy was just a step away. This attitude reflected the growing power of Tamil youth in the way things were run.[53]

An indication of the shape of things to come was when the TUF decided to change its name, to the Tamil United *Liberation* Front (emphasis mine). The first national Convention of the Tamil Liberation Front meeting at Pannakam in the Vaddukodai district in the North, on May 5, 1976 resolved to form the state of Eelam. The convention declared that the

> "Tamils of Ceylon....by their will to exist as a separate entity ruling themselves in their own territory, are a nation distinct and apart from the Sinhalese...This convention resolves that the restoration and reconstitution of the Free, Sovereign, Secular, Socialist state of Tamil Eelam based on the right of self-determination inherent in every nation has become inevitable in order to safeguard the very existence of the Tamil nation in this country.[54]

However, Ramachandran[55] based on interviews with the principal actors claims that the resolution was not unanimous but a reflection of the stand of the FP and the five members of the TC who attended the convention.

The resolve to create a separate state was reflected in the election manifesto of the party in 1977. The manifesto said:

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[53] Ramachandran, n.5, p.15.

[54] Tamil United Liberation Front, *Resolution Unanimously Adopted at the First National Convention of the Tamil United Liberation Front Held at Vaddukoddai on 14.5.1976* (Jaffna: 1976), p.6.

[55] n.5, pp.52-56

"...the TULF seeks in the General Election the mandate of the Tamil Nation to establish...(the) state of Tamil Eelam that includes all the geographically contiguous areas that have been the traditional homeland of the Tamil speaking people in the country."[56]

Regarding the means to be adopted the manifesto said "either by peaceful means or by direct action or struggle."[57]

On such a platform the TULF in the 1977 elections, the eighth in the history of the island state, contested 24 seats, won 18 and bagged 6.75 percent of the total votes polled.[58] However, the pressures of acting as the main opposition and at the same time advocating separatism soon showed. Though the TULF publicly averred that it was for the formation of Eelam, in actual practice it did little. Events such as the 1977 anti-Tamil riots, the promulgation of a new constitution which further centralised the state power and retained the foremost place given to the Sinhala language and the Buddhist religion further indicated the failure of the TULF's moderate political strategy. Angry youths who had voted for the party as a mandate for Eelam slowly began to take up arms against the state.

It is from this time 1975-83 that the formation of underground outfits that openly advocated secession, such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE); Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO); People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOT); and Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) can be dated. As Ponnambalam puts it, "the escalating dialectic of oppression and resistance was leading to a level of

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[56] TULF, n.48, p.7.
[57] ibid., p.7.
[58] Ponnambalam, n.2, p.193

national oppression which could only be met by armed revolutionary struggle."[59]

THE ASCENDANCY OF MILITANT GROUPS IN SRI LANKA

Many Tamil youth began to take to arms during this period. The most important militant groups were the Big Five: the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) led by S. Thangathurai, the Marxist Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) led by V. Balakumar, the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) formed by the Marxist internationalist Uma Mahaswaran after he fell out with LTTE supremo Prabahkaran in 1979, and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) formed by the Marxist K. Padmanabah in 1980, and the LTTE.[60]

THE LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM

The best organised of all these groups was the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the sword arm of Tamil militancy. As this study focuses on this organisation, this part of the chapter will analyse the group in detail, under the divisions, **origins** and **base.** As factors like motivation are related to ideology they will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Origin

As with most militant groups the origins of the LTTE are also obscure[61], and it is a matter of prestige to claim to be the earliest militant group.[62]

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[59] Ponnambalam, n.2, p.201

[60] Edgar O' Ballance, *The Cyanide War: Tamil Insurrection in Sri Lanka 1973-88*, (London: Brassey's,1989), pp.12-20. Also Rohan Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: SANCOR, 1993)

[61] The best secondary sources on the LTTE are Dagamr Hellmann Rajanayagam, *The Tamil Tigers: Armed Struggle for Identity* (Suttgart: 1994); Sumantara Bose, *States, Nations and Sovereignty: Sri Lanka, India and the Tamil Eeelam Movement* (New Delhi: 1994); M.R.

In an open letter to the then Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa, on a visit to London in 1979, the LTTE said that it represented "the most powerful extraparliamentary liberation movement in the Tamil nation."[63] In its documents[64] the LTTE asserts that "as a nation, Tamils have the inalienable right to self-determination, a universal principle enshrined in the U.N. Charter that guarantees the right of a people to political independence. Apart from the right to self determination, the Tamil Eelam may also be justified in terms of reversion of sovereignty and the concept of effectiveness."

The LTTE, borrows both from Lenin's conception of self-determination and the revolutionary vanguard in describing its existence.

> Our liberation movement which spearheads the revolutionary armed struggle in Tamil Eelam is the armed vanguard of the national struggle. The strategy of revolutionary armed struggle was formulated by us after a careful and cautious appraisal of the specific concrete conditions of our struggle, with the fullest comprehension of the historical situation in which the masses of our people have no choice other than to fight decisively to advance the cause of national freedom.[65]

Narayana Swamy, *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* (Delhi: 1994). Primary sources include Political Committee of the LTTE, *Liberation Tigers and Tamil Eelam Freedom Struggle* (Madras: 1983); LTTE, *Voice of the Tigers*, the official bulletin of the organisation, that is published quarterly, various pamphlets, statements etc. There are several works on the various dimensions of the ethnic conflict that refer to the LTTE. These shall be mentioned whenever referred to.

[62] Ramachandran, n.5, pp.66-67.

[63] LTTE, Political Committee, "Open Letter to Ranasinghe Premadasa, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka on his visit to London, 1979" *Towards Liberation: Selected Political Documents of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (n.p., September 1984), p.11.

[64] LTTE, *Towards Liberation,* n.55, ibid.pp.36-54.

[65] LTTE, *Towards Liberation*,n.55, "Tamils fight for National freedom" A memorandum submitted by the LTTE to the seventh Summit meeting of non-aligned nations held in New Delhi, March 7-15, 1983.

With regard to the motivation to take up arms, the LTTE says:

> Master-minding a totalitarian political system, with the collusion of U.S. imperialism, the Sri Lankan ruling elite since "independence" wielded their political power since "independence" wielded their political power by invoking the ideology of national chauvinism and religious fanaticism and by actually practising a vicious and calculated policy of racial repression against the Tamil people.[66]

Thus the LTTE' home page on the Internet speaks of the "*Sinhala* state's oppression of the Tamil people," "*Sinhala* colonisation of traditional Tamil areas which was started in the fifties, and was intensified in the eighties with the security forces wiping out Tamil villages and resettling them with Sinhala settlements." The LTTE, asserts that it took to arms only as a last resort against the might of the Sri Lankan state:

> With all democratic ways to achieve equality having failed repeatedly, an armed struggle for independence began, led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). International Law recognises that the armed resistance of the Tamil people to Sri Lankan rule is lawful and just. Today, the LTTE has evolved into a military and political organisation representing the aspirations and hopes of the Tamil people.[67]

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[66] ibid.

[67] LTTE Home page, Copyright © 1997 Eelam House. All Rights Reserved. 202 Long Lane, London SE19QB, UK.

In early press reports[68] on the rise of the LTTE, this seems to be the underlying theme as Tiger after Tiger said that it was the failure of moderate politics that led to the armed struggle. Thus "the turning point for most was the 1977 anti-Tamil riots that made them realise that ahimsa was not enough." By this time, many Tamils were disillusioned with the moderate tactics of the TULF, especially as these failed to deliver the goods.

The LTTE, like most other militant organisations, began as a band of young men who struck at random and lacked proper organisation. In 1972, a youth organisation called the *Tamil Ilainar Piravi* (TIP) had been founded with links to the Tamil United Liberation Front. Out of the TIP originated the Tamil New Tigers (TNT) in 1973. The LTTE asserts that student radicalism of the 1970s inspired its early days and admits the role of Sivakumaran, who was arrested for leading a band of student radicals in the early 1970s. [69]

However, Ramachandran asserts that the early militants favoured other organisations, and refers to the early criminal links of the LTTE, such as its origin in the Valvettiturai region which has traditionally been a smuggler's paradise.[70]

However, the available literature seems to indicate that the LTTE was linked to the Tamil New Tigers (TNT), the suspected militant arm of the TULF.[71] While Ramachandran refers to internal power struggles in the early days, what is evident is that Prabahkaran became the chief of the organisation and renamed it the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on May 5, 1976.

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[68] For example, David Selbourne, "Sinhalese lions and the Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka", In *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay, 17 October 1982. Quoted in Ponnambalam, n.2, p.214.

[69] Ramachandran, n.5, p.24.

[70] ibid., p.24.

[71] For example Ramachandran, n. 5, pp.68-70; O'Ballance, n.54 , pp.13-15, Swamy, n.52, pp.47-50.

When asked why he had chosen the name Tiger, in an interview with *Sunday,* he said: "I named the movement "Liberation Tigers" since the Tiger emblem has deep roots in the political history of the Tamils, symbolising Tamil patriotic resurgence. The Tiger symbol also depicts our mode of guerrilla warfare."[72] It is significant that even in those early days the LTTE already was seeing the conflict as one between Sinhala and Tamil rather than against the Sri Lankan state. The logo of the LTTE, designed by Prabhakaran himself, shows the logo of the roaring tiger, with two rifles and 33 bullets around the tiger's head. The Tiger was the symbol of the ancient Chola kings, who built an empire in South India and captured parts of Lanka in the early 13th century.

Early on, the tactics of the group were limited to targeting informers and those it regarded as collaborators of the Sri Lankan Government. Other acts were attacking police stations, ambushing army convoys, etc.[73] If the TNT is seen as the predecessor of the LTTE, then the first act of defiance was the shooting of the Tamil mayor of Jaffna, Alfred Durayappah, in a temple on July 23, 1973. It was Vellupillai Prabhakaran, the supreme military and political commander of the LTTE, who fired the shot.

Other actions of the LTTE included the selected killing of police informers, the recruitment and training of young men and women (1977); the setting up of camps in the jungles and the claiming of responsibility for at least 11 assassinations as well as some attempted ones in the first five months.[74] The Sri Lankan government struck back by banning the LTTE.[75] (1978); bank robberies such as the raid on the People's Bank at Puttur in Jaffna (1979) when the LTTE took away Rs. 5,00, 000 and jewels worth

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[72] *Sunday,* 11-17 March, 1984.
[73] Swamy, n. 53, p.77.
[74] O' Ballance, n.54, pp.13-14.
[75] O' Ballance, n.54, p.15.

Rs.2,00,000 rupees[76] The money was used for training and purchasing weapons. The LTTE had its first martyr when a 19-year-old Tamil Tiger consumed cyanide after he failed in a mission to kill a police inspector.[77]

One of the most spectacular acts that the LTTE carried out was to blow up Air Lanka's sole passenger aircraft on the ground at Colombo's Ratmalana airport (Sept.7, 1978)[78] A few months earlier, the government in a bid to finish off the Tamil Tigers had enacted the proscribing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam Law (No.16 of 1978)..

The LTTE had considerable support across the Palk strait in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and especially from it's chief minister, M.G. Ramachandran. Camps were set up to train the LTTE, and the Central government led by Mrs. Gandhi turned a blind eye.[79] The violence spilled over on to the streets of Tamil Nadu. In 1982, the organisation split into PLOTE (People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam) led by Uma Maheshwaran and the LTTE under Prabhakaran--the fallout of increasing differences between the two leaders. In May 1982, the LTTE and PLOTE clashed in the streets of Madras, two Indian civilians died in the crossfire, and both Maheswaran and Prabhakaran were arrested.[80]

However, the turning point came on July 23, 1983. On that day the LTTE ambushed an army convoy enroute to Jaffna. Thirteen soldiers were killed when they ran into a hail of machine gun fire. The leader of the ambush, by his own admission, was Sadashivam Krishnakumar, better known

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[76] Mohan Ram, *Sri Lanka: The Fractured Island* (Delhi: 1984) p.268.
[77] O' Ballance, n.54, p.13.
[78] Rajesh Kadian, *India's Sri Lankan Fiasco: Peacekeepers at War* (New Delhi: 1990) p.66.
[79] In June 1973, Deputy Defence Minister Jayakody had informed the National Assembly that a Ceylonese naval vessel had captured a boat bound for Lanka, with 48, 000 Indian made detonators on board. O' Ballance, n.54, p.16.
[80] Kadian, n.72, p.67.

as "Kittu." The bodies were brought to Colombo for a joint military funeral and burial. The event inflamed Sinhalese passions.

Riots broke out in Colombo and went on for two days, with the military and the police either turning a blind eye to the violence or actively joining in. Tamils were attacked even in the prisons. 52 Tamil political prisoners were killed in the Welikede prison near Colombo.

At the end of the week-long orgy, more than 3,000 civilians had been killed and 160,000 left the island as refugees, with 115,000 heading for India. 18,000 Tamil homes and 5,000 business establishments were destroyed.[81] The lasting effect of the riots was that they ensured that the Tamils would feel that the only wayout was secession. Henceforth the LTTE would have no dearth of recruits. The LTTE would grow into one of the most powerful guerrilla organisations in the world in the coming decade. As this will be the focus of the coming chapters, and will be part of the narrative structure, this will not be dealt with here.

Base of the LTTE

The difficulty in studying this aspect of the LTTE is the paucity of material on the subject. Most studies on the base of insurgent movements have been on the basis of the confessions of captured militants. However, the "cyanide cult" of the LTTE has effectively denied access to such information, as the number of militants who have been imprisoned is extremely limited.

Age: Now, the constant fighting in the north has forced the LTTE to recruit children, that today the "organisation is more of a child brigade."[82] In recent attacks the role of the child cadre of the LTTE has been pronounced. For

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[81] See O' Ballance, n.54, p.21-31.

[82] P. Sahadevan, "On Not Becoming a Democrat: The LTTEs Commitment to Armed Struggle", *International Studies*, Vol.32, No.3, (1995), pp.55-56.

example, one report quoted the attack on the Thandikulam army base on June 10 spoke of "rows and rows of children in army fatigues advancing"[83] on the Sri Lankan forces. In this the LTTE differs from classical guerrilla organisation in which the cadre are generally older.[84] Usually in guerrilla warfare, the younger members (12 to 15 years) and older members (over 35) are generally more active in underground operations rather than in actual fighting units.[85] It also differs from classical guerrilla organisations in the fact that it has tended to be male-dominated.

The reasons for the LTTE moving to the recruitment children to fill its rapidly depleting ranks can be summarised as follows: the massive losses in manpower as a result of the LTTE adopting to face Sri Lankan forces in conventional warfare,[86] the alienation of the Tamil people from the LTTE, who can only promise them total and permanent war;[87] the drying up of the traditional recruiting grounds of the universities and the schools, with most young people going West if they get a chance, the increasing reluctance of the Tamils, a traditionally peace loving community to sacrifice endlessly.[88]

Thus, the average age of the LTTE cadre is in its late teens. An entire generation of Tamil youth, who have had no contact with the Sinhalese, except on the battlefield, is at the forefront of the battle today. This

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[83] Nirupama Subramanium, "We were vastly outnumbered by the LTTE, says survivor", *Indian Express*, June 13, 1997.

[84] Andrew R. Molnar, "Factors related to Revolutionary Warfare" , in Jerry M. Tinker ed., *Strategies of Revolutionary Warfare* (New Delhi: 1969), pp.19-42.

[85] ibid.p.26-35.

[86] For example in the attack on the army camp at Weli Oya in July 1995, Tiger cadre who went into the camp ran into heavy machine gun fire. Over 280 were killed in this single instance. Cited in Sahadevan, n.76, p.274.

[87] There have been increasing reports of the Tamil populace actually leaving LTTE areas for Army areas. See for example, Nirupama Subramanian, "Starved and tired, Tamil families leave Tigers for Army Peninsula", *The Indian Express*, (New Delhi), 18 April, 1997.

[88] P. Sahadevan, n.76, p.274.

enforces the "Tamil- Sinhala war" doctrine that the LTTE has so carefully cultivated, and vitiates the chances for a peaceful settlement of the issue.

Gender: The LTTE at the beginning was a male-dominated organisation but the enormous losses that the organisation faced on the battlefield has resulted in a massive influx of women. For example, in the attack on the Nochimoddal and Thandikulam army camps on June 10, 1997, more than 60 percent of the attackers were teenage women.[89] One of the Sri Lankan soldiers who was in the Omanthai army camp which was also overrun said that he saw nearly 200 Tiger teenage girls firing at his unit. There are several reasons for more girls joining the LTTE than boys. Educated Tamils seem to prefer to go to the West rather than join the militants.[90] The LTTE has given women a place that they have been denied in traditional Tamil society.

A whole culture that emphasises the beauty of laying down one's life in the service of the motherland exists and women who have suffered rape and other forms of sexual assault at the hands of the Sri Lankan forces or the IPKF are encouraged to become suicide bombers to avenge the insult.[91] This was one of the prime motivations for Dhanu, the assassin of the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.[92] motivation factors include the consequences of surrender and a perceived sense of honour that has deep roots in Tamil culture. Women cadre of the LTTE go through the same rigorous training that the men go through but on the battlefield are much more ferocious than their male counterparts.

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[89]P.K. Balachanddran "Forces outwitted by Tiger Amazons", *The Hindustan Times*, June 15, 1997, Nirupama Subramanian, "We were vastly outnumbered by the LTTE, says survivor", *Indian Express*, June 13, 1997.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Brenchley, Anna, ``Lady Macbeth in the Jungles of Eelam", *Frontline*, February 23, 1996

[92]Mitra, Anirudhya,``Assassination Probe: Damning Disclosures", *India Today*, 31 May,1992.

The women cadre of the LTTE have increasingly been at the forefront of suicide attacks.[93] Video films showing women cadre inspiring the fighters have been released. And Jaffna is full of the women cadre with their short hair and trousers.[94]

This marks a shift from earlier times when the LTTE was male dominated and had quite traditional views. Thus the LTTE in its early days in concert with classical Tamil values was reluctant to recruit women under the pretext that they would dilute the determination of the men.[95] However, after the IPKF came to the island, there has been a sharp increase in the number of women in the organisation. This has been attributed to the "barbarous attacks" of Indian soldiers, but seems to be a reflection of the decimation of the LTTE ranks.[96]

The influx of women into the organisation has not only been in the military wing but also in the administrative wings. Thus the district court judge of Jaffna, and the Officer-in-Charge of the police station of the LTTE's parallel administration were both women. In 1997, Prabhakaran was giving greater importance to the women's wing than ever before. Thus in the attacks on the Omanthai camp in June, women were put in charge of the team that led the first successful attack.[97]

Language and Religion: As discussed earlier, the base of the war in Sri Lanka is ethnic. It goes without saying that the LTTE is Tamil. There is a large component of Christians in the organisation, primarily from the *Karaiyar* caste to which a large number of cadre, including supreme Prabhakaran,

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[93] V. Jayanth, "Key role for women in the LTTE", *The Hindu*, 26 September, 1994.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Hoole, Rajan, and others *The Broken Palmyra: The Tamil Crisis in Sri Lanka-An Inside Account* (Claremont: 1990) p.327.
[96] Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, *Tamil Women in the Struggle for a Free and Independent Eelam* (n.p: n.d.)
[97] Nirupama Subramanian, "Tigers vie with each other to prove military talent", *The Indian Express*, 27 June 1997.

belong.[98] On the other hand, though there are more Muslims than Christians in the north and the east, the "traditional homelands", there are few in the LTTE. In the east, the LTTE has depended on the community for aid and succour especially when it was on the run from the IPKF. However, after the IPKF left, the organisation, for reasons that are still unclear, massacred Muslims.

There has always been an uneasy relationship between the Tamils and the Muslims in the north and the east, with the Muslims vociferously asserting their separate identity[99] and frequent clashes between the two. In fact, the LTTE seems vary of training Muslims, in the fear that they would turn against the LTTE.[100] On the other hand the LTTE has made a conscious bid to woo the Catholic church which it cannot afford to alienate.. Catholics constitute a significant proportion of the Mannar and Mullaittivu areas, many *Karaiyars* are Catholics, and the LTTE has tried to cultivate the Catholic church in a bid for legitimacy.[101]

Region: The regional base of the LTTE is the coastal Valvettiturai region and the surrounding Vadamarachchi region from where most of the top leadership of the organisation hail. Prabhakaran, like Saddam Hussein of Iraq, seems to have preferred to recruit from personal friends.. In this aspect the LTTE is different from other guerrilla organisations, and is more akin to a mafia organisation.[102] Prabhakaran, Mahatiya, Kittu, Mahatiya all hail from

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[98] Prabahakaran has named his son Charles, after one of the earliest martyrs of the LTTE, Charles Antony.

[99] See Zarin Ahmad, "The Muslim Minority of Sri Lanka: A study of their Assertion of Ethnic Identity," (Unpublished M.Phil dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, School of International Studies, New Delhi, 1996).

[100] Ramachandran, n.5 , p.101.

[101] Ramachandran, n.5, p.201.

[102] The Sicilian mafia, for example, reflected the close knit family and clan relations of the island's families. This was what made it difficult for the police to crack the criminal organisation.

this region. When Maheswaran, Sundaram etc, who were not from the Vadamarachi region left the base of the LTTE became narrow.

Other factors that have influenced the regional base of the LTTE are the operations of the Special Task Force and the decimation of other militant groups, which meant that the LTTE became the only guerrilla organisation that could be joined. Recruitment from the East was falling. In fact, more LTTE cadre surrendered in 1992-94 than ever before in the history of the movement.[103]. However, now, with the stepping up of army operations in the East, there is a greater flow of recruits into the organisation, especially the "tough rural women" of the East.[104]

Caste: One of the most important aspects of the LTTE, is the caste factor. The LTTE seems to have been able to destroy the deeply entrenched caste system in the Jaffna peninsula. Most of the LTTE cadre, including supremo Prabhakaran is *Karaiyar*. Dagmar[105] and Bose[106] argue that the LTTE is as much a social reform movement as an ethnic force. They contend that the LTTE, by addressing itself to hitherto margianalised groups like the *Karaiyar* (fisherman) caste, set off a social revolution in the peninsula. However, what is not clear is whether this is intentional in which case the LTTE is following Mao's doctrine of guerrilla warfare which has as it's nucleus the people,[107] or whether the greater involvement of hitherto margianalised sections of society is a mere fallout of the war that never seems to end.

The LTTE seems to have dealt the death blow to the caste system in Jaffna, and has fulfilled the same role as the Justice Party in Madras, which took up cudgels against the caste system and Brahmin dominance in the early part of the 20th century. In fact, the caste system in the Jaffna

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[103] V. Jayanth, "Ray of hope in Sri Lanka?", *The Hindu*, August 22, 1994.
[104] K. Balachanddran, n.83.
[105] Dagmar, n.55, pp. 100-24.
[106] Bose, n.55, pp.67-74.
[107] op.cit, n.37

peninsula was so deeply entrenched that until the 70's the lower castes could not enter temples in Jaffna.[108] The plantation economy that had characterised these areas had hardened the caste divisions, and let them linger after independence as a "glorious relic" of the plantation economy.[109]

Another reason for the rise of the *Karaiyar* dominated LTTE is the inaccessiblity of education. In Tamil societies learning has always had a high place--it was the key to the future. The "standardisation" law cut off access to higher education, but this affected the *Vellalar* caste to which Uma Maheswaran belonged more. The decline in the professional and civil service jobs led to a new sense of rebelliousness among the *Karaiyars.* They were no longer willing to accept the domination of the high caste *Vellalar.*[110]

The Federal Party had tried to create electoral unity without addressing the crucial question of caste around a programme of defensive nationalism. As Pffenberger puts it: "the Federal Party's politics of defensive nationalism was a politics of avoidance: it refused to deal constructively with the death throes of the plantation economy."[111]

It is also significant that of the top leadership of the LTTE, only Kittu, (Sathasivan Krishnakumar, 1957-1993) was a Vellar. Prabhakaran, Mahathiya, Yogaratnam Yogi, commander for Jaffna and Lawrence Thilakar, spokesman in Paris are all *Karaiyars.* Thus, the LTTE, opened the path of liberation to the lower castes. The existence of an oppressive dominant majority--the Sinhalese--cut off the anti-caste movement from the path of political moderation.

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[108] Dagmar, n.55, p.33.

[109] Bryan Pfaffenberger, "The Political Construction of Defensive Nationalism: The 1968 Temple Entry Crisis in Sri Lanka", *Journal of Asian Studies,* Vol.49, No.1, (1990) pp.78-96.

[110] Amita Shastri, "The Material Basis for Separation: The Tamil Eelam Movement in Sri Lanka", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol.49, No.1, (1990), p.58-79 and Dagmar, n.55, pp.62-35.

[111] Pfaffenberger, n.103, p.79.

CONCLUSIONS

As the preceding study shows, the basis of the conflict in Sri Lanka is not seen by the main protagonists, the Tamils and the Sinhalese, as the rise of an oppressed minority against the existing regime seeking greater concessions. Instead it is "race war." This factor explains the seeming unwillingness of both sides to go in for concessions and to the negotiating table. The Sinhalese will never accept the Tamils as a separate people, nor will they redefine their version of nationalism, which is based on Sinhalese myth and legend, to accommodate the Tamils and other minorities.

At the same time, the Tamils have their own version of history, and they see the conflict as a freedom struggle rather than as one to achieve a better deal within the existing system. At the root of such differing perceptions is a reading of history that pits one Tamil against the Sinhalese. The LTTE, has successfully internalised this logic.

Ever, since its inception, inspite of the fact that it professes to be a Marxist group, it is a prisoner of a peculiar reading of history, and it is this that makes it unwilling to negotiate and to suffer unrelenting losses. At the same time, my argument is that this history which holds both communities in its grip, is fundamentally flawed and more of a construct. An analysis of Sri Lankan history from the remote past does seem to show an history of Sinhalese-Tamil conflict, but that is a false picture, *because in that distant past there was no consciousness of differing ethnic identity.* Rather that identity is the product of the redefining of nationalism in the 19th century and the result of colonial policy.

Again, we see that the LTTE rises to the fore of Tamil militant groups not only because of its enormous firepower *but also because it gave marginalised sections of society,* such as women and the lower castes a voice in the scheme of things. However, at the same time it is not clear

whether this is LTTE doctrine or a fallout of the war. This aspect, especially in the matter of recruitment of women is a reflection more of reverses in the battlefield, than of deliberate policy.

However, it is quite clear that the LTTE has set off a caste revolution in the peninsula. As the Tamil militants had to face the Sri Lankan state, which was by this time Sinhalese in all but name, the anti-caste struggle in the peninsula did not go for a peaceful change of the order as in Tamil Nadu. Instead, it fought the battle on two fronts--the social and the political. The way of political moderation was out of the question in the case of the island. The revolution, like the nationalist struggle in India has become the crucible where caste differences have melted.

The LTTE, by appealing to ancient Tamil nationalism and to a version of history that is knowingly or unknowingly implanted in the heart of each Sinhalese and Tamil has been able to attract considerable support. At the same time, as such a reading of history, means *total and permanent war,* the LTTE is losing the support of the Tamil people, who are unwilling to bear the brunt and cost of total war.

CHAPTER III

The Ideology, Military Structure and Sources of Arms Supply of the LTTE

This chapter will study the LTTE as a guerrilla organisation. The focus will be on three aspects: the ideology of the group and motivation of the cadre, the military structure of the group with particular emphasis on the command structure and the sources of arms supply of the group. Does the LTTE have a specific ideology and a theory of revolution like the Chinese and the Vietnamese revolutions or does it hark back to the days of yore when clan and caste loyalty meant more than ideology and nationalism? In that sense, is the LTTE a modern version of the ancient armies of the Cholas?

THE CONSTRUCTION OF CONFLICTING IDENTITY

All conflict has its roots in identity or rather the perception of identity by the combatants in the conflict.[1] This perception is rooted in history or history as it is defined and taught,[2] or to quote Spencer, "the historical arguments so often heard in Sri Lankan politics have themselves to be understood as products of their own peculiar history."[3] In Sri Lanka, the conflict runs deep, and no small part is played by alternate definitions of identity in myth, legend and history.

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[1] For example, in the war in Bosnia the Serbs inspite of continuous indoctrinate under Tito harked back to the past and saw themselves as being under siege from the Muslims, who they saw not as a helpless minority but the descendants of the Ottoman Turks.

[2] There is nothing like a straight forward "true' history. For an understanding of the various ways in which history becomes a construct see, R.G. Collingwood, *What is History?* (London: 1966)

[3] Jonathan Spencer (ed), *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict* (London and New York: 1990), p.3. The book goes into the question of the construction of alternate and opposing histories and identities by the major ethnic groups on the island--the Tamils and the Sinhalese.

What is operative in Sri Lanka is what Kapferer calls the "religion of nationalism"[4] He defines this as "a nationalism that makes the political religious and places the nation above politics."[5] In this kind of nationalism, the culture of the nation, the founding myths and legends of the nation and the customs, traditions, and language of the nation become sacred and inviolable as these are the sole criteria by which the nation is defined. And the diverse nature of the state or polity is supplanted by an universal, uniform all-encompassing ideology in which everything is submerged.

The construction of identity is an absorbing passion for both the Sinhala and Tamil.[6] An understanding of the conflicting myths of the two races is essential to the understanding of the conflict on the island, because the ideology of the Sinhalese Sri Lankan state and the Tigers--the most potent of the guerrilla armies that oppose the government--have deep roots in these legends and myths.[7] In fact, one reason for the recalcitrance of both sides to see reason and their willingness to slug it out to the last is *that both sides are so imprisoned by these myths that they see the conflict as "race war"--a central argument of this study.*

In the mists of antiquity

Colonial historiography used the category of race to define and understand Sri Lankan society--in much the same way as colonial history[8] in

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[4] Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia* (Washington and London: 1988), p.1.

[5] ibid., p.1

[6] Ibid. pp.19-44.

[7] There are many general histories of the island. For a representative sampling see, S.Arasaratnam, *Ceylon* (New Jersey: 1964); K.M. De Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka* (London: 1981); B.H. Farmer, Ceylon: *A Divided Nation* (London: 1963) and Urmilla Phadnis *Sri Lanka* (Delhi: 1973).

[8] Thus in India, history is divided into the Hindu (ancient) Muslim (medieval) and British (not Christian!) based on the religion of the rulers. This has the effect of making feudal clashes, as for example, the war between the Maratha king Shivaji and the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, in the late 16th century, seem the continuation of an unending war between Hindus and

India used religion as a category to define society and consequently history.[9] But what is surprising is that the category of race is still accepted as the defining characteristic of Sri Lankan history. Even a respected historian like de Silva, even while conceding that the "national chronicle" of Sri Lanka, the *Mahavamsa,* "glosses over facts and events"[10] and arguing that the kingdom of Anuradhapura, the glory of Sinhalese civilisation, was in reality a weak feudal state[11], does not challenge the race category. This is evident in the first chapter "Colonisers and Settlers." Implicit is that even in the days of the past the Sinhala and the Tamil defined themselves in terms of race and more important, ***conscious of that identity.*** Coming from this is the idea that centralised rule is necessarily the best kind of rule that the island can have--as epitomised in the remark of de Silva, that one cannot "underestimate" the 'achievement" of Dutthagamani, who "accomplished what he set out to do, to establish control of the whole island. It was, in fact, the first significant success of centripetalism over centrifugalism in the island's history."[12]

Sinahlese nationalism is what Kapferer terms an "hierarchical nationalism", a nationalism in which the state protectively encloses the nation of the Sinhalese Buddhists, whose integrity as Buddhists is dependent on this encompassment. What is significant is that the state, in such a conception, *included non-Buddhists only in subordination* to the Sinhalese Buddhist. The power of the state is measured in terms of how far the state is able to support the hierarchical nature of the order. At least part of the willingness to dominate the Tamils stems from the image that the Sinahalese

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Muslims. This glosses over the fact that the Mughal calvary was commanded by the Hindu Jai Singh and that as many Hindus as Muslims fought Shivaji.

[9]Kapferer, n.4, pp.1-12.

[10] de Silva, n.7, p15

[11] Ibid, pp.17-59.

[12] Ibid, p.16.

have of themselves. It is also significant that the Sinhalese words for nation, race and the people are virtually the same.[13]

Sri Lanka possesses a continuous historical tradition preserved in historical form by Buddhist chroniclers. The core of this tradition--the chronicle called the *Mahavamsa* ("Great Chronicle") and its continuation the *Culavamsa* ("Little Chronicle") constitutes a literary record of the establishment and the growth of Sinhalese political power and the Buddhist faith on the island. These works were written at various times by Buddhist monks and are based on other written records and an oral tradition. The *Mahavamsa* accounts, supplemented by commentaries on them and by other historical records in Pali and Sinhalese, provide a sequential narrative and a chronological framework for the history of the island to the fall of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815. Such literary evidence is supplemented by inscriptional and archaeological evidence.

The Sinhala arrival is shrouded in grand myth. Crucial to an understanding of the Sinhalese mentality is the "Vijaya" legend in the *Mahavamsa* which maintains that the Sinhalese are the descendants of the Aryan king Vijaya, who accompanied by seven hundred Aryan followers from Sinhapura in Orissa near the Bengal border arrived in Lanka.[14] Here they encounter the *yakkas* (demons) whom Vijaya slaughters with the aid of a demoness, Kuveni. Vijaya then abandons her, his lover or wife, establishes settlements throughout the island, and rules according to a new order. His men marry Indian women that the king himself has brought, while Vijaya himself marries an Indian, and makes her his queen.

A royal line of Sinhalese kings begins and an unruly prince becomes a just king. Vijaya has no heir to succeed him and towards the end of his reign

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[13] de Silva, n.7, p.512.

[14] Kadian, Rajesh, *India's Sri Lankan Fiasco: Peacekeepers at War* (New Delhi: 1990) pp. 53-55, Kapferer, n.4, p.34, de Silva, n.7, pp. 1-15.

sends for his younger brother at Sinhapura. The brother, unwilling to leave his native land sends his youngest son, Panduvasudeva, to Sri Lanka. Panduvasudeva is believed to have landed with 32 followers at Gokanna (now Trincomalee) in the east coast. He was enthroned at Upatissagama and continued the Vijaya dynasty.

According to Sinahalese tradition, Buddhism was first brought to India by a mission sent out under the patronage of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (269-232 B.C.) and under his son prince Mahinanda. They converted the Sinhalese king Devanampiyya Tissa. Though the conversion of King Tissa is of historical importance, the spread of Buddhism among the Sinhalese must have been more gradual, before and after the reign of Tissa. By the 2nd century B.C. the Sinhalese had accepted Buddhism totally and this faith helped produce an unity or consciousness on which subsequent political and economic strength was founded.

As K.M. De Silva puts it, "This intimate connection between the land, race and the Buddhist faith foreshadowed the intermingling of religion and national identity which has always had the most profound influence on the Sinhalese."[15] Buddhism in Sri Lanka, as Kapferer argues, gains its significance within the religion and practice of Sinhala nationalism and not vice versa. It is ironic that a religion that teaches peace and tolerance, is in Sri Lanka reduced to a nationalist ideology . This version of history, reflects the Sinahalese perception that they are a besieged majority, afraid that they would be swamped by the Tamils from across the Palk straits.

And, like the Jews, the Sinhalese have perfected the concept of the *"chosen race."* At the heart of this is the attempt to synchronise the advent of Vijaya with the *parinibbana* (the passing away of the Buddha) Thus, Ceylonese legend holds that the last words of the Buddha before he died in

[15] K.M. De Silva, n.7, p.4.

483 A.D. were, "Vijaya, son of King Sihabahu, is come to Lanka from the country of Lala together with 700 followers. In Lanka, O Lord of Gods, will my religion be established; therefore, carefully protect him with his followers and Lanka"[16] From this emerges the concept of the "chosen race"[17], that embraced Buddhism when the son of the Emperor Ashoka came to the island.[18] The Sinhalese base the idea that they are the chosen guardians of the island on the tale of the epic battle that the Sinhala king Dutthagamani killed the Tamil king Elara or Ellalan in single combat and seized his capital, Anuradhapura.

The *Mahavamsa* was written at a time when there were increased incursions into the island from the Indian mainland, especially from the Tamil kingdoms in the south of the peninsula. According to the Mahavamsa Dutthagamani faced thirty-two Tamil sub-kings before the final and epic battle before the walls of Anuradhapura.[19] The Mahavamsa says it in lyrical language,

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[16] Kadian, Rajesh, *India's Sri Lankan Fiasco: Peacekeepers at War* (New Delhi: 1990) p.54.

[8] The concept of the chosen race has always been an additional stumbling block in the path of reconciliation between opposing groups. Thus the greatest opposition to the Israeli peace process and the eventual evacuation of the Occupied West Bank and the Gaza strip, known as Judea and Samaria in the Bible, came from the ultra-orthodox Jewish right.

[18] According to the *Mahavamsa*, he did so through the air and landed at a hill at Mihintale, east of Anuradhapura, in about 200 B.C.

[19] The idea of Aryan-Dravidian clashes is a prevalent theme in South India. Thus in the southern Indian state of Kerala, the festival Onam commemorates the annual visit of Bali, an "Asura" (demon in Hindu myth) king, who Vaman, an incarnation of the Hindu God Visnu vanquishes. Bali, according to legend asked Vaman, as a final boon, permisson to visit his people once an year. The story is considered, by some, as a classical example of how the Aryan North has tried to subjugate the Dravidian south. It is interesting to note the similarities between the story of Bali and that of Ellara or Ellalan. Both were just and wise under whom their subjects attains peace and prosperity. Both were killed by Aryans inspite of their goodness. The moral of the story seems to be that only the Aryans have the right to rule no matter how good or just the Dravidian kings are.

"Ellara hurled his dart, Gamini evaded it; he made his own elephant pierce Ellara's elephant with his tusks and he hurled his dart at Ellara; and this latter fell there with his elephant" [20]

And the Mahavamsa says that a general massacre of the Tamils followed as the Buddhist monks counselled Dutthagamani that the Tamils were sub-human and so killing them was no sin. At the heart of this fable is the idea that the Tamils must be subordinate to the Sinhalese. On the other hand, the Tamils, as part of their assertion of identity, hold King Elara or Ellalan in great reverence. One example is that the name of the nation that the Tamil insurgency aims at achieving is Eelam.

The Sinhalese identity

A theme that recurs in Sinhala literature and government propaganda today is that the two races are one, or even if not, then the proper place of the Tamils is in subordination to the Sinahlese. As the Sri Lankan forces move northward in their attempt to put an end to the Tamil insurgency once and for all, their regiments bear names like the Gemunu Watch, the Sinha Regiment and the Rajarata rifles, names of mythic Sinhala heroes. In a widely circulated pamphlet, *Eleam--the Truth*, the government has this to say:

The Tamil people even of the eastern and northern provinces are one and the same race. They are descended from King Vijaya's Ministers, from whom the Sinhala people take pride of descent[21]

[20] The former Sri Lankan president the late Ranasinghe Premadasa was well aware of the story of the *Mahavamsa*. In his novel, *Golu Muhuda* (The Silent Sea) the young Sinhala hero tells his father, the King, "This is a Buddhist country. Migrant foreigners have no claim to it." See Kadian, n.14. p.55.

[21] Quoted in Kapferer, n.4, p.35.

On the other hand, Tamil myth struggles to prove that there have always been two distinct and separate identities on the island.[22] The consequence of such an argument is that the present state of Sri Lanka has no legitimate right to include the northern and eastern parts of the island, the 'traditional homelands' of the Tamils and that they are right now under Sinhalese occupation--against whom the Tamils are fighting for their freedom. *Thus the conflict is not separatism--it is resistance to an occupying power.*

For example in an interview to Anita Pratap[23] of the *Sunday* magazine, LTTE supremo Prabhakaran[24] throughout refers to "Sinhala forces" (p.79); "Sinhala oppression" (p.79); "Sinhala parties" (p.80); "Sinhala military machine" (p.85); rather than to the Sri Lankan state. Stachi Ponnambalam[25], argues that culture and civilisation are a Tamil legacy. He analyses the official history and the school curriculum to show how the myth that there was a 2000-year old struggle for supremacy between the Sinhala and the Tamil foments hatred among the young

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[22] This is similar to the argument of "cultural nationalism" advanced by the Hindu nationalist right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party in India. This argument rather than basing Indian nationalism on the concept of "unity in diversity" that was the rallying point of the freedom struggle and the basis of post-1947 Indian state, tries to make nationalism an emotive issue, by saying that all Indians are one because they share the same "Hindu" culture, whatever their actual religion. Such events as the 13th century saint Sri Shankaracharya establishing "mutts' in the four corners of the country, or the ancient mythological concept of "chakravartin" the king who unites the whole of the Indian subcontinent under one rule are taken as examples of the underlying unity of India. Such a framework is similar to arguing that Europe should be one because it was at one time ruled as one by the Romans and because the Catholic church established churches throughout Europe.

[23] Anita Pratap, "If Jayawardene Was a True Buddhist I Would Not Be Carrying a Gun", *Sunday*, (Calcutta), vol.2, no.32, 11-17 March 1984. Reproduced in *Towards Liberation: Selected Political Documents of the LTTE* (n.p: September 1984), p.53-64.

[24] Prabhakaran is also spelt as Pirabhakaran in *India Today* as for example, Prabhakaran's interview to *India Today* (New Delhi), 30 June 1996. However, as the official LTTE spelling is Prabhakaran, this study will refer to him by that spelling. See *Towards Liberation*.

[25] Statchi Ponnambalam, *Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle*, (London:1983) pp.229-251.

.THE IDEOLOGY OF THE LTTE:

Thus central to the political thought of the LTTE is the concept of "race war." This part of the chapter will deal with the ideology of the LTTE as revealed in its propaganda pamphlets and other material. It will focus on the ideology of the group and try to see whether it is unique, or a reflection of Marxist thought as the LTTE claims. *The argument here is that the LTTE did see the struggle in Marxist terms at the beginning, but later shifted as Prabhakaran rose to supremacy.*

In the 1970s and the early 1980s, the struggle was defined more in Marxist terms. For instance, the LTTE theoretician Anton Balasingham, used Marxist terms to define the LTTE's struggle and held that the failure of the Marxist parties in Sri Lanka was that they failed to recognise the "national aspects of the struggle," and tried to delink the class struggle from national self determination.[26]

Early documents of the LTTE seem to indicate that the organisation saw the conflict in class terms, and against the Sri Lankan state. Thus, the LTTE, in a letter to the Sinhala soldier released in 1982, exhorted them not to

> "die labouring for the foul campaigns of the ruling class. Do not lose your integrity and humanity, so that those who rule *us* may prosper. It is only when you take up arms on the side of the oppressed Sinhala workers and peasants, against the state of Sri Lanka, that *we* could speak the language of friendship. When and if you do that, you'll understand the pulse of your own struggle."[27] (*emphasis added*)

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[26] ibid.,pp.33-76.

[27] LTTE, Political Committee, *Towards Liberation,* n.23, p.16.

According to its literature, the LTTE claims that it is in favour of a one-party socialist system. Anton Balasingham[28], for example, criticised the Left parties's struggle for Tamil rights. He argued that their vision of the struggle as being of the Sinhalese and Tamil workers and peasants against the neo-colonial Sri Lankan state was fundamentally flawed as it did not recognise the right of the Tamil people to secede. This was based on a wrong reading of Lenin's theory of self-determination. As he puts it:

> If we want to grasp the meaning of self-determination of the nations, not by judging with legal definitions...but by examining the historical-economic conditions of the national movement, we must inevitably reach the conclusion that the self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies and the formation of an independent nation state'.

However, the literature of the LTTE now propogates the idea of race war. Some of the statements like "The power of the people turns the wheel of history" and "Our houses become our graves...our villages become cremation grounds. The Sinhalese racist demons slowly take over our ancient land. On our own soil, the soil where we were born and have lived from time immemorial, our people are being turned into slaves, they are being destroyed," or "the power of the people turns the wheel of history" all taken from the official organ of the LTTE, *Voice of The Tigers* are more examples of a racial, exclusivist ideology rather than Marxist thought.

The argument here is that the shift in the LTTE's ideology is quite associated to the fortunes of Prabhakaran. An attempt will be made to

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[28] Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, *Socialist Tamil Eelam: Political Programme of the LTTE.* (n.d. n.p.) pp.48-64.

prove the point on the basis of LTTE literature and the statements of its supremo, Prabhakaran.

In 1984, in an interview to *Sunday*, Prabhakaran said, "Our struggle is for self determination, for the restoration of the sovereignty in our homeland. We are not fighting for a division or separation of a country, but rather we are fighting to uphold the sacred right to live in freedom and dignity."[29] At that time, Prabhakaran had not consalidated his hold over the organisation. But with his rise the LTTE has downplayed the Marxist ideology and has emphasised the Tamil identity. The very same Prabhakaran, in a 1986 interview to *India Today* says,

> "We have crossed the stage of being able to visualise a solution within the framework of a united Sri Lanka. We have come to a point of no return with regard to the *eelam* goal.[30]

The shift in the ideology was, however, gradual. In a document that the LTTE entitled *Tamils Fight for National Freedom*, submitted to the seventh summit meeting of the Non-Aligned nations held at New Delhi, March 7-15, 1983, the LTTE says:

> "The armed struggle, therefore, is the historical product of intolerable national oppression; it is an extension, continuation and advancement of the political struggle of our oppressed people....Our total strategy integrates both national and class struggle, interlinks the progressive patriotic feeling of the masses with the proletarian class consciousness to accelerate the process of socialist revolution and national liberation."

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[29] ibid., p.83.

[30] *India Today* (New Delhi), 30 June 1996, cited in P. Sahadevan, "On Not Becoming a Democrat: The LTTEs Commitment to Armed Struggle", *International Studies*, Vol.32, No.3, (1995), pp.275.

At the same time, the document talks of the uniqueness of the Tamil nation and people, "Tamil Eelam" and "Sinhala chauvinistic oppression" and the settlement of the Tamil lands by Sinhalese colonisers. However, even then the primary emphasis is still on the class contradiction, rather than the ethnic one. The LTTE defines itself as the "authentic revolutionary vanguard of the struggling masses"[31] And the document is more in Marxist terms than in terms of Tamil nationalism.

Again, the LTTE though it claims to be socialist, and envisions the future state of Eelam organised along socialist lines, in its propaganda and appeal the LTTE is at variance with other organisations like the Eelam Revolutionary Peoples Liberation Front (ERPLF) or the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS), which define the war in terms of the class struggle. To them, the Sinhalese rural masses who form the bulk of the Sri Army are merely the catspaw of a neo-imperialist, neo-colonialist or neo-fascist oppressor. Further, what is more significant is that these groups do not look back to the glory of a Tamil ``golden age'', nor is there any reference to the historical traditions of the Tamils in the literature of these groups.

On the other hand, the name ``Tigers'' comes from the symbol of the ancient Chola kings who built an empire in South India and conquered parts of Lanka in the early years of the 11th century and there is a constant emphasis on the glory of ancient Tamil kingdoms in LTTE literature.

The changing nature of the LTTE was also reflected in the actions that it undertook. In the 1970s and the early 1980s, the LTTE never targeted Sinhalese civilians or carried out large-scale massacres of Sinhalese to avenge killing of innocent Tamils. This was true even after the 1983 riots.

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[31] LTTE, Political Committee, *Towards Liberation*, n.23

However, on 13 May 1985, the LTTE targeted innocent Sinhalese people for the first time when it machine gunned and threw grenades at a crowd of Sinhalese civilians in Anuradhapura. At least 100 were killed. Press reports quoted the Tigers as shouting "70 for 70" apparently in reference to the alleged killing by security forces of 70 Tamils two days earlier.[32] The Anuradhapura massacre marks a turning point in the ideology of the LTTE. While earlier the contradiction was between the Sri Lankan state and the Tamil militants, the Anuradhapura massacre was the last straw. Now it was the Tamils against the Sinhalese.

The *shift marked the triumph of a strong undercurrent of racial thought that had always existed in Tamil nationalism with deep roots in Tamil myth and history and that had always uneasily coexisted with Marxist ideology that the LTTE seemed to profess.* Thus even in 1975, Chelvanayakam, had said, "Troughout the ages the Sinhalese and the Tamils in the country lived as distinct sovereign people till they were brought under foreign domination."[33]

The other factor, that led to the change in ideology is the rise of Prabhakaran in the organisation. Prabhakaran rose, especially after the Lebanon-trained Uma Maheswaran, Chairman of the Central Committee in the late '70s, who was more of a Marxist internationalist than Tamil nationalist, left in 1982. In this sense, Maheswaran was the Trotsky of the organisation while Prabhakaran is the Stalin of the LTTE.[34] Though

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[32] For details, O' Ballance, *The Cyanide War: Tamil Insurrection in Sri Lanka 1973-1978* (London: 1989) p.48, Dayan Jayatilleka *Sri Lanka: The Travials of a Democracy, Unfinished War, Protracted Crisis*, (New Delhi: 1995) pp.3-8.

[33] Quoted in Ponnambalam, n.25, 184.

[34] Stalin, after coming to power abandoned Marxist internationalism for "socialism in one country", over which he and Trotsky fell out. But the fallout was not purely ideological and reflected deep personal differences. Stalin was able to force Trotsky into exile. Trotsky was killed on Stalin's orders in Mexico in 1941. In almost a parallel process, Prabhakaran forced Maheswaran out of the LTTE by starting a campaign against him over an alleged affair. Later, in 1982, Prabhakaran tried to shoot Maheswaran in Madras. Maheswaran eventually

Prabhakaran became the leader of the LTTE in 1976, there are indications that a power struggle took place in the LTTE.[35] It is only in the mid-1980s that he was able to emerge unchallenged as the supreme leader of the organisation.

The Influence of Prabhakaran's personality on the LTTE

Any organisation is influenced by its leader. And the influence of Prabhakaran personality is very much evident in the LTTE. There seems to be a corelation between certain personality traits of Prabhakaran and the ideology of the LTTE. This is one area in which the LTTE differs from other insurgent movements and is unique in itself.[36] Though there have been personality cults around other leaders like for example Mao Tse Tung, the significant point is that these personality cults came into existence only after they were in power. On the other hand in the case of the LTTE there is a virtual personality cult around Prabhakaran even though the organisation is still in the stage of an insurgent movement. In this the LTTE is more in keeping with the traditions of medieval times when loyalty was to a person and not to an ideology as such.

And a huge propaganda machine has swung into action to enhance the reputation of the leader. Tiger pamphlets[37] eugolise Prabhakaran who is quite a capable guerrilla leader, while, even in India, he

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died at the hands of suspected PLOTE dissidents. Another similarity is that both Stalin and Prabhakaran were uneducated while Trotsky and Maheswaran were intellectuals.

[35] Sudha Ramachandran, "Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka: A Study of the Evolution and Growth of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)" (Ph.D.Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, School of International Studies, New Delhi, 1995) p.70.

[36] The LTTE in this aspect is similar to the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, where a personality cult existed around the leader, Pol Pot. But the Khmer Rouge is different in that it reflected Pol Pot's ideology rather than his personality traits.

[37] Ramachandran, n.35, p.85.

is hailed as the "Netaji"[38] by a meeting that was addressed, among others, by an Indian member of Parliament.[39]

Prabhakaran by keeping an extremely hidden profile has enhanced his legendary reputation. Less than 10 percent of the Tiger cadre have seen him.[40] Hellmann Rajanayagam argues that Prabahkaran's mystique lies in the fact that Prabhakaran is just like the warrior heroes of the Tamil *Purananuru* period.[41]

Several aspects of the LTTE's ideology, that make no sense when we try to analyse the movement in the light of classical guerrilla doctrine or other revolutionary movements like the Vietnamese, Chinese, or Russian become clear when seen in relation to the personality of the supreme leader. Prabhakaran has "a permanent aggressive streak in his character"[42] is deeply suspicious, brutal, has a total disregard for human life, is fanatically brave[43] uncompromising and dauntless. Prabhakaran never forgets or forgives and is relentless in his pursuit of vengeance. This part of the chapter will study unique aspects of the LTTE such as the unending fight for Tamil Eelam, the suicide cult, the vengeance cult, in relation to both the the personality of its leader, and ancient Tamil myth.

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[38] The legendary hero of the Indian independence struggle, Subhas Chandra Bose, who led the Indian national army against the British in World War II.

[39] "Prabhakaran hailed as 'Netaji' of Tamils", *The Pioneer*, 8 January 1997.

[40] For a detailed examination of the rise and leadership qualities of Ramachandran, n.35, pp.84-100, also Sahadevan, n.30, p.259-262.

[41] Dagamr Hellmann Rajanayagam, *The Tamil Tigers: Armed Struggle for Identity* (Suttgart: 1994), p.37.

[42] Sahadevan, n.30, p.262.

[43] This is open to question. One of the reasons that Prabhakaran fell out with Kittu was his comment to the Indian press that he never issued orders from behind the lines but led from the front. D.B.S. Jeyaraj, "We are prepared to Die, They Are Not"--Interview with LTTE's Kittu of Jaffna", *Frontline*, vol.3, no.23, pp.15-28. cited in Ramachandran, n.35, p.91.

An Unending Fight for Tamil Eelam

The first thing that can be explained using this framework is the unwillingness of the LTTE to come to the negotiating table. There is no compromise. One of the major reasons for this is the personality of Prabhakaran. If at all he has been willing to negotiate, it has been as a tactical ploy.

Thus faced with enormous reverses in 1996, Prabhakaran in his annual message on National Heroes Day, November 27, said that the LTTE was "prepared to talk and reach agreement" --if Sri Lankan forces that have occupied the north were withdrawn.[44] At the same time he said that the Tamils could not obtain their "just rights" by pleading with the Sinhala rulers.In the same speech Prabhakaran gave an indication of his deeply suspicious nature that borders on paranoia. He accused "several forces" of conspiring to join hands against the "liberation struggle" of the Tamils.[45]

Thus the LTTE is so much a prisoner of its own ideology of race war as of the personality of its leader that there can be no compromise. I

The cyanide cult: Another aspect of the LTTE that is unique is the determination of its fighters to never be taken alive. While preferring death to capture is nothing new the LTTE's glorification of those who do so and the refusal to condone not committing suicide,[46] in the event of capture, is unique.

Many militants have committed suicide to avoid torture at the hands of their captors. Yet at the same time there was always a greater proportion

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[44] Amit Baruah, "Drive out Army, Prabhakaran tells Tigers", *The Hindu*, November 28, 1996.
[45] Baruah, n.44.
[46] Ramachandran, n.35, p.57

of an insurgent army willing to be captured.[47] This is where the LTTE deviates from classical guerrilla groups. *In their case, suicide is the last option to avoid torture. On the other hand in the case of the LTTE it is the first option.*

Prabhakaran explained the motive for the "cyanide cult":

> Carrying cyanide on one's person is a symbolic expression of our commitment, our determination, our courage....this gives our fighters an extra measure of belief in the cause, a special edge: it instils in us the determination to sacrifice our lives and everything for our cause.[48]

However, such motives do not require a cyanide pill around the neck. The determination of the Vietnamese or the Chinese or the Afghans did not depend on an assurance of suicide.

A mere fear of torture also cannot be the motivation for such an act especially given the fact that the LTTE cadre have time and time again demonstrated their bravery. Like many other aspects of LTTE ideology, this cult too has deep roots in Tamil myth and ideology. The *Purnananuru* makes several references to the practice of ancient Tamil warriors sacrificing themselves for the leader. It was considered the ultimate tribute. The concept of suicide for a cause seems to be part of Tamil culture, just as it was in pre World War II Shinto Japan. Thus, unique to the southern state of Tamil Nadu, there was and is the practice of supporters immolating themselves when a revered leader dies.[49] The key point is that suicide, for a

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[47] For example, in Vietnam, Korea and Malaya, the counter-insurgent forces relied on the confessions of captured militants for crucial information. Rarely does one come across a Viet Minh or Viet Cong rebel committing suicide. See See James L. Estep, *Comanche Six: Company Commander in Vietnam* (New Delhi, 1991), a gritty memoir of the Vietnam War by an infantryman.

[48] *The Hindu*, 5 September, 1986. Cited in Sahadevan, n.30, p.265.

[49] Thus when the leader of the anti-caste struggle, E. Periaswamy Naickar (EVR) died, at least 40 people committed suicide, by self-immolation.

cause is accepted in Tamil society, unlike the horror that it evokes in Western societies.[50] *Thus the cult of suicide draws legitimacy from both the past and the present.*

In the LTTE, the motivation seems to be peer pressure--the isolation and revilement of those who do not commit suicide.[51] The cult should be seen in the background of the LTTE's unique martyr complex, its glorification of death and sacrifice, its obsession with endless war.[52]

The Black Tigers

Another example of the power of the martyrdom cult is the suicide bomber. Other guerrilla organisations have adopted this tactic.[53] The LTTE, however, is perhaps the first to make suicide bombing an article of faith, with the Black Tigers (*Karim Puligal)* becoming the most honoured members of the organisation, entitled to one last meal with Prabhakaran himself before setting out on their missions.[54]

However, this tactic of the LTTE is relatively recent, and even more recent is the adoption of it to eliminate key political leaders and attack civilian targets. The first instance of a suicide bombing is on July 5, 1987, when the LTTE Black Tigers Captain Miller drove a van full of explosives into a military camp at Nelliaddy. More than 128 soldiers were killed.[55] The first Black Tiger attack on water was when Captain Borg, a sea Tiger, drove a

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[50] This horror is a reflection of the Judeo-Christian societies, which hold that life, being God given, can be taken only by God.

[51] Thus for example, Nalini, the only LTTE cadre connected to the Rajiv Gandhi killing to be captured by the Indian police, feared to return as much for her life as humiliation.

[52] Sahadevan, n.30, pp.264-267.

[53] For example, the Islamic resistance movement, Hamas, carries out frequent bombings of buses in Israel. One of the earlier examples of such bombings is the attack on the Marine barracks in Beirut, July 1983, when more than 200 U.S. soldiers died when a Shite Muslim drove a truck full of explosives into the barracks.

[54] Sahadevan, n.30, p.112.

[55] V. Jayanth, "A Crucial Vote", *Frontline*, November 4, 1994, p.29.

boat of explosives against the Sri Lankan naval vessel *Edithara*, killing eight naval officers.[56]

On May 21, 1991, the LTTE adopted the tactic to assassinate the former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi at an election rally at Sriperumbudur near Madras. Since then suicide bombers have killed Sri Lankan president Ranasinghe Premadasa (May 1, 1993), presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake (October 23, 1995). The callous disregard of the LTTE for human life--again a reflection of the personality of the leader--was evident in the fact that these attacks also claimed many innocent bystanders. The LTTE has also used the tactic to kill and maim innocent civilians. On January 31, 1996, in revenge for Operation Riveresa, which led to the fall of Jaffna, Raju, a Black Tiger drove a truck laden with explosives into the Central Bank on President's street in Colombo. More than a 100 innocent civilians were killed and more than a 1000 injured.[57]

It is difficult to understand the motives of the Black Tigers, even more so when the Black Tigers carry out "dry runs" that should frighten a normal person.[58]

The only comparable instance, of this tactic, which has not been advocated by any of the classical theorists like Mao, Lenin, Che etc are the tactics of Islamic militants in the Middle East. In their case, their ideology leads them to believe that they will go straight to heaven. Thus, for them, suicide is a way to a better deal--even if that is in the afterworld. On the other hand LTTE literature does not promise any afterlife with the houris of paradise. The LTTE is officially atheist and if at all there are believers in the cadre, they being Hindus, would believe in reincarnation of the soul.

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[56]M.R. Narayana Swamy, *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* (Delhi: 1994), p.78.
[57] *The Indian Express*, February 1, 1996.
[5858] Both Dhanu, the assassin of Rajiv Gandhi and "Babu", alias "Veerakumar" the assassin of Premadasa had dry runs, which were recorded on videotape. V. Jayanth, "The suicide bomber strikes again", *The Hindu*, October 28, 1995.

In the LTTE's case, the motivation seems to be a kind of en masse cult hysteria that the LTTE consciously cultivates by such rituals as observing Martyr's Week in the last week of November, a cultivated cult of martyrdom, the building of special cemeteries, the naming of weapons after Black Tigers etc., in short the promise of honour after death.[59] This becomes significant as most of the LTTE cadre now, unlike until the mid-80s when most of the cadre were from moderately educated backgrounds--the victims of standardisation, are from lower middle class backgrounds, and are more likely to accept such propaganda.[60]

Another powerful motivation for the LTTE's suicide cadre is that the LTTE has been able to connect its ideology and its tactics to the past by a judicious use of symbols rooted in Tamil myth such as the tiger, the symbol of one of the most favourite Tamil gods, Murugan, and the emblem of the ancient Chola emperors, the concept of *maram* (wrath), the concept of the brave mother (*vira tayar)* and the *vira pen* (brave woman) who sacrifice their loved ones for the war, a recurring theme in *Purananuru* poetry of the glorious *Sangam* period between 500 B.C. and 200 A.D.[61] *The argument here is that this puts tremendous pressure on the LTTE cadre, to conform to the ideals of the past. A failure is then not the failure of an individual, or even of having let down the organisation, it is failure to live up to the ideals of a long and glorious past.*

The motivation of the LTTE Black Tiger cadre is then very similar to that of the *Kamikaze* pilots of the Japanese airforce in the Second World

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[59] Sahadevan, n.30, pp.264-267, Ramachandran, n.35, pp.108-150.

[60] The lower middle classes have been intensely nationalistic and susceptible to myth and legend. For example, Ball Gangadhar Tilak, was able to appeal to the lower middle class along similar lines by reviving the Sivaji festival in turn of the century Maharashtra. See Bipan Chandra, *India's Struggle for Independence* (New Delhi: 1988)

[61] For discussion on how myth plays an important role in the ideology of the LTTE, see Rajanayagam, n.41; Sumantara Bose, *States, Nations and Sovereignty: Sri Lanka, India and the Tamil Eeelam Movement* (New Delhi: 1994).

War. They would crash their explosive laden planes against American warships, crying "I die for the Emperor." They too were deluded into believing that they were carrying on the ancient Samurai tradition, that they were living up to ancient warrior ideals, that they were fulfilling a sacrifice demanded by the Emperor, and above all also faced tremendous shame and humiliation if they surrendered.[62]

The cult of vengeance

Another mystifying aspect of the LTTE is its willingness to inflict revenge on those who harm it, *inspite of the tremendous damage that this can inflict upon its cause.* The best example of this is the assassination of Indian Prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. After the assassination, the LTTE lost the tremendous goodwill and support that it had enjoyed in Tamil Nadu--a major reason why New Delhi has adopted a "hands off" policy in the island's affairs.[63] The LTTE network has been smashed and all sympathy seems to have dried up.[64]

The ideology of vengeance, in addition to being a reflection of the ruthlessness of Prabhakaran, seems to be part of the ideology of the organisation. Thus speaking to a group of journalists who had accompanied a member of Parliament, Vasudeva Nanayakkara, on a visit to the then LTTE-held Jaffna in the first week of January 1997, LTTE ideologue, Anton Balasingham, virtually acknowledged that they were behind the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi[65] and said that it was more important to

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[62] W.G. Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*, (London: 1966)

[63] Indian intervention in Sri Lanka was always aimed at preventing separatist sentiment in the state of Tamil Nadu and also to win their support. Thus Mrs. Gandhi turned a blind eye to training camps for the militants, and Rajiv Gandhi ordered Operation Mercy Mission--the airdrop of food and medicine by Indian Airforce planes that flew 48 kilometers into Sri Lankan airspace.See *India Abroad*, 12 July 1987.

[64]Subramaniam Swamy, "Isolation of the LTTE", *The Hindu*, November 22, 1995.

[65] The LTTE never acknowledges political assassinations. Thus on October 24, 1995 Tamil Tiger leaders told Reuters that they had no hand in the killing of Dissanayake two days before. "LTTE denies hand", *The Hindu*. October 25, 1995.

analyse why certain leaders were killed rather than finding out who had killed them:

> Why was he (Rajiv Gandhi) assassinated? His army killed over 10, 000 Tamils here. We can't blame the troops for these killings. The responsibility lay with Mr. Gandhi for ordering a war with the Tamils, not with the army."[66]

The same report, quoted him as saying that the LTTE was not planning to assassinate the present President Chandrika Kumaratunge,[67] and advised her to "keep her hands clean." Balasingham said,

> "If by chance she gets her hands splattered with blood she will have to pay for those deeds."

The LTTE's *attitude to the tactic of political assassination*, which has been used by insurgent groups the world over, seems to be different. It is revenge, rather than a political weapon[68] to prove a point. At the root of such an ideology of vengeance is the LTTE's cohesion as a fighting force. An insult or a killing of one member is seen as an insult or slight to the whole group.[69] Thus the LTTE is not content with avenging the deaths of its cadre

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[66] "LTTE's grim warning to Chandrika", *Indian Express*, September 20, 1995.

[67] This was before the peace talks failed and Kumaratunge ordered the hitherto most successful push to try and drive the LTTE out of the peninsula.

[68] The basic principle behind assassinations has always been "propaganda by deed", such as the assassination of U.S. President William Mckliney in 1901 by anarchists. In fact, at the end of the 19th century the description "terrorist" began to be applied specifically to the strategy of political assassination that was employed by Narodnaya Volya, a Russian anarchist organisation, against the Tsarist regime, particularly the "blow at the centre"--the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in March 1881. Adrian Guelke, *The Age of Terrorism and the International System* (London, 1995) p.20. Giap also advocated the tactic. See Chapter I.

[69] "Security tightened in Colombo", *The Indian Express*, July 4, 1997.

once, but repeatedly strikes year after year on the same day in the name of observing the anniversary of the event.[70]

Another aspect is the *indiscriminate* nature of the revenge. The organisation has over the years fabricated a motif of the "Sinhalese monster" that it routinely massacres Sinhalese civilians in revenge for reverses on the battlefield.[71] What is significant is that the *cult of revenge is so ingrained and saw rooted in the concept of race war that it is not even important that the victims be guilty.* For reverses on the battlefield, innocent Sinhalese must pay with their blood.

AN APPRAISAL OF LTTE IDEOLOGY

The LTTE's ideology, though in name targetted at the workers and peasants, seems to cater more to the sensibilities of the middle class, with its emphasis on the glory of the Tamil race and people. Patriotism has always appealed more to the middle class. Thus, the LTTE defines the war as service to the mother--just as the Bengal revolutionaries in the early part of the 20th century described their movement in religious, patriarchal, terms. The middle class or lower middle class background as well as the cult of violence that surround the LTTE is more in tune with a cult movement than with classical Marxist ideology or the practice of revolutionary warfare. What is at stake is Tamil culture.

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[70] On 26 September 1987, Thileepan, who had begun a fast unto death died. Three years later, LTTE cadre, inspired by Thillepan's dream to liberate the Jaffna Fort, the Tigers captured it. Ramachandran, n.35 p.115.

[71] When the 17 Tamil prisoners, committed suicide rather than be taken to Colombo after the IPKF landed on the island, the LTTE struck swiftly. They massacred 200 Sinhalese and executed eight Sinhalese prisoners. This event marked the unravelling of the 1987 India-Sri Lanka accord. Depinder Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi, Trishul Publications, n.y.) pp.81-85.

THE MILITARY STRUCTURE OF THE LTTE

It is quite difficult to gather material regarding a highly secretive organisation like the LTTE. However, an attempt has been made, with the limited material at hand.[72]

The position of Prabhakaran

At the top of the hierarchy is the 43-year-old Vellupillai Prabhakaran, who is the Chairman of the Central Committee of the LTTE and Commander in Chief of its military wing. Prabhakaran is the undisputed leader who takes all major decisions and many of the minor ones too.[73]

In this aspect the LTTE differs from classical guerrilla organisations The *LTTE is dependent not on an ideology, which means that the organisation is independent of personality, and that no one is indispensable.* It also means that arresting or killing the leader alone will not destroy the organisation. On the other hand, the LTTE seems to be more of a cult or a mafia organisation or a feudal army in which the loyalty is to the leader. Prabhakaran has also been determined to eliminate any opposition to him no matter how small.[74] Hence any attempt to defeat the LTTE will depend on the elimination of Prabhakaran. Chandrika Kumaratunge seems to realise that the adamant attitude of Prabhakaran is the major obstacle to peace.[75]

Though the LTTE started off as a typical Marxist organisation with considerable devolution of power, the Central organisation was dissolved soon after the Prabhakaran-Maheswaran split.[76]

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[72] Newspaper reports and magazines, statements of the leaders and LTTE literature.
[73] Sahadevan, n.30, p.269-270.
[74] This is more a trait of a criminal organisation or a dictator in power. Thus, though Trotsky and Stalin had their differences these surfaced only when the party took over.
[75] *The Pioneer*, 19 January, 1997
[76] Ramachandran, n.35, p.71.

Ramachandran argues that the centralisation of power was the result of rapid expansion, but the argument here is that it is a reflection of the paranoia of the leader. This is evident in the way the entire second rung of the organisation has been eliminated.[77] The organisation has no official decision-making body subordinate to Prabhakaran, and the Senior Committee consist of close *personal* associates of Prabhakaran like Baby Subramanium, Appiah Annan and Sornalingam.[78] Mahatya was a member of this committee till he fell out. Thus Prabhakaran's way of functioning is more like a mafia don rather than a political or military leader. *The key point is that the second rung leaders exist only at the pleasure of the leader.*

The organisational structure

The organisational structure of the LTTE is best represented by charts (Chart 3.1 and 3.2). Most classical guerrilla forces followed Marxist doctrine in constructing their hierarchies. According to Communist doctrine the military wing is subordinate to the military wing, as analysed in the first chapter. However, in the case of the LTTE, the military wing is supreme.

And contrary to several insurgencies the LTTE does not have two insurgent wings, one overground and one underground.[79] There is only one LTTE. One major reason for this is the terrain in which the LTTE fights. It is not, like many organisations, an insurgent movement within a populace. As the Tamils lived in contiguous areas in the North and the East, the LTTE found it easier to set up its organisation overtly.

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[77] Thus after Maheswaran, Mahatiya was killed, on charges of having had an hand in the death of Kittu. Kittu too had differences, and there are reports of a growing rift between Prabhakaran and Anton Balasingham. Amit Baruah, "Prabhakaran sacks Pottu Amman?" *The Hindu*, October 6, 1996.

[78] Ramachandran, n.35, p.72.

[79] Thus in Malaya, (1948-1960) there was an overt armed force, the Malayan races Liberation Army (MRLA), and an underground force the Min Yuen: in Algeria (1954-1962) the guerrilla force the ALN and the political force, the FLN.

Two aspects in which the LTTE reflects classical Maoist doctrine is in the emphasis on discipline and it the absence of a formal ranking system. Mao writes[80]

> "A soldier who habitually breaks regulations must be dismissed from the army. Vagabonds and vicious people must not be accepted for service. The opium habit should be forbidden and a soldier who cannot break himself of the habit should be dismissed. *Victory in guerrilla war is conditional upon keeping the membership pure and clean.* (emphasis added).

The LTTE is also insistent on strict military discipline. Thus, smoking and drinking is frowned upon, Tigers can marry only after five years in the organisation and are not allowed to indulge in casual relationships.[81]

The second aspect in which the LTTE reflects classical Maoist doctrine is that the positions in the organisation are to be earned at least at the cadre level. Thus, though the LTTE has a strong hierarchical structure, and is not easy to join, having a tough three-month training programme[82] and it does not have a military hierarchy that is appointed as a result of extraneous considerations. Local commanders tend to be men who have had years of experience fighting the Sri Lankan forces[83]. All Tigers irrespective of rank enjoy the same privileges.[84]However, reflecting Prabhakaran's paronoia, the area commanders are allowed to take decisions only at the tactical level and not in formulation of policy.

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[80] Mao Tse Tung, *The Nature of Guerrilla Warfare*, with a foreword by Captain B.H. Liddell Hart. (London, 1966)
[81] P.Sahadevan, n.30, p.271
[82] Dagamar Rajanayagam, n.41, pp.65-67.
[83] Shankar Bhaduri and Afsir Karim, *The Sri Lankan Crisis*, (New Delhi: 1990), pp.42-46.
[84] Ramachandrah, n.35, p.73

Thus the LTTE, though it has evolved a structural organisation that in some ways is similar to the revolutionary organisation, the emphasis on certain aspects like extreme loyalty to the leader, the centralisation of all decision making powers in the hands of Prabhakaran, etc reflect the *unique nature of the organisation as a reflection of the personality of the leader.*

MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLY NETWORK

This aspect of the LTTE too is murky and not easy to identify. As most of the literature on such branches of the LTTE as the intelligence wing, the naval wing etc are quite complex an attempt will be made to present the data combining both organisational and equipment related aspects (CHART 3.2 & 3.3).

Chart 3.2, material for which was collected from various sources[85], gives an idea of the enormous firepower of the LTTE. The type of weaponry also indicates that one reason why the LTTE has perfected certain unique tactics, such as suicide bombing is a lack of adequate fire power. Thus the LTTE strikes at the Sri Lankan navy's Israeli made Dogra speedboats using suicide bombers because it cannot match the enormous firepower of the Sri Lankan forces. The dwindling of support abroad, especially in India,[86] which

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[85]Bhaduri Shankar and Karim, Afsir, *The Sri Lankan Crisis*, (New Delhi: Lancer, 1990),Gunaratna, Rohan, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: SANCOR, 1993) Gunaratna, Rohan, *War and Peace in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: SANCOR 1990); Singh, Depinder, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi, Trishul Publications, n.y.), various newspaper and magazine reports.

[86] The US has declared the LTTE a terrorist organisation, the FBI is investigating the accounts of expatriate Tamils, since 1994 Prabhakaran and Pottu Aman are wanted for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by Interpol and the Canadian government has begun to crack down on the LTTE's front organisations. Subramaniam Swamy, "The isolation of the LTTE", *The Hindu*, November 22, 1996, and V.Jayanath, "Interpol unable to trace LTTE chief", *The Hindu*, February 1, 1996.

in the early stages of the Tamil insurgency actively abetted the Tamils[87] has led the LTTE to improvise. At the same time, the LTTE seems to have acquired formidable weapons like Surface to Surface Air Missiles[88] and have even used gas attacks.[89] The LTTE also makes use of arms that have been captured from the military. Thus in an attack on the Mullativu camp, the LTTE looted artillery pieces. (See chart 3.3)

About the sources of funding the LTTE, having lost sympathy in Tamil Nadu is increasingly resorting to exortion rackets and money laundering [90] However, there are still many support networks active both at the national and the international level. (See Chart 3.3)[91] Chart 3.2 also reveals that the LTTE has perfected a local arms industry that could rank among the best in the world.

The LTTE is able to produce missiles such as the Palissan-2000, and its speciality is the belt-bomb which it used to kill the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Built with the plastic explosive RDX, the belt bomb is filled with steel pellets and cuts a swathe of destruction after it explodes.[92]

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[87] Ramachandran, n.46, pp.140-150.

[88] For example, on November 18, 1996 the LTTE shot down a Sri Lanka Air Force Y-8 transport aircraft three kilometres north of the Palai airstrip with 50 mm guns. On April 28 and 29, the LTTE fired surface-to-air missiles and destroyed two Arvo transport aircraft. Amit Baruah, "LTTE shoots down transport plane," *The Hindu,* November 19, 1996.

[89] Amit Baruah, "Gas Attack foiled, 80 LTTE men killed in fighting", *The Hindu,* November 26, 1996. However later reports said that the gas used was tear gas.

[90] Charu Lata Joshi, "Was the Bank scam used to fund the LTTE?", *Outlook,* (New Delhi) June 4, 1997. The article said that the CBI was investigating the 1,336 crore Indian Bank scam was examining whether a large chunk of the funds were diverted to the LTTE.

[91] Material for the chart was collected from various sources including Bhaduri, Major Shankar and Major General Afsir Karim, *The Sri Lanka Crisis* (New Delhi: 1990) Gunaratna, Rohan, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: 1993) Gunaratna, Rohan, *War and Peace in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: 1990) Kadian, Rajesh, *India's Sri Lankan Fiasco: Peacekeepers at War* (New Delhi: Vison Books,1990) Swamy, M.R. Narayana, *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* (Delhi: Konark, 1994) and newspaper and magazine articles from 1992-1997.

[92] V. Jayanth, n. 100

Thus the LTTE like most guerrilla organisations depends on a wide variety of arms, from improvised to sophisticated.[93]

CONCLUSIONS:

The preceding discussion of the ideology, military structure and sources of arms supply of the LTTE reveals that the LTTE, though following certain aspects of classical doctrine has mutated in accordance with the Sri Lankan situation. The ideology of the LTTE, though it claims to be Marxist is in reality rooted in Tamil myth and history. However, this shift in ideology is deeply related to the rise of Prabhakaran in the organisation. Now, the ideology of the organisation reflects the total hegemony that he has over it.

Given this framework, that sees many of the unique characteristics of the LTTE as the reflection of the personality of the leader, several strange tactics of the LTTE become clear. Thus central to the political thought of the LTTE is the concept of "race war" The two sides are so much a prisoner of their respective myths and history that there is no room for compromise. The LTTE's ideology, though in name targeted at the workers and peasants, seems to cater more to the sensibilities of the middle class, with its emphasis on the glory of the Tamil race and people. Patriotism has always appealed more to the middle class. Thus, the LTTE defines the war is defined as service to the mother–just as the Bengal revolutionaries in the early part of the 20th century described their movement in religious, patriarchal, terms. *Thus the middle class or lower middle class background as well as the cult of*

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[93] Weapons used by guerrilla forces are unconventional primarily because a guerrilla army cannot depend on a regular supply of arms. Most guerrilla armies have a wide variety of weapons.Thus in Vietnam, American forces frequently encountered home-made rifles, hand grenades, trails booby trapped with Claymore mines to "punji sticks" soaked in urine and designed to badly infect the wound it inflicted when soldiers stepped on it, and even nailboards in shallow pits. In Afghanistan the weapons used ranged from old Enfield rifles handed down from generation to generation to anti-aircraft Stinger missiles supplied to the Mujahideen by the CIA.

violence that surround the LTTE is more in tune with a cult movement than classical Marxist ideology. What is at stake is Tamil culture.

The Anuradhapura massacre of 13 May 1985, marked the *triumph of a strong undercurrent of racial thought that had always existed in Tamil nationalism.*

Several aspects of the LTTE's ideology,reflect the personality of the supreme leader. At the same time they are deeply rooted in Tamil myth and legend which puts tremendous pressure on the cadre. For example, in the LTTE, the motivation to commit suicide if captured seems to be peer pressure--the isolation and revilement of those who do not commit suicide. The cult should be seen in the background of the LTTE's unique martyr complex, its glorification of death and sacrifice, and its obsession with endless war.

Another aspect of the LTTE's behaviour, is its apparent preference for senseless brutal violence. *The LTTE seems to indulge in violence for the sake of violence,* reflecting the words of Fannon:``At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from the inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction: it makes him fearless and removes his inaction.[94]'' Guerrilla organisations prefer to resort to violence for a number of reasons: to ensure that the organisation and its ideals remain in the glare of public attention; to eliminate opposition leaders; to paralyse normal government activity; to intimidate the general populace and to keep one's own followers from defecting are just a few of these. Rarely do they glorify violence for its own sake. *However, in the case of the LTTE there is a glorification of violence for its own sake. In this the LTTE is unique.*

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[94] Fannon,Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York:1967). p.67.

It is this cult of violence that is so carefully cultivated that is at the heart of many of the most unique characteristics, including the cult of vengeance, the cult of revenge, the motivation to die and a seeming death desire of the cadre.

In the same way as the personality of the leader is reflected in the ideology of the organisation it is seen in the centralisation of the LTTE, the elimination of the second rung and the relations that Prabhakaran has with his followers, both in the symbolic and in the practical sense.

The LTTE, like most guerrilla organisations, depends on a wide variety of arms, funds for which come from mysterious sources. The network of the LTTE is vast and varied. However, the alienation of support, especially in the former rear base of Tamil Nadu, has led the LTTE to seek other sources of arms and support.

LTTE ORGANISATION

VELUPILLAI PRABHAKARAN
MILITARY AND POLITICAL COMMANDER

ANTON BALASINGHAM,
POLITICAL ADVISER
THAMIL CHELVAM
POLITICAL LEADER

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

LAWRANCE THILAGAR
SECRETARY
INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

POLITICAL
THAMIL CHELVAM

MILITARY
BALRAJ

POLITICAL & ADMINISTRATION CENTRE

JAFFNA

SPECIAL GROUPS
SWARNAM, BANU, SELVARAJ

TAMIL EELAM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION
RAVI

KILINOCHCHI

SEA TIGERS
SOOSAI, KANAGAI AMARAN

MEDICAL
DOCTOR, SOORI

MULLAITIVU/WELI OYA

INTELLIGENCE
POTTU AMMAN

WOMEN'S WING
JEYANTHI

VAVUNIYA

MILITARY OFFICE
VEDI DINESH

EELAM EDUCATION CENTRE
BABY SUBRAMANIYAM

MANNAR

WEAPONS PROCUREMENT
KUMARAN PADMANADAN

STUDENT ORGANISATION OF LIBERATION TIGERS
IDAYAN

TRINCOMALEE

WOMEN'S FRONT
RADI

JUDICIAL
PARARAJASINGHAM

BATTICALOA/AMPARA

COMMUNICATIONS
JUDE

NIDHARSANAM/ VOICE OF TAMIL TIGERS
JAVAN, SITTU

AIR TIGERS
SHANKAR

EELANATHAM/VIDUTHALA PULIHAL
RAVI WASANTHAN

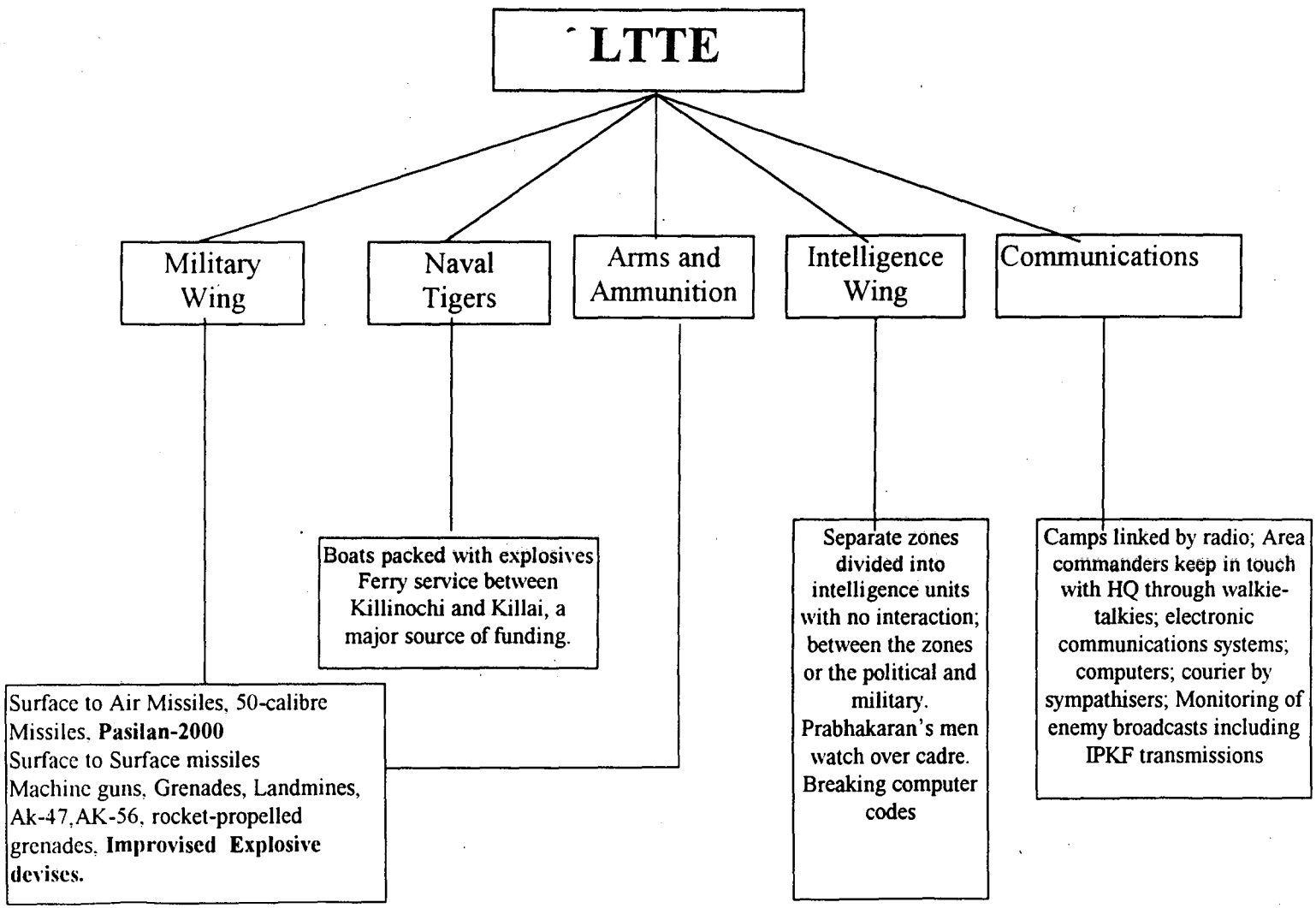
POLICE
NADESON

CULTURAL AND ARTS
PUDUWAI RATNADORAI

FINANCE
RANJITH APPA

The Island January 12, 1997

CHART 3.2 : **ORGANISATION OF THE LTTE**



LTTE external support network

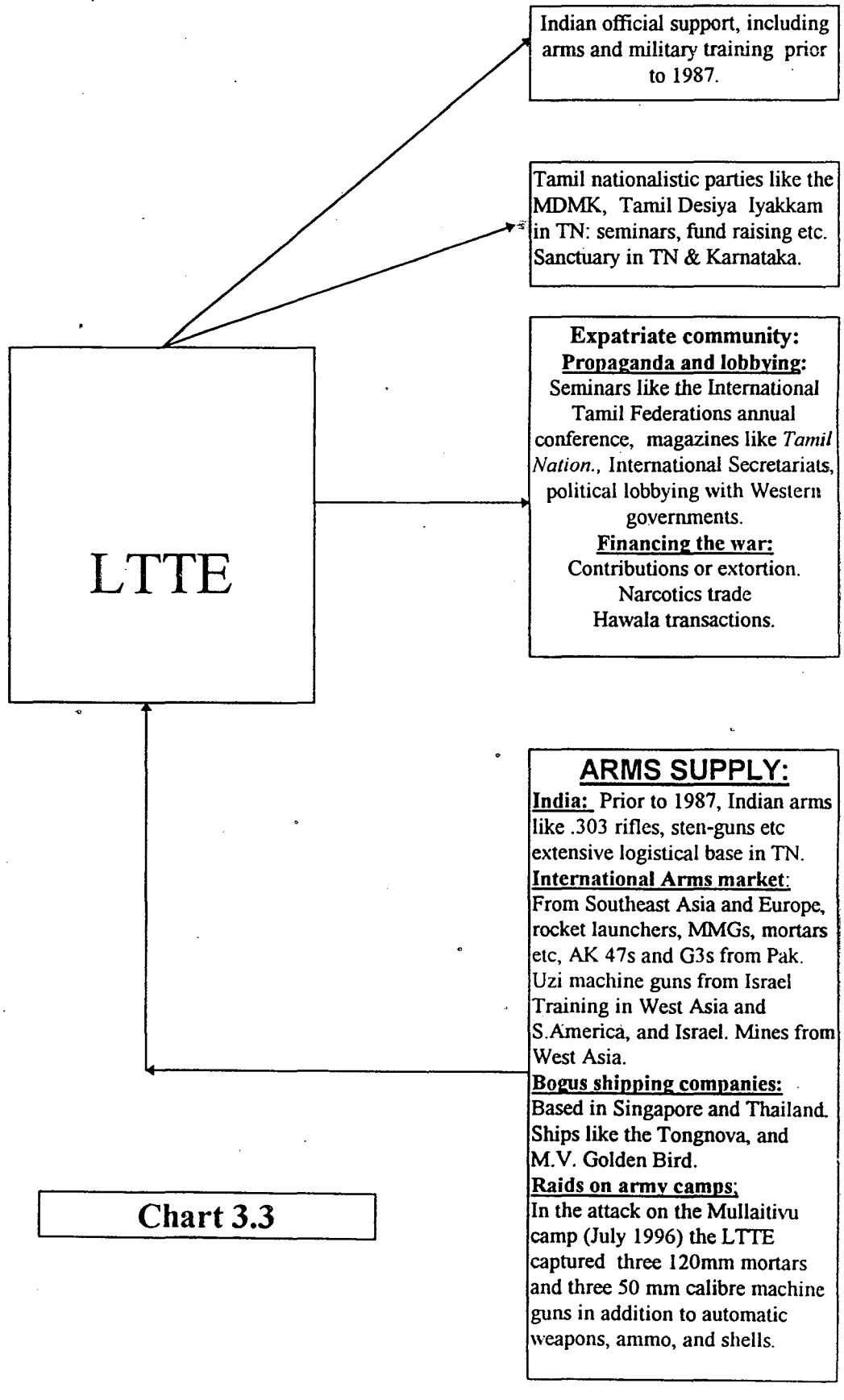


Chart 3.3

CHAPTER IV

The Strategy and Tactics of the LTTE

This chapter will study the strategy and tactics of the LTTE, both on and off the battlefield. The chapter is constructed along the following lines. It will look at the general politico-military strategy of the LTTE, the specific tactics that the group uses on the battlefield, with emphasis on the changing patterns of the tactics that the LTTE has adopted especially the shift from guerrilla to conventional tactics. These shall be examined in the light of classical guerrilla doctrine and strategy. This chapter too will rely on graphics to illustrate key points.

THE LARGER POLITICO-MILITARY STRATEGY

The LTTE's larger strategy has **four** key components: *the use of times of peace to prepare for war; an attempt to attain total control over the Tamil struggle, a subordination of the political struggle to the military one and a mixture of guerrilla and conventional warfare tactics in actual battle.* As the outfit faced reverses on the battlefield it has shifted from one kind of warfare to another.

Peace-War-Peace

The LTTE has always used times of peace to prepare for war. In using a time of peace to prepare for war the LTTE is in tune with Maoist thought.[1] Mao had argued that it was best for people's army to retreat when the army was hard pressed;[2] and to pay attention to the material base (men, material, and environment), such as the strengthening of local defences, while using the time gained to try and win back the support of a war

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[1] For extensive details see Chapter I.
[2] For details see Chapter I, n.54, 215-22. Also n.57, pp. 119-156.

weary people.[3] The LTTE follows this strategy in that *peace talks are always a time for rational preparation, a time to regroup and then strike with renewed vigour.* This part of the chapter will argue that the LTTE follows the *War-Peace-War* strategy, in which *a period of hardship on the battlefield in followed by an attempt to negotiate, while the LTTE rebuilds its strength, or to put it a bit more colourfully licks its wounds. It then goes into battle again. Crucial to this is the LTTE's use of the period of peace to gain legitimacy and support among the people* (Table 4.1). This chapter will try to prove the point by examining the statements of the LTTE, and the tactics it has adopted in peace talks.

At the root of such a strategy is the *unwillingness of the LTTE to compromise in the pursuit of Tamil Eelam.* This is the overriding objective of the LTTE. An examination of LTTE literature, the statements of its leaders and its propaganda makes this aim of the LTTE clear. For example, the LTTE in a 1979 letter of protest to the then Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa, wrote:

> We are fighting for a noble cause, a right cause, the cause of the national freedom of the oppressed nation--Tamil Eelam. The revolutionary process towards which we work to achieve national liberation and socialism will be long and arduous. Yet; we are certain that no force on earth, however repressive it may be, can stop us from the revolutionary struggle that we are committed to.[4]

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[3]Mao Tse-tung, "Why Can China's Red Political Power exist?" (1928), in *Selected Works, Vol.I,* (London,1954) pp.63 -70, also "We Must Attend to Economic Work" (1933), pp.129-137, p.129 and n.55, p.209. That the LTTE had used the temporary lull in the fighting to regroup was evident from that it had stockpiled huge quantities of food. P. S. Suryanarayana, "LTTE abandoned huge food stockpile", *The Hindu,* June 2, 1997.

[4] LTTE, Political Committee, "A letter of protest to Mr. R. Premadasa, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam" dated 20.7.1979. Appendix.9, pp.264-266 in Statchi Ponnambalam, *Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle,* (London:1983).

Nearly 20 years later, when the LTTE is fighting with its back to the wall and is isolated internationally, the LTTE is still unwilling to compromise. Thus after the debacle at Weli Oya, on July 28, 1995, where the LTTE lost about 200 cadre, the LTTE journal *Viduthalai Puligal,* said:

> If the young blood (young men/women) start living in the Tiger camps instead of the refugee camps, there will no longer be any refugee camps in our lands...that is how the Israeli youth won. Except for the aged and the children (?) (sic) all others fought for their land and their lives. Why can't the Tamil youth do what the Israeli youth did?[5]

Hence, for the LTTE there is no compromise on the basic goal of Tamil Eelam at the best of times or at the worst of times. The "War-peace-War" (W-P-S) strategy is based on this premise. The LTTE has adopted the tactic time and time again.

One of the earliest instances of this tactic is at the Thimpu talks. A concerted counter-insurgency drive against Tamil militant groups was picking up, when India intervened and persuaded President Julius Jayawardene and the Tamil militant leaders to observe a cease-fire starting June 18, 1984.[6] And even as Tamil militants imposed a three-day strike in Jaffna in protest against the talks[7] the LTTE came for negotiations at Thimpu. Tamil representatives later walked out of the talks on August 22, 1984, claming that the government was not sincere in its negotiations, when the talks were at a crucial stage.[8] This followed an incident when Sri

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[5] Amit Baruah, "21 LTTE cadre killed in the East", *The Hindu,* August 29, 1997.
[6] Edgar O' Ballance, *The Cyanide War: Tamil Insurrection in Sri Lanka 1973-1978* (London: 1989) p.50.
[7] ibid.p.50.
[8] ibid.,, p.50.

Lankan forces, enraged by a grenade attack on airforce personnel in the market, went on a rampage in Vavuniya.[9]

At the talks the LTTE was unwilling to compromise on the basic goal of Eelam, showing that the organisation has always had Eelam and only Eelam as its ultimate goal.

Another significant turning point is 1987. Sri Lankan army offensives had driven the LTTE to the wall.[10] India stepped in, signed a peace agreement with Sri Lanka that promised the Tamils a merger of the eastern and northern provinces, a referendum to test the decision before 31 December 1988, election to provincial councils, devolution of powers and a general amnesty.[11] The accord resulted in the Sri Lankan forces withdrawing to pre-1987 positions at a time when the LTTE was having the worst of the battle.

However, to the LTTE, the accord was just a time for breathing space. Just after the India-Sri Lanka accord was signed in July 1987, V. Prabhakaran, in a speech on August 4, 1987 at the Sudumalai Amman temple town in the vicinity of Jaffna town made the LTTE's stand on the accord clear:

> I have unrelenting faith in the proposition that only a separate of Tamil Eelam can offer a permanent solution of the problem of Tamil Eelam. Let me make it clear to you here, beyond a shadow of doubt, that I will continue to fight for the objective of attaining Tamil Eelam.[12]

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[9]Dayan Jayatilleka, *Sri Lanka: The travails of a Democracy, Unfinished war and Protracted Crisis* (New Delhi: 1995), p.4

[10] For details see Chart 4.1.

[11] *The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord* July 23, 1987.

[12] LTTE, Political Committee, "The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam view of the India-Sri Lanka Agreement." Appendix. 8, Rajesh Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka fiasco: Peacekeepers at War* (New Delhi: 1990)p.170-71.

Thus it was inevitable that the accord was doomed from its very inception. True to the W-P-S strategy, the LTTE, after using the respite to build up its forces attacked the IPKF.[13]

Again, after the IPKF withdrew from the island in 1989, the LTTE averred that it was ready to negotiate with Premadasa, only to attack the Sri Lankan armed forces and start war. As an illustration of the "W-P-S" strategy, LTTE policy in the aftermath of the withdrawal of the IPKF will be examined in detail.

After the departure of the IPKF the LTTE took advantage of Premadasa who preferred to settle with the Tamils rather than compromise with India, unlike his predecessor who signed a pact with India rather than arrive at an agreement with the Tamils. True to the strategy, even when negotiations were on the LTTE went in for a massive military build-up.

Then, the LTTE, as part of the "W-P-W" strategy made two demands. At the **political** level the Tigers wanted the Sixth Amendment of the Sri Lankan constitution that made even the peaceful advocacy of a separate state unconstitutional and illegal repealed and the North-East Provincial council annulled, so that it could play an overt political role with constitutional respectability. Thus it decided to contest and win the Provincial Council elections as an interim measure and then negotiate on the substantive issues. A victory at the polls would give it "legitimacy" and prove to the world that the LTTE were the authentic representatives of the Tamil people. Another key demand of the LTTE was that it be made responsible for maintaining law and order in the Tamil speaking areas.

The LTTE also began to initiate relief and rehabilitation measures for the affected people; it tried to transform the guerrilla cadres into a conventional military and para-military force and tried to generate economic development in the Tamil region. The replacement of the 1990

[13] See Table 4.1.

political conference in London by an international seminar on North-East development is a case in point. All this reflects classical guerrilla doctrine, in that a time of peace is used to recoup.

Militarily the LTTE wanted a process of demilitarisation to begin. The army was to revert to a non-law enforcement role. Its presence to be minimised in the Northeast by the gradual closing down of most camps except for one or two in a district. Policing was to commence with the recruitment of provincial police reflecting the ethnic composition of the North-East. The Tigers themselves, however, expanded rapidly with massive recruitment and asserted their right to be the dominant authority responsible for security, law and order in the Northeast. The LTTE, making use of the interval of peace, was building up its resources for another clash with the Sri Lankan state. Significantly, the Tigers themselves refused to lay down arms. Crucial to the "W-P-S" strategy is the *LTTE's refusal to lay down arms as part of any accord.* To the LTTE, *until the Tamil problem is resolved arms are a must.*

However, such a strategy is bound to unravel since, as this study argues, *the two sides have always seen the conflict as race war.* While the LTTE sees the time as an opportunity to gather forces, the Sinhalese perception is always diametrically opposite. The feeling is always that the LTTE was being given a last chance to join the political mainstream.

What had brought the two sides together in 1988 was their common hostility to the Indian army. With the Indian army gone the assertion of the LTTE became highly visible and led to hostile resentment in the south. Instead of the relaxation of hostilities that would have taken place if the two sides were sincere, what had happened was in tune with the deep seated ideological principles that the two sides were holding fast to.

In line with the W-P-S strategy the LTTE then broke the peace by a series of provocative actions. In the aftermath of the renewal of hostilities

the LTTE released a statement in Paris on June 15[14] which said that conflict began as a result of continuous irritants by the "Sinhala Police" and the obstacles caused to the LTTE by them.

The statement accused the government of increasing the strength of Sinhala police in Tamil areas, and that despite the cease-fire announcement the government had expanded military activities by deploying additional troops and intensifying attacks. The LTTE then attacked setting off a new round of hostilities.[15]

In 1994, with the newly installed Chandrika Kumaratunge government the LTTE adopted the same tactics.

First, the LTTE expressed its willingness to talk to the LTTE and the two sides on August 15, 1994 agreed to negotiate. In January 1995, even as the second round of talks was going on, intelligence reports came in of the infiltration of LTTE cadre into Trincomalee, Batticaloa, Amparai, Vavuniya, and Mannar, as well as the stockpiling of arms.[16] Wary of the LTTE, the government refused to lift the restriction on civil maritime coastal activity around the Jaffna peninsula.[17] The LTTE did not compromise on its basic demands. That the LTTE was not seriously considering peace was evident when the LTTE spokesman, Anton Balasingham said, that even the "*next round* of peace talks will fail if Colombo failed to bring satisfactory responses to the demands of the LTTE."[18]

The tactic came to the fore when Kumaratunge put forward a devolution package that met all the major grievances of the Tamils. Considerable autonomy was promised to the regions, and "equality of

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[14] *The Indian Express*,, January 12, 1990

[15] For details, see Table.4.1.

[16] See, for example, J.N. Dixit, "Talking to differ", *The Indian Express*, December 12, 1995

[17] Prakashan, Anandi Surya, and Subramaniam Nirupama, ``Sri Lanka: Back to the Battlefield",, *India Today*, 31 May,1995

[18] Dixit, n.16.

status" was accorded to the Tamil and Sinhala languages.[19] The LTTE reaction was along predictable lines. It argued that the government was trying to impose a "shoddy political settlement through military means"[20] LTTE ideologue Anton Balasingham said that the proposals were a mask to cover the government's military intentions.[21] And then it attacked Sri Lankan forces at Trincomalee in April 1995.

Why is it that the LTTE adopts the "W-P-W" strategy? *The rationale behind this process is twofold: the organisation gets time to recoup and at the same time, ensure that the support that the LTTE has among the Tamil people does not dry up.*

The LTTE, though it does not go out and out to woo the Tamil people[22] knows that it cannot survive if the Tamil people turn overtly hostile. By 1997, after two years of unrelenting war which the LTTE was badly losing, there were indications of a considerable dwindling of support among the Tamil people[23]. This was evident in the fact that many Tamils, inspite of strict orders from the LTTE, defied orders to abandon Jaffna when the fall of the peninsula to government forces was inevitable in 1995 For example, refugees from Vanni, who had been forced to leave Jaffna returned inspite of the deplorable conditions there.[24]

Seeking third party intervention is another aspect of the LTTE's strategy. In 1987, when the Sri Lankan army was about to capture Jaffna, the LTTE agreed to the India-Sri Lanka accord. In 1997, with the LTTE on the run there were persistent attempts to ensure Indian intervention in the

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[19] S.D. Muni, "Sri Lankan package: A bold initiative", *The Indian Express*, August 17, 1995.
[20] Amit Baruah, "It's a mask, says LTTE", *The Hindu*, August 16, 1995.
[21] ibid.
[22] See below, "Subordination of the political to the military struggle."
[23] See, for example, Amit Baruah, "Tamils weary of detention in camps", *The Hindu*, 1 September 1996.
[24] P.K. Balachanddran, "No reconstruction work In Jaffna", *The Hindustan Times*, 18 April 1997.

crisis.[25] However, India, after its bitter experiences with the LTTE, was unwilling to get entangled again. Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, on a visit to Sri Lanka in January 1997 said that India believed that "a political solution which addressed the causes of the conflict alone can provide a lasting settlement."[26] At the same time, the LTTE desperately tried for British intervention in the conflict. Karikalan, the Vanni-based leader of the LTTE in London, and Paris-based spokesman, Lawrence Thilakar were reported to have visited London[27] in a bid to ensure that the British intervened. The Sri Lankan government, however denied the reports.[28]

Thus the primary commitment of the LTTE is to win Tamil Eelam, not compromise with the Sri Lankan state. This explains why the organisation has a long record of breaking off from promising peace negotiations at the slightest pretext. The LTTE comes to the negotiating table *only when it has suffered major reverses on the battlefield. And never has it come in a sincere search for peace.*

In other words there is no meaning in bringing the LTTE to the negotiation table unless the organisation goes for a laying down of arms first. The Chandrika Kumaratunge government seemed to be aware of the "W-P-W" strategy. As a precondition for talks with the LTTE, fighting with its back to the wall in 1996, the Sri Lankan president Chandrika Kumaratunga said:

> We must be convinced that the LTTE would want to go to the end of a discussion and not use the negotiations process to

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[25] P.K Balachanddran, "Tamil parties to press for Indian mediation", *The Hindustan Times*, 19 January 1997, which quoted PLOTE leader D. Siddarthan as saying that he believed that the LTTE might want some mediation to end the war which had claimed 10,000 to 15, 000 of its cadre. Also, "Time not ripe for Indian mediation in Sri Lanka", *The Hindustan Times*, 18 January 1997.

[26] Amit Baruah, "Hopes on the Horizon", *The Hindu*, 24 January, 1997.

[27] Ibid, "Sri Lanka deal for talks with the LTTE", *The Hindu*, 2 April, 1997.

[28] Sugeeswara Senadhira, "Government sees no foreign mediation for LTTE talks", *India Abroad*, 11 April, 1997.

strengthen itself and hit back again, as it has done over and over again.[29]

The Sri Lankan government also insisted that the talks be time bound. In an interview to the *Sunday Observer*, Kumaratunga said:

> "So if they (LTTE) are ready for talks, we are still ready for to try that. But...this can be done only if they are willing to lay down arms, if they are willing to agree to a limited time frame by which time the talks have to end either way, and the time must be very limited. Then we are still willing to talk. We will see."[30]

Despite heavy fighting the Sri Lankan government has remained true to this position. The military strategy that it followed was two-fold. On the military front it tried to defeat the LTTE, while at the same time, on the political front it searched for a consensus on greater devolution of power, and on meeting the basic demands of the Tamils in a bid to isolate the LTTE.[31]

The LTTE is not interested in the problems of the Tamil people, it is more interested in total and absolute power for itself. Therefore, even if it's demands are met the LTTE always comes up with newer and newer conditions to ensure that the peace process is scuttled.[32] Chart 4.1 illustrates the "W-P-W" strategy of the LTTE.

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[29] Amit Baruah, "The Sri Lankan challenge", *Frontline*, (New Delhi), vol.13, no.19, September 21-October 4, 1996, "Reject Fascist leadership, Chandrika tells Tamils", *The Hindu*, January 7, 1997.

[30] Amit Baruah, "Differing Perceptions: Receding hopes of Talks" "The Sri Lankan challenge", *Frontline*, (New Delhi), vol.13, no.24, November 30-December 13, 1996.

[31] D.B.S. Jeyaraj, "The British initiative in Sri Lanka", *Frontline*, (New Delhi), Vol.14, No.10, May 17-30, 1997.

[32] Baruah, n.12, p.60. Also V. Jayanth, "LTTE's new terms slowing peace process", *The Hindu*, March 5, 1996.

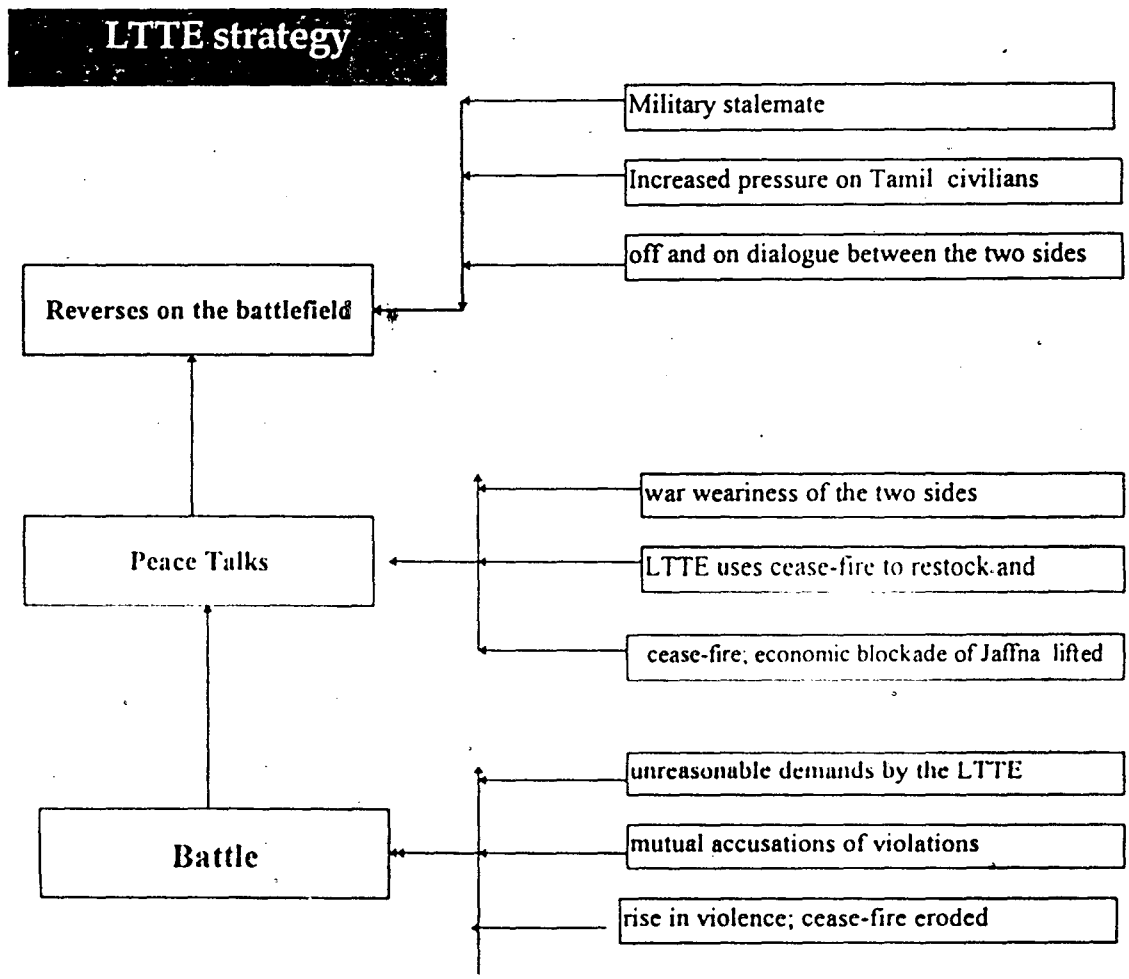

CHART 4.1: THE "WAR-PEACE-WAR-STRATEGY"

A struggle for total hegemony

Related to this is the LTTE's struggle for total and complete control of the Tamil struggle. This is important as the LTTE, to gain legitimacy has to be recognised as the "sole spokesman" of the Tamils. The LTTE has eliminated all opposition to it's rule, thus putting before the Tamil people a stark choice: rule by the LTTE or rule by the Army. *In this sense what the LTTE is trying for is not the liberation of the Tamil people but the imposition of its rule on the Tamil people.* The tactics that the LTTE adapted to attain this objective included opportunistic alliances with rivals, in a bid to absorb them[33] the discrediting of rivals through propaganda, of insisting on being the only representative of the Tamil people,[34] and the physical liquidation of its rivals such as the elimination of PLOT in May 1986, and the EPRLF in December that year,

The LTTE has justified such massacres as pre-emptive actions or operations against anti-social elements.[35] The LTTE is intolerant of dissent. It is estimated that more than 2,000 civilians are held in LTTE prisons. The LTTE has murdered students, dramatists and in general anyone who has dared to speak out against it.[36] Ordinary Tamils who refuse to tread the path of the LTTE become the victim of either lamppost executions, or the practice of "necklacing' when a tyre is placed around the victim's neck and set on

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[33] For example, the LTTE absorbed the Balakumar faction of the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) in 1989-90. Sudha Ramachandran, "Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka: A Study of the Evolution and Growth of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)" (Ph.D.Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, School of International Studies, New Delhi, 1995) pp.191-207.

[34] Ramachandran, n.33, p.208-209. Prabhakaran became instrangient over the India-Sri Lanka accord when he, in New Delhi, found that other Tamil militants had also been invited for talks.

[35] LTTE, Political Committee, *Towards Liberation: Selected Political Documents of the LTTE* (n.p: September 1984), p.12.Also see Dagmar Hellmann Rajanayagam, *The Tamil Tigers: Armed Struggle for Identity* (Suttgart: 1994) pp.142-44.

[36] Sugeeswara P. Senadhira, *Under Siege: Mass Media in Sri Lanka* New Delhi: 1996)

fire.[37] And the LTTE's formidable war machine is aimed not only at the Sinhalese but against all who cross its path.

Related to this is the LTTE's *senseless use of violence*. The killings of the LTTE are often extremely brutal, and hundreds have died from torture at the hands of the LTTE.[38]

The tactical use of violence by the LTTE would at first seem to reflect Lenin's advocacy of the controlled organised use of mass terror subordinate to the needs of overall strategy.[39] However, the brutal nature of LTTE violence seems to have deeper roots, as for example, the frequent bombing of civilian targets and the setting off of bombs on trains. It is to instil a sense of fear in the people, especially as there are increasing reports that the LTTE is losing the support of the Tamil people and that the LTTE is now having to force people to join the organisation.[40]

Subordination of the military to the political goal

Turning Clausewitz on its head, for the LTTE politics is an extension of war by other means. The LTTE is unique in its subordination of the political wing to the military wing, and in the primacy of the fighting force over the political branch. *The LTTE is primarily a military force, and it is an army that claims to be fighting* ***for*** *the Tamil people. It is not an army* ***of*** *the Tamil people. And its goal is military rather than political.* This is one reason why the LTTE has never been interested in the political process. Even when the

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[37] See the report of the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna). The report quoted an instance when a middle aged mother, Sivayogini Patkunamanikkam, was killed on the streets for having defied the LTTE order to vacate Jaffna on 31 October, 1995, and for being cordial towards the security forces. Amit Baruah, "LTTE accused of scuttling peace moves", *The Hindu*, 1 September 1996.

[38] For a graphic account of how the LTTE deals with its rivals, see the experience of EPRLF cadre Suresh, recorded in M.R. Narayana Swamy, *Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerrillas* (Delhi: 1994), p.1-10.

[38] Ramachandran, n.33, p.48.

[39] V.I. Lenin, "Lessons of the Moscow Uprising" (September 1906), in *Collected Works*, Vol.I, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), pp.163-71.

[40] G. Srinivasan, "The Tigers have no sympathy this time", *The Hindu*, November 23,1996.

organisation has been given a chance to join the political process it has not been willing to. Thus Prabhakaran in his speech on August 4, 1987 at the Sudumalai Amman temple town in the vicinity of Jaffna town said that he had no wish to be the Chief minister of the North.[41] To the LTTE, and especially to Prabhakaran, the power that the outfit commands is just too great to be given up for a mere settlement within a political framework.

In this the LTTE breaks from theorists like Lenin, Mao and Giap. For Mao, there was no separation of the people and politics from the army--the army and the party belonged to and were very much a part of the people.[42]

That the military struggle is of paramount importance was evident even in the beginning. The LTTE, instead of going in for a period of political mobilisation followed by armed struggle, like other groups such as the PLOT and EPRLF, went in for armed struggle at the very inception. Consequent to this the LTTE has not really tried to win the support of the people. It, on the other hand acts like a conventional force or a force of fighters, that is not dependent on the support of the people. In this the LTTE is different from most guerrilla organisations that have stressed on how necessary it is to win the support of the people. Mao, for example, always placed politics over the purely military effort.[43]

Shifting tactics on the battlefield

LTTE tactics have shifted in accordance with the growth and evolution of the organisation. (See Table 4.1) As part of its strategy, the LTTE

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[41] P. Sahadevan, "On Not Becoming a Democrat: The LTTEs Commitment to Armed Struggle", *International Studies*, Vol.32, No.3, (1995..

[42] Mao Tse-tung, "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War" (1936), in *Selected Works*,_ Vol.I, (London,1954) pp.175-253, also Mao Tse-tung, "The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War" (1938), in *Selected Works*,_ Vol.II, (London,1954) pp.244-261. Also "Problems of War and Strategy" (1938), in *Selected Works*,_ Vol.II, (London,1954) pp.267-281.For further details see Chapter I.

[43] Mao Tse-tung, "Strategic Problems of China's Revolutionary War" (1936), in *Selected Works*. Vol.I (London,1954) pp.175-253.

has adapted the tactic of protracted warfare. One important reason for this is that the JVP insurrection in 1971 had shown that the Sri Lankan state was too strong to be overthrown, according to Leninist strategy, in a single decisive moment.[44] The LTTE, therefore went in for a gradual build-up of its military infrastructure. In this the LTTE strategy is similar to that of the Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionaries.

The LTTE seems to have followed the "three stage Maoist conception of guerrilla warfare, but seems to have skipped the **first stage**: *consolidation of the organisation* when volunteers are trained to go forth as agitators and propagandists to enlist peasant support.

The LTTE on the other hand seems to have followed the anarchist idea of "propaganda by deed" and the Gueverist idea of the "foco." The LTTE has not tried to mobilise the peasants for an attack on the cities (Mao) or tried to rally the urban proletariat to its cause (Lenin). Indeed, in LTTE literature, there has been little on the agrarian question or on the rights of the working class. What little there was has disappeared with the rise of Prabhakaran in the organisation. The LTTE, on the other hand has itself been the revolutionary vanguard, and in its inception and way of living has been more of the Gueverist foco, where the revolutionaries live and die together.

The LTTE seems to have gone directly to the **second stage**: limited direct action marked mainly by sabotage and terrorism aiming at eliminating opposition leaders and gaining arms and supplies.[45]. Phase 3 is the destruction of the army by largely orthodox forces. The LTTE uses a mixture of tactics of the second and third stages. When beaten on the conventional battlefield, the LTTE falls back to guerrilla tactics.

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[44] LTTE, Political Committee, *Diary of Combat (1975-1984): A Historical and Chronological Sketch of the Armed Resistance Campaign of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (n.p. n.d.) p.1.

[45] for details, see Chapter I.

In its battlefield strategy, the LTTE also seems to be following the last two stages of General Giap's formulation that was discussed in the first chapter. Giap had said that at the second level, conflict is escalated and is a war of movement--*van dong chien*--marked by combined armed and political struggle was to be used to harass enemy forces. This was the time to substitute guerrilla warfare with mobile warfare--the intermediate step between conventional and guerrilla warfare. The LTTE has adopted Giap's strategy of mobile warfare."[46] The basic tactic in this stage is to have a series of engagements with the enemy including hit-and-run tactics such as attacks on outposts, convoys and military targets. The LTTE, after Jaffna fell to the Sri Lankan forces in December 1995 has been indulging in a series of hit and run attacks against the Sri Lankan forces.[47] These include, attacks on isolated police stations, the killing of soldiers etc.--in sum a series of guerrilla attacks designed to wear down the enemy. The LTTE, in accordance with Giap's ideas has also adapted the policy of political assassination.[48] If Giap's doctrine is applied to the LTTE, it would be in between this stage and the **final stage**, the front assault stage, or the attack against fortified positions stage--*cong kien chien* ,or the counteroffensive--*phan kong*--or the conventional warfare stage.[49]

TACTICS ON THE BATTLEFIELD

LTTE tactics on the battlefield have been summarised in Chart 4.2. This part of the chapter will evaluate them in the light of guerrilla doctrine

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[46] Giap, *People's War, People's Army* (Hanoi: People's Publishing House, 1961), p.45. For further details see Chapter I.

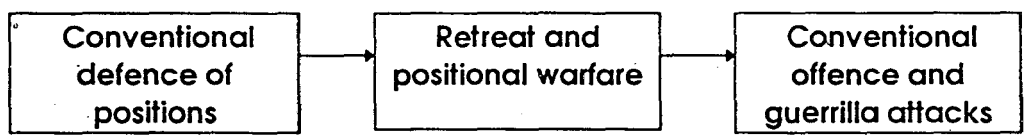
[47] For example, the attack on the Palliyagodalla police station on October 22, 1997 in which 16 securitymen were killed. See Amit Baruah, "16 securitymen killed in army attack" *The Hindu*, October 23, 1997. After the fall of Jaffna in 1995, there have been, in addition to set piece battles, daily skirmishes between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan forces.

[48] The LTTE's tactic of political assassination has been discussed Chapter III..

[49] For example, on July 27, 1995, the Sri Lankan army successfully fended off pre-dawn simultaneous attacks on five military camps in the Weli Oya region in the northeast. More than 218 LTTE cadre were killed in the attacks. See Amit Baruah, "LTTE loses 218 in raids" *The Hindu*, July 29, 1995.

as was summarised in the first chapter. It was held that guerrilla warfare was marked by small-scale, limited action in tandem with a larger political-military strategy and against orthodox military forces. This breaks down in the case of the LTTE. The LTTE seems to have gone in for the Maoist conception of protracted warfare, while at the same time in line with the tactics of the Vietnamese, has gone in for conventional warfare.[50] This is evident in the fact that the LTTE regularly attacks army bases in conventional style.[51]

However, the LTTE has been worsted on the battlefield by the Sri Lankan forces. Its lost Jaffna, and the valuable arms and ammunition factories there, it has had its rear base in Tamil Nadu smashed, and is faced with alienation all around--both at the international and the local levels. The LTTE has lost stalwarts like Kittu, Pulendra, Akila, Radha and others.[52] The decimation of the mid-level leaders and the cadre of the LTTE has forced the LTTE to shift its tactics to offensive guerrilla warfare. *The pattern of the LTTE can be represented as follows:*



Other aspects: In some tactics the LTTE adheres to the tactics that other guerrilla organisations have resorted to in the past. The LTTE guerrillas are unconventional in arms,[53] lack formal supply lines[54] and employ highly

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[50] See Table 4.1

[51] For example, on April 21, 1996, the LTTE struck the Welikanda base in eastern Pollonnaruwa district killing at least 21 and wounding 40. "35 killed as LTTE captures army camp" *The Hindu*, April 22, 1996. This is just one of the many conventional military attacks that the LTTE has carried out in the peninsula.

[52] Rohan Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka* , (Colombo: 1993) p.234.

[53] Weapons used by guerrilla forces are unconventional primarily because a guerrilla army cannot depend on a regular supply of arms.For details of the LTTE's arsenal see chap. III.

[54] See chapter III.

unorthodox tactics including terrorism, bombings, psychological warfare such as bombings, sabotage etc.

The LTTE does seem to follow aim of guerrilla warfare as conceptualised by Carl von Clausewitz, but at the same time has modified it. According to Clausewitz the aim of guerrilla warfare is to wear down the enemy to such an extent that he loses his will to fight. The LTTE, on the other hand, adopts conventional tactics in which the aim is the same as orthodox warfare: to defeat the enemy on the battlefield, if not destroy him.[55]

Another aspect of LTTE strategy is its willingness, unlike conventional guerrilla forces, to adopt an offensive mode vis-à-vis the Sri Lankan state. The LTTE, here seems to be aware that the defensive mode is acceptable only as a temporary phase, and that only an offensive army can capture or hold the initiative, achieve results and maintain freedom of action. The aim of the LTTE has always been to make the Sri Lankan state *react* rather than *act*. It was this that made the LTTE take the battle to Colombo in early 1996, after Jaffna fell to the Sri Lankan forces in December 1995.. The series of victories from early 1994 had led the Sri Lankan military establishment to think that the LTTE could be easily defeated. The military establishment led by Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte had given President Chandrika Kumaratunge the impression that the total military defeat of the LTTE was just a matter of time. The LTTE, instead of taking a defensive position, took an offensive one in which they attacked southern economic and civilian targets. (See Table 4.1). The LTTE attack was planned. On December 31, 1995 an LTTE spokesman said that the Tigers would accelerate their activities in the east and south:

> We will destroy southern economic targets. They (the army) will run away unable to save Batticaloa or will get reinforcements

[55]Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey, 1976).

from Jaffna. When that happens, the strength of Jaffna will be weakened. At that time, we will infiltrate Jaffna and launch attacks. We will not allow them to live in peace in Jaffna. This is the Tiger plan.[56]

Then followed the attacks in Colombo and Mullaitivu. (See Table 4.1)

One significant aspect of LTTE tactics on the field is the use of *"human wave"* attacks. Though the LTTE has adopted the tactic of the ambush, whose principle aim according to Mao and Giap was to conserve forces, the LTTE has in prime opposition to the tactics of guerrilla warfare, where single isolated attacks are more common gone in for human wave attacks, designed to overwhelm the enemy. LTTE cadre swoop down on Sri Lankan army bases in human waves. For example, on January 7, 1997 over 1000 LTTE cadre, led by hordes of suicide bombers, launched a pre-dawn surprise attack on the Paranthan military camp capturing the base within three hours.[57] In this the LTTE seems to be applying the Maoist version of the concept of "mass" in the sense of concentrating forces in mass attacks to overrun a position.[58] The planning of the attacks also show that the LTTE is well aware of the Maoist conception of establishment of strategy[59] thus emphasising the weaknesses and strengths relatively of oneself and the enemy; and the need for planning.[60]

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[56] Amit Baruah, "At a crossroads", *Frontline*, Vol.13, No.19, September 21-October 4, 1996.

[57] "800 killed in Lanka fighting" *The Hindustan Times*, January 10, 1997.

[58] In Korea, the Chinese would overrun a small position with sheer manpower and persevere in doing the same for larger positions despite of enormous casualties. Geer cites the example of an attack against Fox Company, 7th Marines, at Toktong Pass in the retreat from Yudam-ni. The Chinese left 2,000 dead around the Marine position--defended by 200. see Andrew Geer, *The New Breed* (New York, 1952) p.301.

[59] Tse-Tung, n.57, Chapter I, pp.157-59.

[60] Mao Tse-tung, "The Struggle in the Chinkkang Mountains" (1928), in *Selected Works*, Vol.I, (London,1954) pp. 71-101, see also Chapter I, n.55, pp.187-198, "On Practice" (July 1937) pp.282-297, and "On Contradiction" (August 1937) pp.298-338. For further details see Chapter I.

LTTE on the field of battle:

The guerrilla tactics that LTTE cadre actually use are represented in Chart 4.2.

CHART 4.2: TACTICS of LTTE CADRE ON THE GROUND

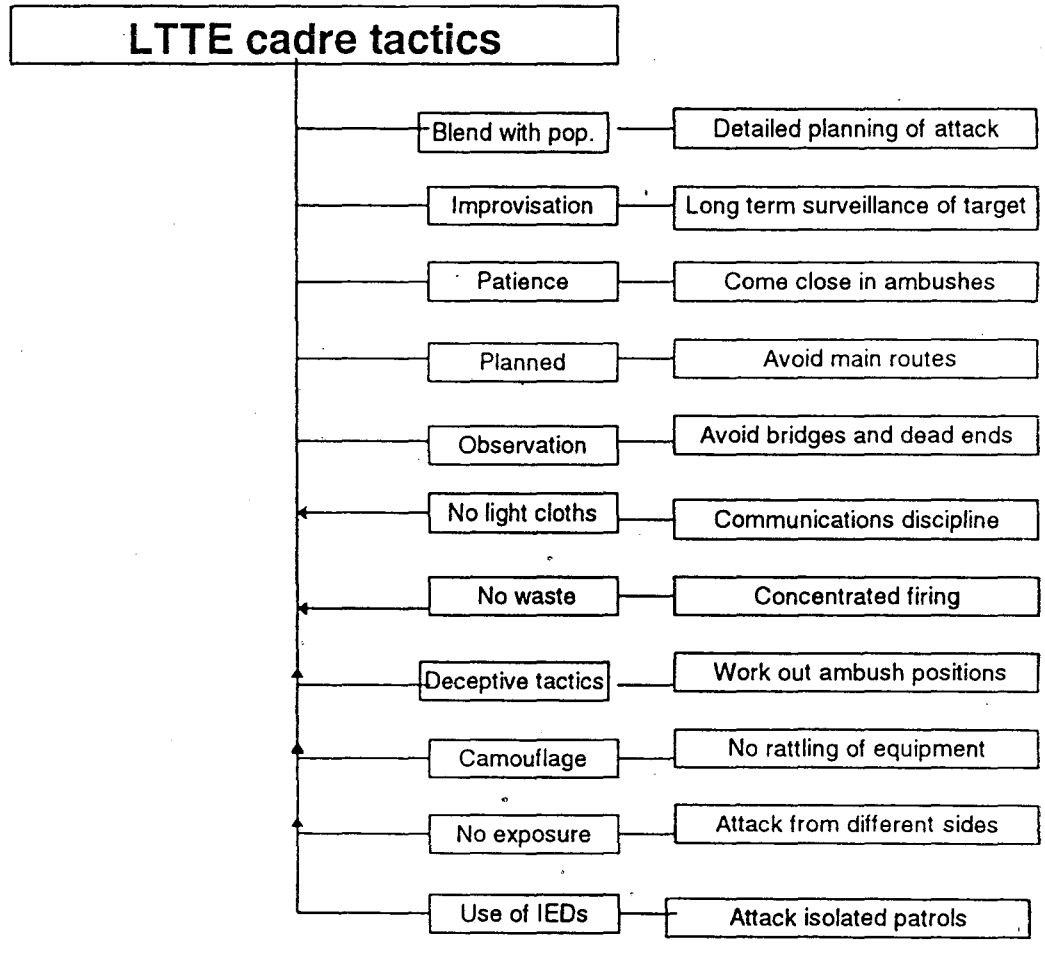

Chart 4.2, for which material was collected from various sources[61] shows LTTE tactics on the ground. The tactics shown show that the LTTE is very aware of the need for security in tactical operations.. Security depends on the measures that a unit takes to protect itself from surprise, observation, detection, interference, espionage, sabotage, or annoyance. Both offensive protective measures like ambushes and deception tactics such as camouflage have been adapted by the LTTE.

A superb illustration of the tactics on the ground level was evident in the battle for Jaffna in 1995. At first, the LTTE exploded all the bridges around the Jaffna town on 14th January 1995[62]. This restricted the movement of the Sri Lankan army, which was further hampered in its progress by the use of landmines and booby traps. By mid-1995 the whole of the Jaffna peninsula was in the hands of the LTTE. The LTTE then banned all other organisations and established a parallel government in the peninsula. They collected taxes from shop owners, businessmen and also from trucks. For example, on October 13, the LTTE asked all government servants working in the Jaffna peninsula to contribute one month's pay to the war effort.[63] The LTTE's strategy as outlined above, include delaying, retreating; defending, attacking and also deception tactics.[64]

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[61] Bhaduri, Major Shankar and Major General Afsir Karim, *The Sri Lanka Crisis* (New Delhi: 1990) Gunaratna, Rohan, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: 1993) Gunaratna, Rohan, *War and Peace in Sri Lanka* (Colombo: 1990) Singh, Depinder, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi, Trishul Publications, n.y.),.

[62] Amit Baruah, "Sri Lanka: Operation Sath Jaya III", *Frontline*, (8 December 1995), p.124.

[63] Amit Baruah, "LTTE asks Govt. Staff to give one month pay", *The Hindu*, October 14, 1995.

[64] Such as the use of camouflage, feigned retreat, fall back etc.

The LTTE has shown the capability to *place the enemy in a position of disadvantage by the flexible application of combat power.* Thus the LTTE retreats into the jungles when hard pressed by the Sri Lankan forces, especially to the jungles around Vayuniya. It then destroys the morale of the Sri Lankan forces by a combination of tactics that range from human wave attacks to ambushes. The LTTE has mastery over the three related dimensions of tactical strategy--*flexibility, manoeuvrability,* and *mobility.* The LTTE is able to concentrate forces at the enemy's weakest points as for example the attack on the Mullaitivu base. In this the LTTE follows Leninist doctrine in that it accepts the crucial importance of numerical superiority in the decisive battle, as for example in its human wave attacks.

All these tactics were evident in the attack on the Mullaitivu base in July 1997. The LTTE captured the Mullaitivu army base inflicting the worst ever defeat on the army in the 14-year old civil war on July 18-26. The attack on the isolated base in the heart of Tiger held territory[65] revealed all these tactical elements. The soldiers were overrun in waves, and they were attacked when they were weak and isolated. The attacks on the Omanthai, Elephant Pass, and Paranthan army camps in 1997 again revealed how the LTTE concentrates and disperses forces in a way that is designed to place the enemy at a disadvantage and achieve the maximum results with a minimum of disadvantage. To defend the bases the Sri Lankan army has to spread out, and without a land route the occupying forces in Jaffna have had to depend on the airlift of supplies from Colombo.

The LTTE's mastery of leadership tactics on the field is evident in the way in which the force has a strong sense of hierarchy and leadership while in

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[65] Ram Manikkalingam, "The Sri Lankan challenge: Interview with Chandrika Kumaratunge", *Frontline*, (New Delhi), vol.13, no.24, November 30-December 13,1996.p.4

battle. *For every objective, there should be unity of effort under one responsible commander.* At a tactical level, the LTTE has been able to master the employment of military forces in a manner that develops their full combat power. Thus the LTTE has different wings and is able to match the superior firepower of the Sri Lankan forces by the use of tactics such as suicide attacks. The superior strength of the Sri Lankan navy is thwarted by suicide attacks by the Sea Tigers.

The unity of command requires that there should be a common goal and means the direction and concentration of all forces towards that goal. The intense ideology of the LTTE is able to inspire its forces, while at the same time the relative independence of tactical commanders is combined with a loose knit command structure that the LTTE has. The LTTE structure combines a strong hierarchical system with the Gueveraist common *foco* (commune)[66]

Going back to Lenin, these tactics of the LTTE reflect his teaching. He calls for "the overcoming of the guerrilla spirit",[67] and a unified command at the top,[68] the need for the leadership to gather and organise all the forces for a general attack.[69]

Surprise is one factor that can make or break a guerrilla army. *Surprise means going against an enemy army at a time or place in a manner that he is not prepared for.* LTTE tactics are also designed to surprise. They emphasis mobility, the employment of unexpected forces, effective intelligence,

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[66] See Chaper I for theoritical details..

[67] V.I. Lenin, "A Great Beginning" (June 1919), in *Collected Works*,_ Vol.II, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), p.213.

[68] V.I. Lenin, "All Out for the Fight against Deniken" (July 1919), in *Collected Works*,_ Vol.II, Part 2, (Moscow, 1950), pp.240-262.

[69] V.I. Lenin, "What Is to Be Done? " (July 1919), in *Collected Works*,_ Vol.I, Part 1, (Moscow, 1950), pp.240-262.

deception operations of all kinds, and variations of tactics, all of which exist in the LTTE strategy as can be seen in the chart. For example, most LTTE attacks come at an unexpected time, for example before dawn when the troops are relatively dull and lethargic.[70] The attacks on the Vavunthivu army camp in Batticaloa district and the China Bay air force base close to the strategic Trincomalee base on 5 March 1997 reveal that. The attacks, which were totally unexpected, claimed the lives of 70 soldiers. Waves of suicide bombers, in tune with the classic guerrilla strategy of rapid deployment of unexpected forces, blasted their way into the camp.[71] Another aspect of guerrilla strategy that the LTTE reveals is its ability to surprise Sri Lankan forces by its effective intelligence. For example, the LTTE ran over the Elephant Pass and Parathan camps on January 10, 1997 using 80 mm guns that they had captured at Mullaitivu. There are indications that the LTTE has meticulous intelligence of the topography of the camps.[72]

Another illustration of the tactics of the LTTE is in its ambushes. The LTTE, first after constant surveillance by sympathisers, identifies the possible places where an held up column of soldiers would take shelter. Claymore mines are placed with ring main circuitry placed both at the chest and at the head level. Intermediate IEDs would then be used to halt a convoy of army trucks. As the soldiers came out they would run into heavy automatic weapons fire and rocket propelled grenades. Trying to seek shelter would run into the anti-personal mines. Thus the LTTE would be able to decimate enemy forces[73] In

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[70] Donald C. Hodges, ed., *The Legacy of Che Guevera: A Documentary Study*_(London, 1977) pp.127-132.

[71] "200 killed as LTTE storms key army camp in eastern Sri Lanka", *The Times of India*, 7 March, 1997.

[72] Apratim Mukarji, "Attack underlines might of the LTTE", *The Hindustan Times*, January 11, 1997.

[73] Kadian, Rajesh, *India's Sri Lankan Fiasco: Peacekeepers at War* (New Delhi: Vison Books,1990)pp.126-133.

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this the LTTE has borrowed from both Giap, and Mao who to conserve forces adopted the tactic, which enables the guerrillas to select time, place and enemy. Other aspects of guerrilla strategy in which the LTTE is similar to Giap's tactics is in the emphasis on mobility, offensive operations and constant activity.[74]

CONCLUSIONS

From the above discussion it is evident that the LTTE, while conforming to certain of the qualities of other guerrilla forces, has at the same time developed certain other qualities that are unique among the world's revolutionary armies. These are both structural and tactical. Of primary importance is the **"War-Peace-War"** strategy. The LTTE comes to the negotiating table *only when it has suffered major reverses on the battlefield. And never has it come in a sincere search for peace. On the other hand the LTTE uses the lull in the fighting to recoup and strike again.* Thus, unless the organisation suffers irreplaceable losses on the battlefield, it will never negotiate.

The LTTE is not trying for the liberation of the Tamil people but the imposition of its rule on the Tamil people. It is in pursuit of such hegemony that the LTTE has eliminated all opposition to it's rule. At the same time faced with a massive dwindling of public support and with most of the Tamil grievances being solved by the present government, the LTTE is losing the support of the Tamil people who do not want to join a senseless war. Thus, the LTTE is now having to force people to join when earlier they did so of their own free will.

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[74] Pike, Douglas, *Vet Cong:_The Organisation and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1966), p. 37.

warfare and defensive or offensive guerrilla warfare. However, the LTTE does not have the sophistication to hold its own in conventional warfare, and has suffered decimating losses. it has improvised such unique concepts as the suicide bombers to offset the tactical superiority of the Sri Lankan armed forces. And yet in many ways, the *LTTE is more of a sophisticated guerrilla army than a regular army force.*

One major point of deviance from classical guerrilla doctrine is the LTTE's attitude towards popular support. Rather than win it the organisation seems to take it more or less for granted. This is because *the LTTE is primarily a military force, and it is an army that claims to be fighting* ***for*** *the Tamil people. It is not an army* ***of*** *the Tamil people.* Even in times of peace the onus of the organisation has been to command the support rather than win the support of the people. It has also gone in for the guerrilla strategy of winning legitimacy by setting up a parallel administration, and participating in the political process. But to the LTTE the political process has always been subordinate to the military one and the organisation has been uncompromising in its fight for Tamil Eelam. *Everything is subordinate to this overarching goal.*

As part of its strategy, the LTTE has adapted the tactic of protracted warfare. In this the LTTE 's strategy was similar to the Chinese and Vietnamese experiences.

On the battlefield the LTTE resorts to a mixture of conventional and guerrilla tactics. Thus, while the LTTE like other guerrilla forces does not have formal supply lines, is unconventional in its arms and tactics also fights set piece battles. Believing in the concept of superior numbers the LTTE, just like the PLA in China uses "human wave" attacks to overcome the superior

firepower of opposing forces. The LTTE is now engaged *in a war of movement* marked by combined armed and political struggle to harass enemy forces.

In case the LTTE loses on the battlefield, it reverts, in line with other insurgent movements, to a vicious war of attrition. Hit and run tactics, ambushes, mass attacks, suicide attacks are all part of this strategy. The LTTE, instead of striking a single decisive blow goes in for a series of attacks, designed to sap enemy morale.

The LTTE demonstrates a mastery of the technical aspects of strategy such as the concentration of forces at the enemy's weakest links, *flexible tactics, manoeuvrability,* and *mobility, inspired leadership* cadres of a high motivation, and a continuous ability to *surprise* the opposing forces.

Table 4.1: Shifting Nature of LTTE Strategy

Period	Nature of struggle	Tactics adopted	Aim	Individual actions
1976-1983	Preparation for struggle	Direct armed struggle with propaganda; hit and run tactics; assassinations; robberies of banks and police stations	Publicity; building up support and infrastructure for a protracted guerrilla war.	Killings of Jaffna mayor Duraiappa; police inspector Bastaimpillai; blowing up of Avro aircraft.
1984-1985	Mobile warfare	exploitation of contradiction between opposing forces; cultivating powerful sections of the Tamils; defensive positional warfare (north); hit and run tactics (east) bombings	War of attrition to weaken the enemy; counter attack for army operations in Valvettiturai; confining army to bases; defeating Operation Short-Shirft	Wooing of Catholic priests; Anuradhapura massacre; bombing in Colombo; defence of the Jaffna peninsula; obstruction of troop movement by, for.eg blowing up of Thonda manaruu bridge to cut off access to the peninsula.
May 1986-87	Guerrilla warfare	Direct confrontation is avoided; retreat to rear base of Tamil Nadu; use of mines; succeed in getting India to intervene; taking over of civilian institutions by co-option and coercion; setting up of a judicial system; setting up of taxation apparatus;	Defeat of Operation Vadamarachi and other army offensives in the peninsula	Prevention of the formation of independent bodies like citizens committees; the banning of illicit liquor; black marketing etc
July.1987-October 1987	Regrouping of forces for the next round of war; convince the people of the importance of the LTTE; legitimise position as the sole spokesman of the Tamils	Pretend to accept the India-Sri Lanka agreement of July 23, 1987; series of provocative tactics; making of impossible demands	Regrouping of forces	Thileepan's fast; laid the blame on India for not protecting the lives of 12 Tigers in Sri Lankan custody who committed suicide.

Period	Nature of Struggle	Tactics adopted	Individual actions
1990-93	Guerrilla struggle and Conventional warfare. Setting up of parallel hierarchies.	Assassinations of prominent leaders: holding on to the Jaffna peninsula; thwarting of **Operation Yal Devi** launched on Sept.28, 1993.	Assassination of Rajiv Gandhi (May 21, 1991); high - ranking officers of the Sri Lankan admn. incl Denzil Kobbekaduwa, Vijaya Wimalaratne (August 1992); Ranasinghe Premadasa etc (May 1, 1993)
1994-1995	Peace	Agree to talk to Chandrika Kumaratunge government on 15 August 1994; rebuild base; provocative action to scuttle the peace process	Attack on the Trincomalee harbour
1995	Conventional War Positional Warfare Retreat when pressed; scorched earth policy to deny the SLAF the fruits of victory	Defence of the peninsula against the Army offensive "Operation Riveresa_I" launched under Gen. Dulwatte on Oct.17, 1995 leading to the fall of Jaffna; Failure in conventional warfare leads to the recruitment of women and children; mass attacks against army bases: order women and children to leave	Heavy shelling of the attacking Sri Lankan forces; attacks on army camps such as Weli Oya; order civil population of Jaffna to evacuate on Oct.31, 1995.

Period	Nature of War	Tactics adopted	Aim	Individual actions
1996	Quasi conventional and guerrilla	Suicide attacks on army bases; destruction of the enemy infrastructure in the south and the east; assassinations ambush and harassment of SLAF forces; positional warfare to successfully defend the Killinochi peninsula; looting of artillery pieces.	To harass the SLAF in control of the Jaffna peninsula; to force the Sri Lankan administration into a defensive posture; to divert SLAF to the east and the south so that Jaffna can be recaptured; thwarting **Operation Riveresa-II** (Apr.19, 1996); and other military offensives like **Operation Sath Jaya** and **Operation Thunderstrike**.	Attack on economic target--Central Bank in Colombo--(Jan.31, 1996); attack on Mullaitivu army base killing 1,000 soldiers (July 18); bombing of train at suburban station of Dehiwela killing 70 (July 23, 1996).
1997	Guerrilla war and conventional offensive attacks. Fighting in an offensive guerrilla mode.	To weaken the army; to win a respite so that the LTTE can regroup; heavy resistance to **Operation Jaya Sekuru** which aimed at securing the vital 142-km Vavunniya-Jaffna highway that runs through LTTE territory, propaganda blitz to win back the support of the Tamil people and the international community; lobby for third party intervention..	defend the road and by extension Vanni; heavy resistance all along the line; attack on army bases in the area. Key of strategy is to prevent the SLAF to establish direct road link between Colombo and Jaffna through LTTE held territory.	by attack the SLAF behind the FDLs ie Forward defence lines; delay the movement of the SLAF by stationing cadre in bunkers across the Killinochi highway; attack on Nochimmodai army camp on June 10, 1997.

CHAPTER V
Conclusions

This study set out to evaluate the LTTE in the light of classical guerrilla doctrine. At the outset an attempt was made to draw out a framework and try to define a "guerrilla" in the light of the existing theory and earlier insurgencies. The argument was that there was no such thing as a "classical guerrilla force" though many insurgencies--especially Communist inspired ones--did share many common features, both tactical and strategical. At the same time there was a substantial corpus of literature on the subject of guerrilla war, which in varying degrees has inspired revolutionary forces around the world. An attempt was made to place the LTTE in a definite place in the revolutionary spectrum, by analysing it in the light of this. The basic thrust of the study was understand the nature and characteristics of the LTTE.

Based on the above, a template was forged, and the LTTE evaluated. The LTTE, in many ways conformed, but at the same time it differed radically from earlier insurgent groups. Many of the features of this supposedly Marxist group, such as the suicide cult and the cult of vengeance were so unique, that they proved the hypothesis that the LTTE's ideology, tactics, and strategy has deep roots in myth and legend. However, though the LTTE had many unique characteristics, at the same time it was not an entirely new revolutionary movement. Like all insurgent movements it too had improvised to meet the ground realities of the Sri Lankan situation. But its ideology and the personality of the leader made it a armed cult above all else. Many of its features, like the veneration of the leader, the "rituals" associated with martyrdom, its blind thirst for vengeance, no matter what the cost, all made it unique in the annals of revolutionary warfare, but had much in common with cult doctrine.

Thus the LTTE, though it claimed to be Marxist, was in reality more motivated by an intensely nationalistic racial and exclusive ideology. The next step was to find the roots of this sharply nationalistic and racial ideology. For this, the study turned to the myth and history of Sri Lanka. The emphasis was on trying to understand the construct of history that had led to the creation of such mythical identities. History, in Sri Lanka, was like in most other places, a legacy of colonial times. *But in Sri Lanka, inspite of evidence to the contrary, the colonial categories were accepted* almost unquestioningly. So the conflict was seen by the main protagonists, the Tamils and the Sinhalese, as "race war," rather than the rise of a marginalised minority against the ruling majority.

. One reason why the LTTE emerged as the most successful guerrilla group is that it had successfully internalised this logic.

The LTTE rose to the fore of Tamil militant groups not only because of its enormous firepower *but also because it gave marginalised sections of society* a voice in the scheme of things. As the Tamil militants had to face the Sri Lankan state, which was by this time Sinhalese in all but name, the anti-caste struggle in the peninsula did not go for a peaceful change of the order as in Tamil Nadu. Instead, it fought the battle on two fronts--the social and the political. The LTTE, by appealing to ancient Tamil nationalism attracted considerable support. At the same time, as such a reading of history means *total and permanent war,* the LTTE is losing the support of the Tamil people, who are unwilling to bear the brunt and cost of total war.

The LTTE had started out as a Marxist grouping but soon became an intensely nationalist Tamil insurgent movement. The shift in its ideology is the result of the rise of Prabhakaran. The present ideology of the LTTE reflects the total hegemony that he has over it. The LTTE now reflects Prabhakaran's personal traits such as brutality and paranoia. This explains the centralisation of the LTTE, and the elimination of the second rung of the LTTE and any potential challenge. Many of the unique

characteristics of the organisation also had its reflection in the personality of Prabhakaran, such as his thirst for vengeance. This gives credence to the idea that as long as Prabhakaran is at the helm of the LTTE, there is little room for compromise.

The LTTE, like most guerrilla organisations, depends on a wide variety of arms, funds for which come from mysterious sources. Internationally isolated, the LTTE now has sought new sources of arms and sanctuary.

Finally, in its actual strategic and tactical aspects, the LTTE, while conforming similar to many other insurgencies, developed certain qualities that are unique among the world's revolutionary armies. These are both structural and tactical. Negotiations, in accordance with Maoist thought are, for the LTTE, an opportunity to regroup and rebuild its forces to strike again. *When hard-pressed the LTTE sues for peace. It uses the opportunity to regroup and rebuild its forces. It then breaks off the peace and resumes the war.* The LTTE refuses to take a political approach to the conflict as it sees the conflict as race-war and not an attempt to wring concessions from the Sinhalese. The ultimate goal is Eelam alone, and nothing else. Hence, there *is no attempt at political mobilisation, but rather the focus is on military mobilisation.*

The LTTE aim is not the liberation of the Tamil people but the imposition of its rule on the Tamil people. The ruthless suppression of all opposition to its rule is explained by this facet of the LTTE. At the same time faced with a massive dwindling of public support, and with the Chandrika Kumaratunge government willing to solve the problems that gave rise to the LTTE, the LTTE is losing the support of the Tamil people who do not want to join a senseless war. This explains why the LTTE is now forcing teenagers and children to join the movement.

LTTE strategy is a mixture of conventional and guerrilla tactics. And depending on the challenges that the organisation has faced, *it has swung between conventional and guerrilla warfare.* In fact, the two usually blend in the group's strategy. Thus while the LTTE has gone in for the Maoist

doctrine of protracted war it has at the same time gone in, like the Vietnamese, for decisive conventional battles.

One major point of deviance from classical guerrilla doctrine is the LTTE's attitude towards popular support. Rather than winning it the organisation seems to have a callous disregard towards it. This is because *the LTTE is primarily a military force, and it is an army that claims to be fighting* ***for*** *the Tamil people. It is not an army* ***of*** *the Tamil people.*

On the actual battlefield, one peculiar characteristic of the LTTE is the use of "human wave" attacks especially in its attacks on army bases. Currently out of Jaffna, the LTTE is presently engaged *in a war of movement* in which the aim of the organisation seems to be to demonstrate that though the Sri Lankan armed forces are in control of the peninsula, the LTTE is in actual command.

The LTTE has mastered the technical aspects of strategy such as the concentration of forces at the enemy's weakest links, *flexible tactics, manoeuvrability,* and *mobility, inspired leadership,* has cadres of a high motivation, and a continuous ability to *surprise* the opposing forces. The organisation however, since it has alienated many Tamils, and is facing massive losses on the battlefield, may not be able to survive as the existence of any guerrilla army depends on the continued support of the Tamil people.

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