

Navigating Our Peoples' Struggle Through Uncharted Territories

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Introduction

The loss of territories held by the LTTE to the Sri Lankan state in an atrocious war at a very high cost to the Tamil civilians, particularly in Vanni. This has naturally caused angst and anger among the Tamil communities everywhere. Once the emotions subside and the desire to overcome the disastrous phase in our peoples' lives takes over, many among the Expatriate communities are beginning ask the questions that should have been asked long, long ago. As part of this process this document was prepared for a discussion held at the Tamil Information Centre, Thulasi, Richmond Upon Thames, London, on the 22nd March 2009.

As the purpose is to have an inclusive process to pool the resources for constructive use of our brethren in Sri Lanka, this document is written in four parts and in points form. Part I & II deals with the internal and external conditions that determines our peoples lives and struggles today. Part III gives the relevant political mileposts since the island's independence from the British. Sixty years ago.

Part IV lists the three possible pathways as political options for our people, and what are the immediate steps for each of them.

Part I

Internal conditions

1. Socio-political

1.1a. Tamils are more unified, not necessarily united, as different communities.

1.2a. Tamils have achieved minimum political status through the 13th amendment demarcated by the Indo-Lanka Accord.

1.3a. Tamils have their upper bound of their political aspiration set by the MOU reached between the LTTE and SL state, demarcated by the Oslo Accord.

1.4a. Tamils and Muslims have reached a socio-dynamic political equilibrium in the North and East, largely due to the imposition of the static Provincial Council.

1.5a. Tamils are more aware of their differences as communities and are aspiring for greater unity.

1.6a. Tamil Diaspora has become stabilised as sustainable individual 'economic entities' in major Western cities, particularly in Europe.

1.7a. Tamils are divided in their eventual political objectives.

1.8a. Tamil groups, including the LTTE, do not have cohesive strategy or perspective.

- 1.9a. There are no political administration or guidance for the Tamils.
- 1.10a. Tamils have lost many of their social layers vital for their survival and completeness.
- 1.11a. Tamils have lost most of their social institutions vital to uphold civic norms and conducts.
- 1.12a. Tamils' armed-struggle, the major component of their political activity, until now interpreted as a protracted-war has reached is very low point.
- 1.13b. Tamil speaking Muslims have the same issues with the SL state.
- 1.14b. Tamil speaking Muslims have the same issues with Tamil Eelam propositions, about their belongings and rights.
- 1.15b. The expulsion and the ethnic cleansing of the Tamil speaking Muslim communities from the North and traditional issues about land and resources still remain moot point for separate Islamic units in the North and East.
- 1.16b. Tamil speaking Muslims' effort to reach a separate settlement with the SL state has not succeeded, and the emboldened greater-Sinhala constituency does not recognise their claims.
- 1.17b. Tamil speaking Muslims have the same fractional difficulties under the call of an Islamic-nation, just as the Tamils for the banner of Tamil Eelam.
- 1.18b. Increasing confidence level in a power-sharing life, largely due to the arrangements with the TMVP lead Eastern provincial government, with Tamils has weakened the political strength of Islamist and the Jihadis among the Tamil speaking Muslims.
- 1.19c. The citizenship issue of the Upcountry Tamils has been settled constitutionally, more than a lakh of people and their families still waiting for their settlement.
- 1.20c. The Upcountry Tamils are moving away from the traditional strangle hold of their unions, the CWC and DWC, and are beginning to have community based political views.
- 1.21c. Sinhala political parties, including the JVP, have made inroads into the political culture of the Upcountry Tamils.

2. Socio-economical

- 2.1a. Vast majority of the Tamils are not in gainful employment or production.
- 2.2a. Traditional Tamil economic activities, farming and fishing have been severely hampered.
- 2.3a. The Tamil labour-pool to sustain a self-contained economy has been severely depleted.
- 2.4a. The Tamil male : female ratio in the North is severely distorted, while it has become stabilised at a depreciable rate in the East.
- 2.5a. The Tamil gene pool of the propagating age range has become severely limited.
- 2.6a. Tamils have severe socio-health deficiency in terms of the physical and mental well-being.

2.7a. Tamil war widows and orphans are proportionally large numbers, and critical for particular communities within North and East.

2.8a. Large numbers of Tamils, who supply the labour in the North and East, have become IDPs, migrating from camp to camp.

2.9a. Majority of Tamils with 'income' from their Expatriate-relatives and affected by internecine wars between Tamil groups have chosen to live in the Western province and surrounding areas or Tamil Nadu, India.

2.10a. Standardisation and positive discrimination towards the socially disadvantaged people, together with regional universities have served the Tamils in the East well. Now they have a middle class wanting to be assertive about the issues concerning the East, particularly the Batticola people.

2.10b. Economical conditions of the Tamil speaking Muslims in the North and East, in terms of stratification are similar to the Tamils, except they have the full set of the social strata.

2.11b. The middle and upper strata of the Tamil speaking Muslims have sort to and have improved their economical status during the military struggle between the LTTE and the state.

2.12b. Social indicators such as household income per head, literacy rate among men and women, schooling, number in full time education, life expectancy, employment level, poverty level, are similar among the Tamils and the Islamic speaking Tamils in the North and East.

2.13b. Standardisation has also served the Tamil speaking Muslims well, particularly in the East, just as the disadvantaged Tamils, and they have middle strata bigger than that belonging to the traditional business activities.

2.14c. Up country Tamils are developing a professional and educated layer within their communities.

2.15c. They fall far, far behind in all the social and economical indicators to every community in the island. The fact that their poverty level has gone backwards, to more than 50%, when the whole island has improved by 6% (leaving the North and East out) tells their conditions completely.

2.16c. Upcountry Tamils are vulnerable to the oppression of the Sri Lankan state much more than any other communities.

3. Expatriate Communities

3.1 a. Tamil expatriates have established themselves as economically stable and prosperous entities in many Western cities, particular in Europe (1.6 a).

3.2 a. Values perpetuated by the Anglophile professional classes set the aspirations for the Tamil communities in the UK, Canada, Australia and Norway.

3.3 a. Tamil Expatriate communities in others countries have more 'traditional' aspirations as a community, largely due to the lack of strong middle classes.

3.4 a. Tamils' integration into the host communities through inter-racial economic activities and social activities has increased in the UK, and will be the trend- setter for the communities in

Canada and other European countries.

3.5 a. Tamils 'settled' in Tamil Nadu with little help as possible from their Western cousins, are beginning to integrate into their local communities.

Part II

External conditions

1. India

1.1 The ruling elites and the developing 'middle-classes', which cannot be considered as a single unit in every aspect, have fully subscribed to the vision of an India within a 'globalised world'.

1.2 Instead of leaving the process towards that world to the evolutionary events that put them in that path, they also want to set the parameters for the possible pathways towards it.

1.3 As a consequence, the non-state actors, the new terminology for activities outside the legal control of a recognised authority cannot be allowed to prevail.

1.4 While there is consensus among main steam political parties, i.e. everyone aspiring for share of power at the centre, on this issue about alien groups, they are reluctant to apply the full force of their own definitions to the locale.

1.5 Indian authority's view on national liberation, instead of shaped by their own experiences against the colonial oppression, is hampered by its relationship with Pakistan with particular reference to Kashmir, just as US view to social justice is constraint by its misconstrued relationship with Cuba.

1.6 Indian 'interests' have been redefined at least twice during the past few decades, largely due to the international changes, but has the same underlying tenet of argument: the inner and outer regions defined by Indra Gandhi doctrine, given increased importance for the inner region through Gujral doctrine and developed beyond in the most recent times aim to preserve non-alignment of the inner-region to any particular global political-military organisation or state.

1.7 India presently feel assured of its security interests in terms of challenges from elsewhere. However, challenges come in different forms in the globalised world, which India feel not assured.

1.8 At the present phase Tamils are not considered an asset on the long run by the Indian authorities, and they want to exchange their investment and losses India has had during the global phase-change, to newer assets it hopes will bring great dividends.

1.9 The reassessment of their assets in the island means, instead of 'Tamils', "Tamil speaking communities" separately and, the Lankans as a whole have more values to India.

1.10 As the leading political classes in Tamil Nadu have subscribed to the centre for development and security, their views only have marginal variations to the centralised views on the non-state actors, capitalism, globalisation and everything else.

2. International Community

2.1 IC recognises the dispute between the state and the Tamils as fundamental.

2.2 IC recognise any resolution must involves sharing the sovereign power between the communities and as citizens.

2.3 IC through the Co- Chair has the share the view on non-state actors India.

2.4 IC differentiates the quest for nationhood between those from the developed world and developing world.

2.5 India will be the deciding factor on any eventualities on Sri Lanka.

2.6 India would try to contain any events in the island within a regional context.

2.7 There are no differences in principles that define the overall security of the region between the major powers.

2.8 Economical interests of the major powers that already have vested interests in the region determine the decisive positions in the region.

2.9 The economical interests in the region are determined by (i) global conditions, (ii) global status and position of the powers and other factors that are intrinsic to the peoples in the region. Just as the basic economic factors, the social transformations of the people in the region are also determining factors that evolve accordingly.

2.10 Indian policy to diminish the role of the LTTE will continue even if there is a change in the government at the centre.

Part III

Few points for reference and guidance

Tamils struggle for their full democratic rights have so far gone through three phases.

1. The Parliamentary political phase (up to the early 80s)

1.1 The basic strategy was to translate the Tamils votes into devolved political power through deals with a major Sinhala political party.

1.2 The number game of this type was never going to work, especially when the parties that represented the Tamil speaking communities each wanted to have separate deals with the governments of the day.

1.3 Parties represented the Tamil speaking communities promoted the aspirations of the few and not the majority of their communities.

1.4 As “each for their own” was considered the way forward, trading-off others for ones benefit was also acceptable, and along this path came the 50-50 proposals and the betrayal of the Upcountry Tamils.

2. The India supported militant phase (from early 80s to early 90s)

2.1 There weren't a particular strategy adapted by the Tamil militant movement as a whole, though

there were several attempts to bring about one.

2.2 There were two distinct proposals (i) purely based on a military strategy to defeat the presence and the purpose of the Sri Lankan military forces in the North and East, (ii) a political struggle supported by armed actions, to defeat the Sri Lankan state in order to restructure it.

2.3 Indian intervention from the outset was clear about its objectives (i) some form of autonomy for the North and East, and prevent political separation of the island as a unit, (ii) use Tamil militants who will deliver that result, and its own strategic objectives in a very short time.

2.4 Apart from the Indian diplomatic activities, which prepared the ground work, high impact operations (i) Anuradapura terrorist attack and the massacres of the innocent Sinhalese and (ii) Chavakachcheri Police station attack persuaded Sri Lanka to participate in a talk with the Tamil militants, in Thimbu.

2.5 The success of the Sri Lankan military operations in the North, and the ineffective use of guerrilla tactics of the militants, mainly the LTTE and EROS, within a particularly disadvantaged international circumstances brought about India's direct intervention.

So there were Bangalore Talks, where the LTTE was promoted as the principal Tamil representatives, and Delhi talks, which led to the Indo-Lanka Accord.

In between the LTTE destroyed every other political or military organisation.

2.6 Indo-Lanka Accord concluded the citizenship issue for the Upcountry Tamils, declared as the 4th Thimbu Principle, and Tamil Language was also adapted as a state language along Sinhala and English.

2.7 North and East were merged as one province and 13th amendment provided decentralised power to 8 provinces.

2.8 IPKF-LTTE war ensured India was ejected from the island by the combined forces of LTTE military and Sri Lankan state power & authority.

3. The LTTE's de facto state phase (from the early 90s to the present)

3.1 String of military successes for the LTTE together with a discernable political attitude change in brings Chandrika to power on a peace-ticket.

3.2 Chandrika's (+Nelan) proposal to resolve the conflict, sabotaged from within and rejected by the LTTE. Second proposal, watered-down version of the first gets nowhere, Nelan was murdered.

3.3 Some reversals for the LTTE, it loses Jaffna peninsula, but establishes firm hold on the Vanni area from east to west coasts, and some areas in the East. The LTTE ethnically cleansed the North of Muslims.

3.4 Norway enters with proximity talks and Ranil agrees a MOU with the LTTE, and a non-contiguous de facto state is established, for Vanni and the areas in the East. The LTTE enters into talks with the Muslims.

3.5 Oslo Accord is agreed, but not taken further, as there was prevarication and obstruction from both antagonists.

3.6 There was a change in the IC's approach to the LTTE even during these peace-talks and program to unseat the LTTE was evident. The destruction caused by the Tsunami was also

weakens the LTTE militarily.

3.7 LTTE helps to bring Mahinda-family to power, and the program against the LTTE was in full flow. The strategic objective is to dismiss its veto-power, and the tactics were to weaken it militarily and politically.

3.8 APRC is used as a ploy to frustrate IC , including India by the SL government. Yet, it recognise the need for a self-administrating unit for the Upcountry Tamils.

3.9 The LTTE was pushed outside the East achieving both the objectives, with the organisation was split denying space as well as recruitment ground. Its claim for sole-representation is severely weakened with the provincial and district elections in the East.

3.10 Indian policy makers push the strategy further, and the chance and their need to reassert their assets in the island and join force with Mahinda to reduce the LTTE into an ordinary low-intensive, non-conventional military unit.

3.11 Present political dilemma for the Tamils.

Part IV

Possible Pathways

1. Persisting with the call for Tamil Eelam, a separate state for the Tamils in the North and East of Ceylon.

Basic Arguments

A. Internal Policy

1A.1 Tamils, the indigenous people have the rights over their land, which shall be called Tamil Eelam.

1A.2 Tamils have the inalienable right to fight for and defend the land of Tamil Eelam.

1A.3 All other communities though have the right to live and work the land, cannot have a historical claim over the Tamil lands.

1A.4 Muslims are another nation.

1A.5 Upcountry Tamils are another nation.

1A.6 Tamil Eelam can only be established by a protracted war against the Sri Lankan state, which is the occupying force.

1A.7 Establishing a de facto state is the basic political strategy beneath the protracted war.

1A.8 The LTTE is the only means to deliver Tamil Eelam.

B. External Policy

1B.1 Tamil Expatriate communities should play a supporting role galvanising the international opinion for Tamil Eelam.

1B.2 At present the Expatriate communities must act to reverse the ban on the LTTE, the sole-representatives of the Tamils, because Tamil Eelam is their sole aspiration.

1B.3 IC or India has no right to interfere in the affairs of Tamil Eelam, under the guise of 'interests' or 'security', unless they recognise the right for Tamil Eelam and its sole-representative body, the LTTE.

1B.4 Indian government is fundamentally opposed to Tamil Eelam aspiration.

1B.5 Securing support among the Tamil Nadu masses and radical politicians can be useful, at times essential.

C. Next possible steps

1C.1 Continuation of the war against the state in guerrilla form until the Sri Lankan forces suffer strategic set backs at the hands of the LTTE.

1C.2 Presently, campaign to stop the war and reverse the ban on the LTTE.

1C.3 Prove the illegitimacy of the rule of Sri Lanka in the North and East through international institutions.

1C.4 Set up a form of (phantom) "government in exile", which can be moved about through out the world where Expatriate communities are stable, if the LTTE leadership has to vacate North and East, effectively away from the masses.

2. All the Tamil issues can be settled by working within the constitutional framework of the Sri Lankan state.

Basic Arguments

A. Internal Policy

2A.1 Tamil Eelam struggle under the LTTE is unacceptable, and because of them unattainable, therefore should be abandoned.

2A.2 Tamils should be freed from the LTTE before any resolution to the ethnic crisis can be found.

2A.3 Sri Lankan military operations, though costly for the Tamils, are the only way and should be supported with conditions on human rights.

2A.4 APRC and other consultative processes are adequate means of arriving at a solution for the ethnic crisis.

B. External Policy

2B.1 IC and India can help the process to find a resolution and reconciliation between the communities, but should not 'interfere' in the Sri Lankan affairs.

2B.2 None other than 2B.1.

C. Next possible steps

2C.1 All Sri Lankan state sponsored groups and personalities coming together on a loose-alliance.

2C.1 Press for Provincial Council elections for the North.

2C.3 Hope for serious money as 'peace-dividend' to spend on development programs in the North and East.

3. Establishing for the political demarcation of all the Tamil speaking communities in United-Sri Lanka, within a conflict resolution framework.

Basic Arguments

A. Internal Policy

3A.1 Every Tamil speaking community has fundamental dispute with the Sri Lankan state.

3A.2 The basis of that dispute is about their belongings and the rights to usurp them, and not about rights on the basis of a minority or human rights.

3A.3 The fact they all happened to speak Tamil specify them for the denial of their inalienable rights.

3A.4 "Each for their own" would not restore their full democratic rights as defined in 3A.2 for any Tamil speaking community.

3A.5 The Tamil speaking communities have distinct identities. They are due to their (i) historical origins manifested in their regional and religious differences, and (ii) social transformations classified as casts in the Asiatic mode of production and social relations.

3A.6 We define, "Nation is a consistent, yet evolving socio-political entity encompassing several communities bound by a common language and an underlying economic life, which also associate the people to a historically claimed geographical domain, with a history and myths manifested as cultural traits." Therefore, calling anyone one of the Tamil speaking community would fall short of being a fully fledging nation.

3A.7 The Tamil speaking communities as a whole constitute the basic criteria for nationhood.

3A.8 The nationhood defined as above in 3A.6 & 7 can be constructed within a united Sri Lanka, without contractions with the notion of Sinhala nationalism, an anti-thesis for Sinhala greater-nationalism and chauvinism.

3A.9 Unified approach by all the Tamil speaking communities are essential, even with the international input, to persuade the Sinhala peoples and their ruling classes for a resolution of their common dispute with the state.

3A.10 The resolution of the ethnic crisis on the basis envisaged above is the only way for the Sinhala masses to free themselves from the tyranny of their history, and social justice for all the toiling masses in the island.

3A.11 Any resolution to the ethnic crisis must constitute the restructuring of the Sri Lankan state to accommodate the spirit and character of the multi-ethnic nature and the human rights of all individuals.

3A.12 Any resolution to the ethnic crisis cannot fall short of the Indo-Lanka Accord, and be above that of the MOU administrative agreements, if it is to constitute a united-Sri Lanka.

3A.13 A solution can only be achieved if it is approached from a conflict-resolution framework, and beyond the basis of an interim solution.

3A.14 While right to defend is an inalienable right of any community, it alone cannot be the basis of finding the solution for the ethnic crisis. That means, either the state or the Tamil militants cannot achieve or should be allowed to achieve a military solution to the crisis.

3A.15 A military solution by the Sri Lankan state cannot be anything other than ethnic demise of the Tamils as a people in the island, and the conclusion of the Sinhala chauvinists' program to appropriate the entire island in the name of the Sinhala people.

A military solution by the Tamil militants has no serious practical meaning.

3A.16 Tamil nationalism, though misrepresented, cannot be ignored and set aside by any conflict resolution model.

B. External Policy

3B.1 India holds the key to the final resolution of the ethnic crisis in the island.

3B.2 Empowerment of Tamil Nadu within the Indian state is as essential as the Tamil speaking peoples campaign.

3B.3 Tamil Nadu should be part of a regional solution that constitutes the resolution to the crisis in the island.

3B.4 Tamil Nadu, though can be empathetic to the Tamil speaking peoples plight in the island, they cannot be partial in its approach to the solution to the ethnic crisis in the island.

3B.5 Tamil speaking people in the island have serious responsibilities towards the regional security that includes the tradition of non-alignment to any powers outside the region.

3B.6 Any resolution to the ethnic crisis must include a comprehensive development package on the basis of a program of empowerment of every community in the island and the surrounding region.

C. Next possible steps

3C.1 Strive to achieve Minimum of Understanding among all the Tamil speaking groups and Sinhala groups and parties.

3C.2 Strive to achieve Eelam National Council (ENC), a forum for discussion for the Tamil speaking people, within the context and constitution of a united Sri Lanka.

3C.3 Strive to establish Regional Development Fund and, most importantly an Eelam Development Fund (EDF), within a regional development program.

3C.4 Strive to achieve a constructive role for the Expatriate communities, within the Tamil speaking peoples' campaign and its structure, to democratise the Sri Lankan state.

3C.5 Act as a conduit and catalyst between the Tamils speaking communities and the Sinhala communities to wards a resolution to the crisis.

4. Options for the IC, including India

4.1 Pursue Sri Lanka for a devolution package that mollifies the Tamil militancy.

4.1a Try and create mechanism(s) that may deliver that package.

4.1b The mechanism(s) will have international elements to it, based on development as way out for those in long time conflict.

4.2 Pursue the LTTE until it changes its policies or leadership.

4.2a Maintain military embargo and pressurise Expatriate groups and persons supporting the LTTE.

4.2b Try to formulate alternative leadership to the LTTE.

4.3 Impose a solution, in an extreme circumstance.

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