

Articles

'Terrorism' or 'Liberation'? Towards a distinction: A Case study of the Armed Struggle of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

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Abstract

This article based on extensive empirical field research and primary sources/data attempts to distinguish terrorism from liberation / freedom struggle by means of a case study of the armed struggle of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka. It is argued here that the LTTE was primarily a terrorist organisation/movement because: (i) it's struggle was overwhelmingly based on armed violence; (ii) it demanded support from the masses through persecution; (iii) it intentionally targeted civilians; (iv) it substantially relied on suicide attacks; (v) it substantially deployed under-age children; and (vi) it was proactively involved in internecine war.

Keywords: Civil War, Freedom Fighters, Liberation, LTTE, Sri Lanka, Tamil Tigers, Terrorism

Introduction

Mr. Sherman: "What is the difference between terrorism on the one hand and waging a legitimate guerrilla struggle on the other? What is the difference between Al Qaida and George Washington? George Washington did use violence."

Mr. Camp: "Last I checked, though, he [GW] did not blow up buildings with civilians. I mean, the LTTE has been famous for its attacks; its suicide bomb attacks on civilian targets."

The foregoing exchange took place during a Hearing of the Congressional International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific in the wake of the "unrest" [understatement] in Sri Lanka. The Hearing was held on March 15, 2006 at the United States House of Representatives [aka Congress]. Mr. Donald Camp[1] represented the State Department and Mr. Brad Sherman[2] represented the case of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE].[3]

What is the difference between Terrorism and Freedom/Liberation Struggles? This is the central research question of this article. It will be addressed through a case study of the armed struggle of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE] of Sri Lanka. These 'Tamil Tigers' had been waging a secessionist war against the Sri Lankan state since May 5, 1976 [the date of the formal establishment of the LTTE][4] until it's military defeat in May 2009. The LTTE sought to carve out a separate state for the Tamil ethnic minority community in the eastern and northern parts of Sri Lanka claimed to be the historical habitats or "traditional homeland" of the Tamils.[5] This article is an outcome of an empirical study based on primary sources/data and extensive field research carried out in the conflict-affected regions of Sri Lanka, in India, and within the Tamil Diaspora community in the UK intermittently spanning over a decade and a half.

In the post-9/11/2001 period there is a tendency to castigate the use of violence for political purposes as terrorism [especially in civil war situations]. This over-generalisation of the term 'terrorism' is simplistic because violence has been used in many if not most intra-national and inter-national political conflicts throughout human history. The American and Spanish civil wars, the French, Russian and Chinese revolutions, anti-colonial wars of independence [including the Indian independence struggle against the British, notwithstanding Mohandas Gandhi's adherence to non-violence],6[] communist/socialist revolutions in Eastern Europe and the Third World, and faith-based revolutions [e.g. the Iranian revolution of 1979] have all used, to varying degrees, acts

of violence to attain political objectives. Historically, feudalist, mercantilist, and industrial states have almost all been established through the use of armed force.[7] Therefore, the use of violence [particularly for political objectives], *per se*, is an inadequate reason to brand a group 'terrorist' or its actions 'terrorism'.

Having said that, there are indeed differences [and similarities as well] between the aforementioned violent conflicts and terrorist campaigns. The twenty-first century is marked by what is popularly referred to as 'new wars'[8], which perhaps began with the end of the Cold War around 1990. The nature and characteristics of different civil wars during different time periods were/are different. Understanding such differences is vital for resolving contemporary internal and international conflicts around the world. Therefore, at the outset we would like to highlight that the objective of this article is not an exercise in semantics; on the contrary, the objective is to contribute to a better understanding of the *modus operandi* of different armed conflicts around the world and thereby contribute to the resolution of such violent conflicts, one way or the other.[9]

In the same way that all armed conflicts could and should not be regarded as the same, there is no common approach to resolving violent conflicts either. Thus, there is no blueprint for conflict resolution, so to speak, either in theory or practice. There are causes of conflicts; some causes could be real, some could be perceived or even contrived.[10] Besides, every conflict has a goal or set of goals. Certain goal/s are legitimate and some illegitimate,[11] some attainable and some not. Similarly, the protagonists of violent conflict (both state and anti-state armed groups) adopt or employ different means for achieving their set goal/s. Some means of achieving the set goals are legitimate, and some are illegitimate, which applies to both the state and anti-state armed groups.[12] There are instances where a particular goal is legitimate, but the adopted means for achieving the set goal is illegitimate and *vice versa*.

Terrorism: an Ideology or a Tactic?

There has been a variety of political and/or economic systems practiced during the course of human history such as Feudalism, Mercantilism, Capitalism, Communism, Socialism, Fascism, etc. Each of these had certain ideological underpinnings and value systems based on particular historical time periods, nature of political leaderships, and governance structures.

The term 'terrorism' appears resonant with a new ideology [yet another 'ism']. However, there seems no apparent political and/or economic ideology or system underpinning terrorism as opposed to the aforementioned 'isms', except for the fact that it is more often than not anti-state armed violence with political motive/s. To the best of our understanding, terrorism is a means of achieving variety of goals such as getting rid of foreign occupation, overthrowing a monarchic or despotic ruler, taking control of territory to set up a separate independent state, overthrowing a capitalist or socialist/communist regime, overthrowing a democratic government, etc. Hence, we would argue that terrorism is a means rather than a goal [end in itself]. That is, a tactic rather than an ideology despite its connotation with the latter.

Terrorism is often touted as a weapon or tactic of choice of the weaker force [anti-state armed group] against a stronger force [state security forces]. It is usually cheaper [in terms of money, material, and personnel] to carry-out a terrorist attack as opposed to a conventional military attack. Yet some terrorist attacks have the potential of inflicting greater collateral damage [both material and human] than conventional military attacks. The weapons of choice of terrorist attacks are bombs [time bomb, suicide bomb, etc] or mines [claymore mine, landmine, marine [underwater] mine, etc] rather than guns. Bombs and mines can be hidden more easily than most guns. These are some of the characteristics that make terrorist warfare asymmetrical, irregular, or unorthodox vis-à-vis conventional, regular, or orthodox warfare.

Religion is "opium of the masses" claimed Karl Marx. Similarly, it could be claimed that terrorism is opium of the 'wretched of the earth' [aka 'underdogs'].[13] One person's terrorist could be another's rambo, hero, martyr or freedom/liberation fighter.[14]

Epistemology of Terrorism

During the sixtieth annual sessions of the United Nations [UN] in 2005, the United States along with many other countries proposed a resolution on terrorism to be adopted by the General Council of the UN. However, it did not see the light of the day due to disagreements on the definition of terrorism among member countries. Thus far, there is no universally accepted legal definition of terrorism in international law.[15] On the other hand, there is variety of legalistic definitions of terrorism in different countries in their respective statute books.

The epistemology of ‘freedom/liberation fighters’ and ‘terrorists’ can be traced to Lenin’s extensive writings on the ‘national question’, ‘right to self-determination’ and ‘liberation movements’, Mao Tse-Tung’s treatise ‘On Guerrilla Warfare’, and Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara’s distinction between ‘revolutionary’ and ‘terrorist’ tactics in guerilla warfare.[16]

The following extracts from Guevara’s classic *Guerrilla Warfare* are pertinent to today’s anti-state armed groups claiming political motives because it clearly distinguishes between individual terrorism and popular insurgency/revolution:

“Acts of sabotage are very important. It is necessary to distinguish clearly between sabotage, a revolutionary and highly effective method of warfare, and terrorism, a measure that is generally ineffective and indiscriminate in its results, since it often makes victims of innocent people and destroys a large number of lives that would be valuable to the revolution. Terrorism should be considered a valuable tactic when it is used to put to death some noted leader of the oppressing forces well known for his cruelty, his efficiency in repression, or other quality that makes his elimination useful. But the killing of persons of small importance is never advisable, since it brings on an increase of reprisals, including deaths.[17]

Sabotage has nothing to do with terrorism; terrorism and personal assaults are entirely different tactics. We sincerely believe that terrorism is of negative value, that it by no means produces the desired effects, that it can turn a people against a revolutionary movement, and that it can bring a loss of lives to its agents out of proportion to what it produces. On the other hand, attempts to take the lives of particular persons are to be made, though only in very special circumstances; this tactic should be used where it will eliminate a leader of the oppression.[18]

In special circumstances, after careful analysis, assaults on persons will be used. In general we consider that this is not desirable except for the purpose of eliminating some figure who is notorious for his villainies [sic] against the people and the virulence of his repression. Our experience in the Cuban struggle shows that it would have been possible to save the lives of numerous fine comrades who were sacrificed in the performance of missions of small value.(...)Assaults and terrorism in indiscriminate form should not be employed.”[19]

The types of warfare adopted in most of the post-Cold War era conflicts are antithesis to what revolutionary icons such as Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara envisioned. For the purpose of this article, terrorism could be understood as a form of armed violence wherein ‘terrorist’ tactics [such as “individual assaults”, “killing of persons of small importance”] are used extensively as opposed to ‘revolutionary’ tactics [such as “sabotage”] as illustrated by Guevara in the foregoing paragraphs. That is, in terms of the distinction by Guevara, ‘terrorist’ tactics, which are generally unpopular, overshadow ‘revolutionary’ tactics, which are generally popular, under terrorism.

LTTE: Terrorist Movement or Freedom Fighters/National Liberation Movement?

There has been renewed interest in the distinction between ‘terrorists’ and ‘freedom fighters’ [or terrorist

movements and liberation movements] in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001.[20] Nevertheless, there has been an ongoing debate on the semantics of these characterisations.[21]

In this article it is postulated that, the LTTE is to be viewed primarily as a terrorist movement based on the following characteristics and *modus operandi* of the LTTE during much of its lifetime:

- [1] Armed struggle was overwhelmingly based on acts of violence, devoid of mass mobilisation, political agitations, or popular participation; [22]
- [2] Support of the masses was solicited by persecution rather than persuasion;
- [3] Deliberate targeting of unarmed civilians in armed attacks;
- [4] Reliance on suicidal armed attacks;
- [5] Recruitment and employment of children in active combat;
- [6] Internecine war against members of its own community.

(1) Overwhelmingly based on Violent Armed Struggle

It is the political marginalisation encountered by the Tamil minority community in the post-independence period that precipitated the armed struggle by disgruntled Tamil youths. Thus, the armed struggle was a means of attaining a political goal. Therefore, a political strategy should have steered the armed struggle and not *vice versa* as echoed by one of the earliest analysts of guerrilla warfare in anti-imperial struggles, namely Carl Von Clausewitz[23], and, more than a century later, by Mao Tse-Tung.[24]

In Sri Lanka's Parliamentary elections in 1977,[25] the Tamil United Liberation Front[26] [TULF] sought a mandate from the people of the Eastern and Northern Provinces (particularly the Tamils) for the establishment of a separate state called Tamil Eelam. The TULF received 57% of the total valid votes cast in the east and north combined. Furthermore, 48% of the total of eligible voters voted for the TULF in that election.[27] This was hardly an unambiguous mandate for the establishment of a separate state. Even more important is the fact that, the TULF called for establishing a separate state by political means. The TULF had not explicitly espoused violence, let alone terrorism, to achieve its avowed goal.[28] Therefore, the LTTE had no moral right to hijack the popular mandate of the TULF [however tenuous it may have been] and claim popular support for its armed struggle. The following observation by Martha Crenshaw about terrorism aptly applies to the LTTE.

“Terrorism is essentially the result of elite disaffection; it represents the strategy of a minority, who may act on behalf of a wider popular constituency who have not been consulted about, and do not necessarily approve of, the terrorists' aims or methods.”[29]

Anti-state struggles [whether it is class-based, ethnicity-based, faith-based, anti-colonial, anti-foreign occupation, or aims at capturing state power, or aims at secession of a minority from an existing state, etc] can employ [a] purely non-violent means, [b] purely violent means or [c] a combination of non-violent means [such as demonstrations, shut outs/hartals, civil disobedience, etc] as well as acts of violence [armed and/or unarmed]. Both terrorist struggles and liberation struggles[30] can employ a combination of non-violent agitation and acts of violence. Nonetheless, whilst non-violent agitations are predominant and violent acts are sporadic in liberation struggles; in terrorist struggles violent acts are predominant.[31] This it is argued here, is a fundamental difference between the two.

The modality of the secessionist struggle of the LTTE, right from its inception, has been overwhelmingly violent and militaristic focusing on the use of force.[32] This was different from the struggles of similar anti-state armed groups such as the one of the African National Congress [ANC]. Whilst the military wing of the ANC was subservient to its political wing, it was the reverse in the case of the LTTE. The LTTE hardly had an explicit or implicit political strategy to back up, bolster or complement its military struggle because

Pirapakaran always believed that *kertu vanga mudiyathu, thatti parikanum* [[We] cannot ask and get [Tamil Eelam], [instead we must] hit and grab].[33] In fact, there was an intense ideological debate within the LTTE during the late-1970s, whether to solely or mainly rely on ‘individual terrorism’ [*thani nabar payankaravatham* in Tamil] or steer the organisation towards a mass/popular movement combining non-violent mass protests/uprisings and occasional, selective, or targeted guerrilla attacks on state security forces.[34]

In the formative years, the organisational structure of the LTTE was broad-based. That is, a Central Committee was formed incorporating a political wing and a military wing. Veluppillai Pirapakaran (aka Thamby, which means younger brother, or Karikalan; Pirapakaran was called Thamby because he was indeed the youngest member of the Central Committee) was the head of the military wing while Uma Maheswaran was head of the political wing. There were few other members of the Central Committee including Nagarajah [a mathematics tuition master] and Iyer [a Hindu priest]. While Pirapakaran was the sole military leader, the other members of the Central Committee shared the political and administrative leadership under the chairpersonship of Uma Maheswaran. For example, Iyer was in-charge of the finance and the agricultural farms. While Uma Maheswaran was sacked from the LTTE in 1978 on the allegation of having a girlfriend/s,[35] the remaining members of the political wing of the Central Committee continued their attempts to steer the LTTE towards a mass movement espousing a Leninist/Socialist ideology basing themselves on principle of the ‘right to self-determination’ of the Tamil nation. In fact, the LTTE’s very first publication or manifesto was largely an adapted [more or less plagiarised] version of Lenin’s writings on the ‘national question’ and the ‘right to self determination’ of nations.[36]

Due to the intransigence of Pirapakaran, who was obsessed with pursuing an exclusive military struggle, some members of the Central Committee [namely Nagarajah, Iyer, et al] along with many cadres took control of the LTTE in early-1980. They forged a rapprochement with Uma Maheswaran and attempted to steer the LTTE towards a mass movement in alliance with the youth wing of the premier democratic Tamil party, viz. Tamil United Liberation Front [TULF]. Santhathiyar headed the youth wing of the TULF at that time. This attempted re-structuring of the LTTE was dubbed “*puthiya pathai*” [new path]. Under the new management the LTTE was also connected to Gandhiyam, a non-governmental organisation established in the aftermath of the anti-Tamil riots of 1977. Gandhiyam was instrumental in re-settling the hill-country Tamils who were displaced due to the 1977 and 1981 anti-Tamil riots [in the hill-country] in the sparsely populated Vanni region[37] of the Northern Province. They formed a reservoir of recruits to the LTTE under the new leadership [and later to the Peoples’ Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam – PLOTE headed by Uma Maheswaran].

In the meantime, a disillusioned Pirapakaran deserted the LTTE and joined the second most prominent Tamil armed group at that time, called Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation [TELO]. However, the power struggle between Pirapakaran and a handful of his loyalists and Uma Maheswaran and his loyalists continued. As a result of this tug-of-war, eventually, Uma Maheswaran and his loyalists abandoned the LTTE and established a new organisation called the People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam [PLOTE]. Disillusioned with this internecine conflict, Nagarajah and Iyer abandoned the armed struggle and settled in the South Indian State of Tamilnadu and continue to live there to date (2018). After the PLOTE was established, Pirapakaran re-captured the LTTE sometime in 1981 [deserting the TELO] and instituted himself as the sole leader doing away with the erstwhile Central Committee that had led to internal bickering earlier. LTTE’s split in late-1979/early-1980 was the first major split; it was due to differences in opinion regarding the ideological underpinning/s of the Tamil national struggle and the pursuant political and military strategy to be adopted.[38]

After assuming sole-leadership, Pirapakaran tightened his grip on power within and outside the LTTE. This culminated in the proscription of all other Tamil armed groups and the physical elimination of the members of those groups by the LTTE, an ongoing process since 1986 until LTTE’s demise in May 2009. During the 1983-1986 period several founder and original members of the LTTE [and its predecessor TNT] deserted due to the autocratic rule of the LTTE leader and went into exile abroad. Pirapakaran became the self-proclaimed sole leader of the Tamil national struggle and, as a consequence, all other democratic Tamil parties and armed Tamil groups were branded as traitors and their members hunted down. Almost the entire leadership of the erstwhile premier democratic Tamil party, the TULF, was eliminated by the LTTE in 1989 in Colombo under

the pretext of discussing a rapprochement.

The LTTE never had a political strategy [especially since 1983] towards the goal of establishing a separate state. Its one and only means was militarily defeating the Sri Lankan armed forces; forcing them to withdraw from the “traditional Tamil homeland”, i.e. the Eastern and Northern Provinces of Sri Lanka. Even within the Tamil community and in the self-proclaimed Tamil homeland it never had a political strategy to win over the hearts and minds of the people to support the LTTE’s military strategy or political cause. The LTTE took the support of the Tamil people for granted,[39] instilled fear to obtain support and sought to win sympathy with often exaggerated and sometimes untruthful propaganda. The LTTE regarded all dissidents as traitors, and physically eliminated all those who did not accept their line of thinking and acting. Thus, an exclusive military strategy was not only adopted against the enemy [Sri Lanka’s security forces and the state], but against the dissidents within the Tamil community as well. The LTTE’s often recited mantra has always been that “even if we pardon the enemy, we will never ever pardon the traitors”.

(2) Support Garnered through Persecution as Opposed to Persuasion

Although in the formative years [i.e. from 1972 until about mid-1980s] the LTTE [along with other Tamil armed groups] drew support from the masses through political arguments and persuasion [especially after the successive anti-Tamil pogroms of 1977, 1981 and 1983, which took place outside the Eastern and Northern Provinces], in later years it resorted to instilling fear to draw support to its cause. This was done for recruitment to its ranks as well as for gaining sympathy and support within the country and among the Tamil diaspora communities throughout the world.

After the July-1983 anti-Tamil pogrom, youths joined the LTTE [and many other Tamil armed groups espousing secessionism through armed struggle] in droves voluntarily due to real and perceived injustices meted out to the Tamil minority community by successive governments of Sri Lanka in the post-independence period. However, after the LTTE proscribed all other Tamil armed groups and went on hunting-down its cadres from early-1986 onwards until its demise in May 2009, its political standing among the Tamil community started to wane slowly but surely. Thereafter, the LTTE started propagating contrived grievances, half-truths, and even falsehood to entice youths to join its ranks.[40] On the issue of propaganda, the following observations by Guevara are very relevant and opportune to the case of the LTTE.

“One of the characteristics of revolutionary propaganda must be truth. Little by little, in this way, the masses will be won over.[41] ...observing always the fundamental principle that truth in the long run is the best policy.[42] The radio[43] is a factor of extraordinary importance.....However, the radio should be ruled by the fundamental principle of popular propaganda, which is truth; it is preferable to tell the truth, small in its dimensions, than a large lie artfully embellished.”[44]

Since the LTTE’s strategy of false propaganda had only limited success, it began to resort to involuntary conscription through indoctrination, threats, abductions, etc. In the aftermath of the Indo-Sri Lanka peace accord of July 1987, the LTTE lost much of the male youth constituency and began to recruit and deploy teenage girls and children [both boys and girls under 16 years old] in combat for the first time. Although women and children [over 16 years old] began to join the LTTE after 1983, they were not deployed on active combat until 1987.[45]/[46]

(3) Deliberately Targeting Unarmed Civilians in Armed Attacks

As noted earlier, the fundamental distinction between terrorism and liberation struggle rests with the different means of achieving an end. Although both terrorist struggles and liberation struggles may head toward the same end, it is how [or the means by which] they arrive at the predetermined end what distinguishes the two. Liberation struggles involve both violent and non-violent strategies. Importantly, liberation struggles are

waged against the state's security forces and not against unarmed civilians; therefore the majority of casualties are armed combatants. In the case of terrorist struggles, violence dominates with very little or no role for non-violent protests or civil disobedience. Besides, in terrorist struggles, the majority of victims are unarmed civilians rather than armed combatants. Furthermore, whilst liberation movements target opposing armed forces (the 'enemy') or civilian collaborators with their enemy ['traitors', 'quislings', 'fifth columnists'], terrorist movements target not only the foregoing but primarily unarmed civilians [including progressives, trade unionists, and intellectuals] who do not agree with terrorists' brutal tactics to achieving the ultimate goal [whatever that may be].

One of the salient features of the 'new wars' of the post-cold war era is that majority of the victims of nearly all civil wars around the globe are indeed unarmed civilians. During the anti-colonial, anti-feudal and anti-dictatorship struggles of the pre-World War II and the Cold-War era, unarmed civilian casualties were small and deliberate targeting of unarmed civilians was almost absent. However, in nearly all the civil wars of the post-Cold War era unarmed civilian casualties are higher than combatant casualties.[47] There have been many instances where state security forces as well as anti-state armed groups deliberately target unarmed civilians and put the blame on the opposite side in order to substantiate their claim of 'terrorism' and 'genocide' respectively, and this way seek to gain sympathy both nationally and internationally. The distinction between combatants and civilians has become more blurred during the post-Cold War period.[48]

A hallmark of the LTTE was its targeted assassinations of unarmed civilians, including political leaders of the government and the main opposition party, political dissidents, intellectuals, trade unionists, and journalists within its own community. In addition, the LTTE also deliberately attacked civilians outside the Eastern and Northern Provinces through claymore mine and landmine attacks, time bombs and suicide attacks, especially targeting Sinhalese civilians. These attacks were carried-out in order to elicit a backlash against the Tamils living outside the East and North, which could then be propagated as 'genocide' against the Tamils like in July 1983.[49] The LTTE frequently set-off claymore mines within the Eastern and Northern Provinces as well against the armed forces personnel and police in urban areas and places where civilians congregated. There was a political motive, in addition to a military motive, behind such attacks. When security forces are attacked, they tend to randomly shoot or beat-up innocent people who happen to be in the vicinity of the attack. These exigencies or extra judicial killings by the security forces are then used to demonise the enemy and portrayed as 'genocide' in order to gain sympathy and support for its cause among the local population, with in the Tamil Diaspora, and the international community at large. Therefore, such urban guerrilla [hit-and-run] attacks have dual utility; one military [tactical] and the other political [strategic]. However, ordinary Tamil civilians despised these attacks by the LTTE and have told this author that if the LTTE wanted to attack the security forces it should have targeted the security forces in remote or isolated terrains rather than in places of high population density.[50]

However, LTTE's suicide attack on the Colombo [Katunayake] International Airport on July 25, 2001 could be regarded as an act of economic sabotage [in Guevara's parlance, as noted earlier] rather than a terrorist attack because of zero civilian casualties in that operation. Only a couple of air force personnel and the suicide attackers of the LTTE [all armed combatants] were killed in the entire operation. The LTTE did not attack the passenger terminal or harm any civilian staff working at the airport at the time of operation. However, half the entire fleet of aircrafts of the Sri Lankan Airlines [i.e. five out of ten] and a few [unspecified number] attack helicopters and fighter jets of the Sri Lanka Air Force [SLAF] were either completely destroyed or severely damaged. The attackers waited for the last departing aircraft to take off during the early hours of the day [well past midnight] before launching their attack in order not to harm civilians. In the aftermath of the attack, international freight insurance companies imposed war risk surcharge [premium] on exports and imports from and to Sri Lanka, thereby dealing a severe blow to the economy, which resulted in the Sri Lankan economy recording negative growth in 2001 for the first time since independence.

On the other hand, the suicide truck bombing of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka [CBSL] on January 31, 1996 was clearly a terrorist act because of the death of nearly 100 unarmed civilians in that operation despite also being

an act of economic sabotage similar to the attack on the international airport alluded to above. The suicide truck bomb attack on the CBSL was in some ways similar to Hezbollah's suicide truck bomb attack on the US Marines in Beirut in August 1983. This attack was carried out during the rush hours of a weekday morning around 10.30 AM. Several Tamils have pointed out to this author that they cannot condone such mindless violence, because if the LTTE wanted to attack an economic target it could have done it during night-time thereby avoiding civilian casualties. However, in the LTTE's strategic political thinking, the suicide attack on the CBSL would not have elicited such huge international attention [as reflected in spectacular international media coverage of the attack] if it were carried out during the night-time with zero civilian casualties. Alas, the foregoing line of thinking of the LTTE was counter-intuitive [or backfired] because the strategic political cost of the attack on the Central Bank to the LTTE was enormous in the same way as the LTTE's suicide bomb assassination of the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on May 21, 1991. In the same way as India proscribed the LTTE in 1992 in the aftermath of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, the United States proscribed the LTTE in 1997, citing the LTTE as a threat to US strategic interests in Sri Lanka and the region, specifically as a result of the attack on the Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

The majority of victims in the armed conflict in Sri Lanka have been civilians.[51] In fact, anecdotal evidence indicates that LTTE has killed more civilians [from all three communities, namely Tamils, Sinhalese, and Muslims] than the armed forces personnel, though numbers are unavailable. The LTTE has killed hundreds of Sinhalese villagers in the border areas of Eastern and Northern Provinces in order to make the rest flee their homes in the interior of Eastern and Northern Provinces. Similarly, hundreds of Muslims [who are, in fact, Tamil speaking] were killed inside Mosques in Kattankudy and Eravur in the Batticaloa district of the Eastern Province in August 1990. After these mass murders in the East, the entire Muslim population in the Northern Province [particularly from Jaffna, Mannar and Mullaithivu districts] was ordered to vacate their homes [leaving behind their belongings] within seventy-two hours [in many cases within twenty-four hours] in October 1990. Many of them still languish in several welfare camps in the Puttalam district [North Western Province].

The mass murders and forcible eviction of Muslims and Sinhalese from the Eastern and Northern Provinces were part of the LTTE's strategic logic of creating an ethnically homogeneous "Tamil homeland" through ethnic cleansing. Only a tiny proportion of the Tamil population condones such a supremacist vision of an imagined Tamil nation as envisioned by the LTTE.[52] Moreover, in the closing stages of the civil war during March-May 2009, the LTTE deliberately attacked Tamil civilians who were attempting to flee to the areas controlled by the security forces of Sri Lanka. These wanton attacks on unarmed civilians alienated even senior cadres of the LTTE such as Thamilini Jayakumaran (nee Sivakami Subramaniam), the political head of the LTTE women.[53]

(4) Heavy Reliance on Suicidal Armed Attacks

To run away from trouble is a form of cowardice and, while it is true that the suicide braves death, he does it not for some noble object but to escape some ill – Aristotle

It is not only an ancient philosopher like Aristotle, but modern medical science as well holds that suicides are acts of cowardice to get away from mental or physical illness,[54] rather than bravery or "martyrdom" as the protagonists of suicidal armed attacks would want the world to believe.

According to an Associate Professor at the Medical Faculty of Kabul University, about 65% of the suicide bombers during 2006-2008 [i.e. 52 out of 80] were physically disabled. His reading is that poor families with disabled members could have been paid hefty sums of money to sell the disabled to the Taliban to be utilised as suicide bombers.[55] Further, this author's interviews with middle-level LTTE cadres revealed that those who were physically handicapped in combat were encouraged to join the elite suicide squad, the so-called Black Tigers. There are certain criteria and formal career path to join the Black Tigers squad, which will be detailed

in a subsequent article.

The suicide attacks by Jewish Zealots against Roman occupation 2,000 years ago and kamikaze attacks by the Japanese armed forces during the Second World War in the twentieth century offered role models for the revival of suicide attacks in the early-1980s in the Middle East [notably by Hezbollah in Lebanon], which were later adapted and improved upon by various anti-state armed groups such as the Al-Qaeda, Hamas, LTTE, and more recently the Taliban in Afghanistan.[56]

Sri Lanka has one of the highest suicide rates in the world; suicide had been rising in the early 1980s, though an ethnic or religious breakdown is unavailable.[57] Studies have shown that Sri Lankans tend to take away their lives by committing suicide for trivial reasons. In this context, Robert Pape's revelation that LTTE was responsible for the single largest number of suicide attacks around the world in the period between 1980 to 2003 is not surprising.[58] However, Robert Pape's attribution of foreign occupation as the primary cause of suicide attacks is contentious.

First of all, in internal wars like that of Sri Lanka, where the presence of Sri Lankan armed forces in territories largely inhabited by Tamil speaking people ["Tamil homeland"] could be regarded as "foreign occupation" is debatable, in spite of LTTE's claim to that effect [the same argument has been used in the case of Sikh and Kashmiri separatism in India]. Secondly, if indeed Pape's attribution of foreign occupation as the primary cause of suicide attacks is true, how come the bulk of LTTE's suicide attacks were carried out outside the "Tamil homeland" [largely in and around Colombo] on civilian targets rather than against the occupying security forces within? Even in the cases of suicide attacks carried out in Iraq after the US-led invasion in 2003 and the rise of suicide attacks in Afghanistan since 2008, the bulk of those attacks were NOT carried out against the occupying foreign armed forces. Rather, the larger number of attacks were carried out against Iraqi or Afghan civilians in places where ordinary people congregate, while a smaller number of attacks were carried out against the Iraqi or Afghan national armed forces. Thirdly, as Horowitz has pointed out [59], if foreign occupation is the primary cause of suicide attacks, why was it that some other anti-state groups such as the Irish Republican Army [IRA], the Basque separatist group ETA, or the Mujahedin in Afghanistan against the Soviet occupation [from 1979 to 1989] have not resorted to suicide attacks to drive out the respective occupying forces?

Mia Bloom, another pioneer in the study of suicide terrorism, asserts that suicide attacks are a strategy to "outbid" other competing anti-state groups in garnering public support for the same cause.[60] That is, suicide attacks are a means of establishing supremacy or claim to be authentic representatives of the masses whom they claim to protect or liberate. Whilst in some cases this assertion could be valid, in the case of the LTTE it is NOT valid because the LTTE had emerged as the sole anti-state Tamil armed group by around 1990 when it began to use suicide attacks [barring the first suicide truck bomb attack on July 5, 1987 during the Vadamarachchi operation by the security forces] as a regular politico-military tactic.[61]

When we trace the timings of suicide bombings or assassinations by the LTTE, it is evident that it had resorted to such attacks out of desperation when the military odds were against them in the theatres of war and/or the political odds were against them with regard to popular support from the Tamil people. For example, the first suicide attack by the LTTE was carried out on July 5, 1987, when a suicide bomber rammed a lorry laden with explosives into a makeshift military barrack set up at a school in Nelliady [near Point Pedro town in the Jaffna peninsula]. This was carried out at a time when the Sri Lankan security forces were on an offensive to wrest control of the Vadamarachchi area of the Jaffna peninsula from the LTTE, which had a free reign after virtually eliminating all other Tamil armed groups (particularly the TELO and EPRLF) since the early-1986.

The second suicide attack by the LTTE was the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on May 21, 1991 in Sriperumbudur [in the outskirts of Chennai, the capital of Tamilnadu state in India]. The assassin was the first woman suicide bomber in recent history; it was the only suicide attack by the LTTE on a foreign territory and the first assassination of a Prime Minister-in-waiting by a foreign armed group. The suicide assassination of Rajiv Gandhi was also a sign of desperation as he was perceived to be anti-LTTE [62] [especially anti-Pirapakaran]. Therefore Pirapakaran wanted to prevent Rajiv Gandhi from becoming the

Prime Minister of India for the second time.[63] Moreover, Rajiv Gandhi was popular among the Tamil people [in Sri Lanka as well as in India] as he was instrumental in pressurising the then Sri Lankan President to enact the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka thereby devolving power to the regions through the creation of Provincial Councils [a second tier of government]. Hence, Rajiv Gandhi's popularity among the Tamils was perceived to be a threat to LTTE's military and political stranglehold on the Tamil masses.

Another prominent suicide attack by the LTTE that was a sign of desperation was the suicide lorry bombing of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka on January 31, 1996. The LTTE, which was de-facto ruling the Jaffna peninsula from 1990 to 1995, was driven out of Jaffna by a major military operation, beginning in August and ending in December 1995. The LTTE wanted to avenge its eviction from Jaffna through a spectacular attack in the city of Colombo, which resulted in the bombing of the Central Bank.

Another vivid example of a desperate suicide attack by the LTTE reflecting frustration of losing popular support among the Tamils was the suicide assassination of a member of parliament from the erstwhile democratic party of the Tamils [the TULF], namely Neelan Thiruchelvam. He was popular among the Tamils as the intellectual standard-bearer of the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Tamils. As a Constitutional Lawyer with a doctorate from Harvard University, he was instrumental in drafting a new Constitution in 1995 transforming the Sri Lankan state from a unitary to a federal state ["union of regions"], which however never did see the light of the day. Espousing federalism to resolve the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict was anathema to LTTE's unwavering maximalist demand for a separate sovereign state for the Tamils. So, bumping him off was necessary to the LTTE in order to veer the Tamil people's desire for a federal solution to the long-lasting ethno-national conflict.

The foregoing four examples illustrate the politico-military psyche of the LTTE leadership in carrying out these suicidal attacks. It is pertinent to note and understand that all the foregoing high profile military attacks could not have been possible using orthodox hit-and-run guerrilla tactics. Except the first one [suicide lorry bomb attack on a military barrack] all other targets were non-military. The LTTE was fully aware of the likely national and international political fall-out as a result of those attacks on unarmed high profile civilian targets and therefore had to hide the affiliation of the perpetrators; that is, it did not claim responsibility for these attacks or used the name of "Ellalan [an ancient Tamil king in Sri Lanka] Force" to claim responsibility for the attack on the Central Bank. Nevertheless, in the worldview of the LTTE, those targets were imperative for its very survival as a politico-military organisation. Therefore, it went ahead with the missions notwithstanding the likely strategic political cost. The LTTE was very possessive of its claim to be a liberation organisation spearheading the freedom struggle of the Tamils against the oppressive Sri Lankan state, and the claim to be the "sole representatives" of the Tamils [occasionally tempered with the claim of "authentic representatives"]. That is why it never owned-up responsibility for any suicidal [or other mode of] attacks on civilian targets or suicidal [or other mode of] assassinations of unarmed individuals. This deceptive behaviour of the LTTE was unique in the world of terrorism, because almost all other anti-state terror groups are eager to claim responsibility to prove their brawn power or their commitment to "martyrdom".

(5) Recruitment and Employment of Children in Active Combat

All armed forces/groups [either state, anti-state, or quasi-state] that use child combatants do so for lack popular support for their cause whatever that may be. It is only those armed groups that are unable to convince adults of the legitimacy or inevitability of armed struggle and/or justify the violent means of their struggle which are forced to recruit children [either voluntarily or involuntarily], who can be easily brainwashed. Child combatants are a sign of frustration and bankruptcy of political legitimacy of the armed group they belong to. Besides, children are useful for espionage and logistical duties, as the enemy would least suspect them. Therefore, one of the criteria that can be used to distinguish 'terrorists' from 'freedom fighters' is whether or not they recruit children to fight their war.

The teenage period is an age of rebellion, within the household and/or within the community where they live. It is a time of seeking self-identity and importance. It can also be a time of rebellion against parental authority.

Terrorist groups exploit children's 'age of innocence' for indoctrination, recruitment, and deployment. Children are also usually obedient, compliant to authority, and easier to bully. However, they cannot be effective or efficient fighters on the battlefield since they lack physical strength and/or mental resilience. Therefore, children are often used as cannon-fodder in the battlefield to break through enemy lines [forward defence lines – FDL] and have to pave the way for adult fighters to follow. It is always costly [in terms of human life] to break through forward defence lines because the enemy is well-entrenched. The anti-state armed groups usually lack adequate number of fighters to confront much larger state security forces. That is, anti-state armed groups are far outnumbered in terms of personnel. Therefore, when there is a lack of adult recruits the anti-state armed groups resort to child recruits, because the latter are easier to convince [voluntary recruitment] or conscript [involuntary recruitment]. It is also true that abject poverty drives some parents to voluntarily handover their child/children to rebel groups. This happens not only in Asia but also in Africa.

The LTTE started proactively recruiting children as young as ten years old in the late-1980s. As mentioned above, since the LTTE unilaterally started fighting the IPKF in late-1987 its support among the Tamils started to wane. Hence, it was compelled to actively recruit children in order to compensate for declining adult recruits. Thus, child recruitment for combat is a sign of weakness of a liberation movement. Put it another way, child recruitment by the LTTE was a sign of conversion into a terrorist movement.

The LTTE routinely showed video films of its military operations at schools as a means of enticing children to join its ranks. If this strategy did not bear adequate results, it forcibly kidnapped children to fight for its cause. In a survey conducted in all the five districts of the Northern Province in late-2004, including in LTTE-controlled areas in the Vanni, the interviewed children did not indicate a desire to join the LTTE to fight for their cause.^[64] Furthermore, the following are excerpts from a news report about an exhibition of paintings of nearly five hundred Sri Lankan refugee children born and bred in the refugee camps in Tamilnadu state, India.

“Not many children want to be fighters... Only one child in tens of thousands thinks of “fighting” as an end by itself and this really is what is so “unique”... about Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka, growing up in India, say relief officials. “The kids don’t admire militancy but every child wants to go home”... However, Eme Perumal is an exception. As he makes tea for his mother’s friends, the 11-year-old watches a Jackie Chan film on a tiny colour television set and admires “fighting”, not unusual at his age, his idol, the LTTE fighter.”^[65]

In the areas under its control, the LTTE and its proxies [camouflaged as NGOs, faith-based organisations and humanitarian agencies] ran numerous orphanages, which were virtually factories producing child soldiers or future adult soldiers.^[66] In these factories, camouflaged as orphanages, children used to be indoctrinated about the virtues of Tamils’ freedom struggle and instilled that their saviour and godfather was Pirapakaran [aka the ‘sun god’].

In short, the use of child soldiers is a vivid example of moral, ethical, political, and military bankruptcy of self-styled freedom/liberation movements in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century. The scourge of child soldiers is one of the critical differences between the anti-state armed movements of the pre- and post-Second World War period and the post-Cold War period rebel movements. It would be useful for the modern day self-styled freedom/liberation fighters to do some soul-searching and realise that their predecessors had much greater success in capturing state power and driving out foreign occupation forces without the use of child soldiers and suicide bombers.

(6) Internecine War against Members of its own Community

One of the conjectures about the protracted conflict in Sri Lanka is that, according to anecdotal evidence, it is probable that the LTTE might have killed more Tamils than the Sri Lankan security forces; especially in internecine war against all other Tamil armed groups since the early-1980s [with the breakup of the LTTE into two or more in 1980 as noted above] until its demise in 2009. This was due to the LTTE’s obsessive-compulsive

claim to be the sole representatives of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. This might well be something unique in the mystical world of freedom fighters/liberation movements. The LTTE has not only virtually decimated all other Tamil armed groups, but also the Tamil democratic parties, dissenting voices in the academia, civil society, and the media in order to establish itself as the sole and indispensable politico-military force representing the Tamils. This type of behavior aligns more with mafia groups rather than liberation movements. This unique but negative characteristic of the LTTE has, overtime, gradually dissipated popular support it ones enjoyed among the Tamils during the late-1970s and early-1980s, not only in Sri Lanka but in India as well.

The LTTE's pathological thirst for the sole leadership of the armed struggle of the Tamils has been absent in almost all other anti-state struggles spearheaded by either liberation organisations or terrorist organisations throughout the world. In the armed struggles of the Jews for establishment of Israel,[67] majority community against the minority apartheid rule in South Africa,[68] Palestinians against Israel,[69] Bengalis against the Pakistani rule in East Pakistan,[70] Kashmiris against the Indian rule, Mujahedin against the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, or in Al-Qaeda's global war against Western countries, a variety of armed groups operate in tandem complementing each others' role, in spite of occasional internecine conflict among anti-state movements. Rarely, if ever, did any one group stake claim sole leadership the way LTTE did.

Internecine war among freedom fighters is the anti-thesis of liberation struggle that is supposed to be against a real or contrived common enemy. The fact of the matter is that, other terrorist organisations [let alone liberation organisations], either in the past or present, have rarely indulged in killing each other when they were faced with a common enemy because they very well knew that such actions would substantially weaken their cause or undermine attaining their ultimate goal. On this score the LTTE was a terrorist organisation par excellence since it had an explicit policy of systematically annihilating all other armed Tamil groups, and among unarmed Tamil political parties, those had the potential to challenge its supremacy or the vanguard role.[71] In fact, the LTTE had gone even beyond that by purging potential challengers/competitors to the self-appointed supreme leader Veluppillai Pirapakaran within the organisation itself from time to time throughout its existence [i.e. 1972 to 2009], beginning with the murder of Chetti Thanabalasingam in the early-1970s [72] and the attempted murder of Uma Maheswaran in Pondy Bazaar in Madras/Chennai [capital of Tamilnadu state] in 1982 by Pirapakaran himself.

Studies by anthropologists and sociologists have showed that, among criminal gangs, organized crime syndicates, and mafias, internecine warfare is a very common feature. In this light, the LTTE's systemic intra-group and inter-group purges further lend support to the conclusion that the LTTE was a terrorist organisation rather than as its leaders, supporters and sympathisers claimed, a liberation movement.

Towards a Distinction between 'Terrorism' and 'Liberation'

One of the fundamental guiding principles [and often recited mantra] of the armed struggle waged by the LTTE on behalf of the Tamil people was:

kertu vanga mudiyathu, thatti parikanum ([We] cannot ask and get, [instead we must] hit and grab)

This was often said by the LTTE leadership to its rank and file to justify its resort to arms in the struggle for independence, but also to justify the repudiation of ceasefires and peace negotiations over and over again throughout the civil war period.

Another of Veluppillai Pirapakaran's mantra was:

sollukku mun ceyal irukavendum (Deed should precede word)

The logic of this statement from the leader [73] is easy to comprehend. In Pirapakaran's worldview there is no opportunity or necessity to think before you act. A true representative of an imagined nation [Tamil Eelam] should not act like that;[74] yet this statement encapsulates the mindset of "the most dangerous man in South Asia and the public enemy number one of the Tamils." [75]

The discourses on the semantics of terrorism, thus far, have tended to veer towards abstract conceptualisation. That is, a top down approach from the general to the particular, which is deductive logic.[76] In this article, an alternative approach to the understanding of terrorism has been chosen: a bottom-up approach from the particular to the general, in other words, inductive logic. By way of critically analysing the *modus operandi* of the LTTE, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the LTTE was a terrorist organisation rather than a liberation organisation. The Tamil community's struggle for equality in Sri Lanka, however, cannot be construed as terrorism.

It is this author's conviction that the same six criteria that have been postulated to distinguish terrorist struggles from freedom fighting in the case of the LTTE could possibly be applied to other anti-state armed groups **as well as** state actors. However, since each and every conflict and each and every anti-state armed group are different, these criteria should not become static benchmarks to understand terrorism. Instead, these six criteria could possibly be conceptual thresholds, but dynamic in practical application. Thus, these six criteria should become evolutionary when applied to other cases. In the study of certain states or anti-state armed organisations, one or more of these six criteria could be dropped and new ones incorporated.

As a matter of fact, many sovereign states have been involved in terrorism within and outside their territories [through covert or proxy wars] at certain points of time, throughout human history, until today. This is likely to continue to be so in the future as well. These states come from all ideological persuasions; authoritarian and democratic. Therefore, it is a *sine qua non* to apply the concept of terrorism to sovereign states as well if only because today's anti-state armed groups [*de facto* states] could become *de jure* states tomorrow.

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Notes

- [1] Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, US State Department.
- [2] Democratic Party Representative from California State [27th District], USA.
- [3] Ilankai Thamil Sangam USA Inc [Association of Tamils of Sri Lanka in the USA], [2005], Congressional Hearing on Unrest in Sri Lanka, US House International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Washington, DC. URL; http://sangam.org/taraki/articles/2006/03-23_Congressional_Hearing.php?
- [4] The LTTE was a re-launch of the Tamil New Tigers [TNT], originally established in 1972. The Tamil New Tigers was, in turn, an offshoot of the *Thamil Maanavar Peravai* [Tamil Students' League] that was established in 1970 by Sathiyaseelan to oppose the system of standardisation introduced for university admissions disadvantaging Jaffna students. A leading member of the *Thamil Maanavar Peravai* was Sivakumaran hailing from Urumpirai in the Jaffna peninsula. He became famous after committing suicide when pursued by the police [after throwing a bomb at the police] by biting a cyanide capsule in 1971. Sivakumaran was revered as '*thiyagi*' [martyr], especially among the youths of Jaffna, after his suicidal death. It is this self-sacrificial incident that inspired Pirapakaran to introduce the cyanide capsule in the mid-1980s which was to be worn by all LTTE fighters during active combat. It is '*thiyagi*' Sivakumaran who inspired Pirapakaran to bestow martyrdom to LTTE's military cadres who die in combat.
- [5] Ponnambalam, Satchi, [1983], *Sri Lanka: National Conflict and the Tamil Liberation Struggle*, London: Tamil Information Centre. Wilson, Alfred Jeyaratnam, [2000], *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: its Origins and Developments in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, London: Hurst & Company.
- [6] However, Mahatma Gandhi did not totally reject violence as evidenced in the following quote "I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence...I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness"; URL: http://www.bored.com/findquotes/cate_565_Cowardice/cate_565_Cowardice/cate_736_Suicide.html
- [7] For example, see: Ertman, Thomas, [1997], *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, New York: Cambridge University Press; Sinclair, Andrew, [2003: 1-8], *An Anatomy of Terror: A History of Terrorism*, Basingstoke, London and Oxford: Macmillan; Tilly, Charles, [1985], 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime', in Evans, P, D. Rueschemeyer, and T. Skocpol [Eds.], *Bringing the State Back In*, New York: Cambridge University Press; Tilly, Charles, [1992], *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1992*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers; Tilly, Charles, and Gabriel Ardant, [1975], *The Formation of Nation States in Western Europe*, Studies in Political Development 8, Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.
- [8] E.g. Kaldor, Mary, [1999], *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, Oxford: Polity Press.
- [9] Throughout this article 'conflict' refers to violent or armed conflict.
- [10] Read the debate on greed versus grievance in civil wars. [See: for example, Berdal, Mats and David M. Malone [Ed], [2000], *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers; Collier, Paul and Nicholas Sambanis, [2005], *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, Vol.1 [Africa], Washington, DC: The World Bank; Hollingworth, Steve, [2002], "Greed and Grievance" in the Sri Lankan Conflict: Implications for Poverty and Marginalisation, March 04, *Open Forum on Poverty*, Colombo: Centre for Poverty Analysis. URL; <http://www.cepa.lk/uploads/pubs/of14.pdf>
- [11] What is a legitimate goal and what is not can differ from case to case, and is a matter of ongoing moral debates.
- [12] Aka 'non-state actors' or 'non-state armed groups'. In this article the author deliberately uses 'anti-state armed groups' because non-state actors could refer to non-governmental/non-profit organisations [both national and international] as well, and non-state armed groups could refer to vigilante/paramilitary groups [mostly set up by the state itself and therefore not necessarily anti-state], criminal armed gangs [mafia, triads] and the like. [Policzer, Pablo, [2005: 6-8], *Neither Terrorists nor Freedom Fighters*, Armed Groups Project Working Paper Series, Working Paper 5, March, Alberta: University of Calgary. Hence, it is acknowledged here that 'anti-state armed groups' have political cause/s or objective/s as opposed to criminal armed groups.
- [13] Fanon, Frantz, [2001], *The Wretched of the Earth*, London: Penguin Books [Originally published in 1968]; Freire, Paulo, [1972], *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, London: Penguin Books.
- [14] See *Third World Quarterly*, [2005], "The politics of naming: rebels, terrorists, criminals, bandits and subversives", Special Issue, 26 [1], passim; Wieviorka, Michael, [1995: 598], 'Terrorism in the Context of Academic Research', Chapter 14 in Martha Crenshaw, [Ed], *Terrorism in Context*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

[15] See Whittaker, David J. [Ed], [2001: 3-4], *The Terrorism Reader*, London and New York: Routledge.

[16] Guevara, Ernesto 'Che', [1985], *Guerrilla Warfare*, Manchester: Manchester University Press; Lenin, Vladimir, [1976], *On the National Question*, Moscow: Progressive Publishers. [Originally published in 1912]; Tse-Tung, Mao and Samuel B. Griffith, [2007], *On Guerrilla Warfare*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. [Translated from the original version, Tse-Tung, Mao, [1937], *On Guerrilla Warfare*]

[17] Guevara, Ernesto 'Che', *op cit.* 62-63.

[18] Guevara, Ernesto 'Che', *op cit.* 140.

[19] Guevara, Ernesto 'Che', *op cit.* 131.

[20] For example see, Nadarajah, Suthaharan and Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, [2005], "Liberation Struggle or Terrorism? The Politics of Naming the LTTE", *Third World Quarterly*, 26 [1], 87-100; Policzer, Pablo, [2005: 6-8], *Neither Terrorists nor Freedom Fighters*, Armed Groups Project Working Paper Series, Working Paper 5, March, Alberta: University of Calgary; *Third World Quarterly*, [2005], "The politics of naming: rebels, terrorists, criminals, bandits and subversives", Special Issue, 26 (1), *passim*.

[21] For example, See: Tavin, Ely, and Yonah Alexander [Eds], [1986], *Terrorists or Freedom Fighters: A Tool for the Full Understanding of Who They Are and How They Affect Civilization Today*, Virginia [USA]: HERO Books; Wieviorka, Michael, [1995], 'Terrorism in the Context of Academic Research', Chapter 14 in Martha Crenshaw, [Ed], *Terrorism in Context*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

[22] However, the LTTE did hijack the non-violent 'Pongu Thamil' [Seethe Thamil] agitations staged by the Tamil civil society groups in Trincomalee, Vavuniya, and Jaffna towns [which were under the control of the security forces] in the early 2000s, before the ceasefire signed on February 22, 2002, in order to advance its demand for a separate state. Once the LTTE started getting involved in the Pongu Thamil agitations it coerced the participation of the general public through intimidation. Besides, LTTE cadres occasionally dressed-up in school uniforms took part in the Pongu Thamil [and similar] agitations in order to give the impression that school students were also involved in those agitations, and also as a security cover/ruse on the expectation that the security forces could be reluctant to act against school students.

[23] Clausewitz, Carl Von, [1997], *On War*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd [Originally published in German in 1832], cited in Edwards, Aaron, [2009: 146], "Abandoning Armed Resistance? The Ulster Volunteer Force as a Case Study of Strategic Terrorism in Northern Ireland", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 32 [2], 146-166.

[24] Tse-Tung, Mao and Samuel B. Griffith, [2007], *On Guerrilla Warfare*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press [Translated from the original version Tse-Tung, Mao, [1937], *On Guerrilla Warfare*], cited in Kaempff, Sebastian, [2009: 131], "Violence and Victory: guerrilla warfare, 'authentic affirmation' and the overthrow of the colonial state", *Third World Quarterly*, 30 [1], February, 129-146.

[25] The last free and fair elections held, not only in the Eastern and Northern Provinces but also in the entire country, until 2015.

[26] The Tamil United Liberation Front [TULF] was the premier democratic political party of the Tamils from 1976 until 2000. The TULF was the successor to the *Thamil Arasu Katchi* [Federal Party] from 1949 to 1971 and the Tamil United Front [TUF] from 1971-1976. However, in 2001 the Tamil National Alliance [TNA] was formed incorporating the bulk of the TULF and former Tamil armed groups such as TELO, PLOTE, and EPRLF, which gave-up the armed struggle after the arrival of the Indian Peace Keeping Force [IPKF] in Sri Lanka in July 1987. The TNA has been the premier democratic political party of the Tamils from 2001 to date, having sixteen members in the current parliament of Sri Lanka (2015-2020).

[27] See De Silva, Kingsley M, [1981: 222-223], *Universal Franchise 1931-1981: The Sri Lankan Experience*, Colombo: Department of Government Information.

[28] Notwithstanding the fact that some younger members of the TULF parliamentarians tacitly supported different Tamil militant groups [especially the LTTE and TELO] in the 1970s and 1980s until the LTTE killed almost the entire TULF leadership in 1989 in Colombo.

[29] See Crenshaw, Martha, [1981], "The Causes of Terrorism", *Comparative Politics*, 13 (4), 384.

[30] The liberation struggles envisioned by Guevara, Lenin, Mao, et al, were against colonial, despotic, or feudal rulers rather than against democracies.

[31] See, for example, Clausewitz, Carl Von, *op cit.*, and Tse-Tung, Mao as well as Samuel B. Griffith, *op cit.*

[32] Pirapakaran's wife Mathivathani [prior to their marriage] was an undergraduate student at the University of Jaffna when she along with a group of female undergraduates staged a fast-unto death campaign protesting some political incident [which this author cannot remember anymore] within the premises of the university sometime in 1982. After few days into the fast-unto death campaign the health of the participants deteriorated. At that moment the LTTE intervened and kidnapped the protesters taking them by boat to Tamilnadu in India. The justification given to the general public by the LTTE for this forcible end to the fast-unto death campaign by an independent group of female undergraduates was that the lives of the protesters have to be saved for the armed struggle and that the LTTE could not allow the protesters to die in such callous manner. The foregoing is a concrete example of the primacy given to armed struggle by the LTTE as opposed to any form of non-violent political protests/struggles. While the group of kidnapped protesters was held in Tamilnadu by the LTTE, Pirapakaran fell in love with one of them, namely Mathivathani, whom he married in 1984.

[33] This was revealed by Ganesan [Iyer], one of the founder members of the Central Committee of the LTTE, and another middle-level leader during the course of interviews with this author. In spite of the fact that the LTTE participated in the Thimpu talks with the Government of Sri Lanka in 1985 [along with other Tamil armed groups] as a result of the facilitation by the Government of India and registered a political party named Popular Front of the Liberation Tigers [PFLT] in 1989 during the ceasefire with the then government, it was never genuinely committed to non-violent democratic political processes [be it participation in elections or organising political rallies or meetings to propagate its policies or demands]. However, the LTTE did use the Tamil United Liberation Front [TULF] until 1983 and the Tamil National Alliance [TNA] since the ceasefire in February 2002 until its demise in May 2009 as its proxy.

[34] See Ganesan [Iyer], [2011], *Eelap porattaththil enathu pathivugal: Pirapakaranodu pulikal amaipai arampitha naatkal....* [in Tamil] [My records of the Eelam struggle: days of establishment of the Tiger movement with Pirapakaran], Southall, Middlesex [UK]: Inioru.

[35] See, Ganesan [Iyer], *op cit.* In those days LTTE cadres had to be unmarried and were barred from having a girlfriend [females were deliberately kept out of becoming formal members of the group in order to keep the male members entirely devoted to the armed struggle]. This practice existed until Pirapakaran got married in late-1984. Later, with the formal recruitment of females into the organisation since 1985, the cadres were allowed to marry, but having girlfriend/s and extramarital affairs remained prohibited. Pirapakaran also took action to purge homosexuals from the movement in the early-1980s. One such victim was Ranjan [who was popularly known as Ranjan Lala] hailing from the Vadamarachchi area of the Jaffna peninsula. The witch hunt of Ranjan by Pirapakaran was revealed to this author by Nirmala Rajasingam, who was an academic at the University of Jaffna in the late-1970s and early 1980s and one of the earliest academic supporters of the LTTE, but deserted the LTTE in 1984 and sought asylum in the UK and remains there to this day.

[36] Balasingam, Anton, [1979], *The National Liberation Struggle of the Tamils*, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [underground publication].

[37] Vanni is the geographical area covering four out of five districts of the Northern Province, viz. Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaithivu, and Vavuniya. These four districts were/are sparsely populated jungle areas where all the Tamil armed groups had their military camps.

[38] This historical narrative of the birth and the first breakaway of the LTTE are based on firsthand experiences and information of this author as well as interviews with former members of the LTTE who are now in exile in India, the UK and in Sri Lanka. However, in any underground organisation/movement of this nature there is no perfect information available, which is acknowledged by this author. Ganesan [Iyer], *op cit.*, one of the original Central Committee members of the LTTE, in his memoir [in Tamil] alludes to a similar narrative.

[39] For example, the LTTE would forcibly occupy the homes of civilians and confiscate the vehicles of ordinary people claiming that those are "thesia soththu" [national assets].

[40] For example, the LTTE usually exaggerated their material and human strengths in order to entice the youths to join the movement. Moreover, the LTTE used to propagate that the Sri Lankan security forces routinely sexually harass and rape Tamil girls and women and therefore girls should join them and be armed in order to safeguard their honour and dignity. Although it is true that considerable number of Tamil girls and women have been raped and harassed by the security forces throughout the civil war period [and beyond], it was not routine and systemic as, for example, was the case in Bosnia in the mid-1990s.

[41] Guevara, Ernesto, *op cit.* 131.

[42] Guevara, Ernesto, *op cit.* 145.

[43] In this information age, the internet [especially the social media] is what almost all anti-state armed groups use very

effectively. Virtual communications have become the most important tool of propaganda for various causes throughout the world. The digital divide, in this respect, has been shrinking day by day.

[44] Guevara, Ernesto, *op cit.* 146.

[45] Until Pirapakaran got married in late-1984, the LTTE did not allow any of its armed cadres to get married and consciously avoided recruiting married persons to its military wing until its demise in 2009.

[46] See Human Rights Watch, [2004], *Living in Fear: Child Soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka*, 16 [13], New York: Human Rights Watch. URL; <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/srilanka1104.pdf>

[47] See Kaldor, Mary, [1999], *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, Oxford: Polity Press.

[48] Radu, Michael, [2009], "Gaza: Deterrence and other missed points", E-Notes, January 19, Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute. URL; <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200901.radu.gazaconflict.html> Wenger, Andreas and Simon Mason, [2008], "The Growing Importance of Civilians in Armed Conflict", *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, 3 [45], December, Zurich: ETH Centre for Security Studies.

[49] Anti-Tamil pogrom of July 1983 [popularly known as the 'Black July'] outside the Eastern and Northern Provinces was a spontaneous backlash against the ambush of 13 army personnel traveling in a truck [as a result of a landmine explosion and subsequent firing] near the Jaffna University by the LTTE. This was the first mass casualties of armed forces personnel in the protracted civil war in Sri Lanka. The previous casualties on the government side were all police personnel and only a few army personnel.

[50] The results of the interviews conducted throughout the Eastern and Northern Provinces during 2002-2006.

[51] The LTTE claimed to have lost around 35,000 of its cadres and the government claimed to have lost around 26,000 security forces personnel out of a total of about 125,000 lives lost between 1982 and 2009. The LTTE incurred its first casualty on November 27, 1982 and the last probably on May 18, 2009.

[52] See also; Sarvananthan, Muttukrishna, [2007], "In Pursuit of a Mythical State of Tamil Eelam: a rejoinder to Kristian Stokke", *Third World Quarterly*, 28 [6], 1185-95; Kristian Stokke's reply to Muttukrishna Sarvananthan's rejoinder in the same issue of the journal.

[53] See her memoir, Jayakumaran, Thamilini, [2015], *Oru Koorvaalin Nilalil* [in Tamil] [In the shadow of a sharp sword]: A *Memoir*, Kilinochchi [Sri Lanka]: Sivakami Foundation.

[54] "Suicide is the act of deliberately killing oneself. Risk factors for suicide include mental disorder [such as depression, personality disorder, alcohol dependence, or schizophrenia], and some physical illnesses, such as neurological disorders, cancer, and HIV infection." World Health Organization [WHO]. URL; <http://www.who.int/topics/suicide/en/>

[55] Radgari, Rusuf, [2008], "Over 60 percent of suicide bombers in Afghanistan are physically disabled", *The Mainichi Daily News*, October 22. URL; <http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20081022p2a00m0na002000c.html>

[56] Horowitz, Michael, [2008: 2], "The History and Future of Suicide Terrorism", E-Notes, August, Philadelphia, PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute. URL; <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200808.horowitz.suicideterrorism.html>

[57] World Health Organization. URL; http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide_rates/en/index.html and http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/sril.pdf

[58] Pape, Robert A. [2005], *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, New York: Random House.

[59] Horowitz, Michael, *op cit.* 3.

[60] Bloom, Mia, [2007], *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*, New York: Columbia University Press.

[61] Horowitz, Michael, *op cit.* 4.

[62] Because the LTTE broke-off from the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord and began fighting the Indian Peace Keeping Force [IPKF] from October 1987 till September 1989 until the IPKF was abruptly requested to withdraw from North and East of Sri Lanka by the then newly elected President of Sri Lanka.

[63] In defiance of the counsel by the then second-in-command/deputy leader, Kopalasamy Mahendrarajah [alias Sri annai or Mahathaya], and the political adviser to the LTTE leader, Anton Balasingam.

[64] Although the survey questionnaire did not directly ask a question whether they [children] would like to join the LTTE or not, regarding questions about their aspirations for the future [education, employment, etc] not a single respondent expressed a desire to become a combatant or join the LTTE in any other capacity. See Sarvananthan, Muttukrishna, [2006], *Children of War: Aspirations and Opportunities*, Point Pedro [Sri Lanka]: Point Pedro Institute of Development.

[65] Hindu, The, [2009], "Refugee kids dream of return to an isle of peace", January 25, Chennai, India. URL; <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/004200901251080.html>

[66] Amnesty International, [2004]. URL; <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA37/002/2004> *Child Soldiers Global Report*, [2008]. URL; www.child-soldiers.org/document/get?id=1453 Human Rights Watch, [2004], *Living in Fear: Child Soldiers and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka*, 16 [13], New York: Human Rights Watch. URL; <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/srilanka1104.pdf>

[67] Three groups were involved; the Hagana, International Zionist League [IZL], and Lechi. [See Tavin, Ely, and Yonah Alexander [Ed], [1986], *Terrorists or Freedom Fighters: A Tool for the Full Understanding of Who They Are and How They Affect Civilization Today*, Virginia [USA]: HERO Books.

[68] Three groups were involved; namely the African National Congress [ANC], Inkatha Freedom Party, and the Pan-Africanist Congress.

[69] At least two main groups, namely the Palestinian Liberation Organisation [PLO] and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PFLP], were involved. The PLO itself was an umbrella organisation of several armed Palestinian groups; Fatah being the dominant one.

[70] Mukti Bahini, Mujib Bahini, Z [Zia] Force, and K [Khaled] Force.

[71] For example, while the LTTE eliminated virtually the entire leadership of the TULF in 1989, it did not do any harm to another erstwhile democratic Tamil party, viz. All Ceylon Tamil Congress [ACTC], because it was a petty party with just marginal popular support.

[72] Ganesan [Iyer], *op cit*.

[73] Noticed by this author on the wall of an LTTE office building on a visit to Kilinochchi [Northern Sri Lanka] in March 2003 as part of a United Nations [UN] Mission to present the post-conflict needs assessment at a workshop co-hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka [GoSL], LTTE, and the UN.

[74] "A nation must think before it acts" – anonymous.

[75] According to an elderly person during a casual conversation with this author in the LTTE-controlled area of Vanni in 2005.

[76] See Whittaker, David J. [Ed], [2001: 3-4], *The Terrorism Reader*, London and New York: Routledge.s