
Tigers Tamed, but What Next?

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Introduction

Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka turned violent since the late 1970s as radicalised Sri Lankan Tamil youth resorted to armed means. Belief in militancy and sympathy for militants gradually rose among the Tamils, especially after ethnic riots of 1983. With the massive ingress of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees after the 1983 riots, India could not “remain unaffected by the events.”¹ New Delhi, in view of its national security interests and stability in the region, offered its good offices to resolve the conflict. The failure of various peace missions prompted India to enter into an accord with Sri Lanka in July 1987 “to establish peace and normalcy” in the Island.² In a surprising turn of events, the Sri Lankan state turned against India and secretly aided the Liberation of Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) against the Indian Peace-keeping Force (IPKF).³ However, within a short span of the IPKF’s departure, ‘Eelam War-II’ broke out between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan security forces in June 1990. The new government under Chandrika Kumaratunga in 1994 seriously initiated talks with the LTTE based on comprehensive devolution proposals. The talks, however, broke down due to the LTTE’s obduracy. Gradually, Chandrika became convinced of the rightness of the “war-for-peace” programme after the security forces achieved some spectacular victories in 1995 and early 1996 that included wresting of Jaffna from the LTTE. But the government forces started facing reverses starting from July 1996. On 22 February 2002, with the Norwegian mediation, a ceasefire agreement (CFA) was signed between the government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) headed by Ranil Wickremasinghe and the LTTE. In due course, however, the CFA was relegated to paper. The LTTE’s sporadic suicide and air attacks triggered open confrontation between the two antagonists

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in August 2006. The present spell of confrontation reached a new high in 2008-09 as the government under President Mahinda Rajapakse determinately pursued its “war for peace” programme: resolving the ethnic issue by defeating the LTTE. As of April 2009, the government was in a position to confine the LTTE to a few square kilometres in Mullaithivu district, but not without colossal human and material cost. Parallel efforts towards peace are not encouraging.

End of a Ceasefire and Beginning of a Ceaseless Fire

The Rajapakse government abrogated the CFA in January 2008 stating “the agreement has become a dead letter” in the wake of “senseless violence by the LTTE”.⁴ In reality, however, the government believed that the CFA stood as an obstacle for its formal military thrust against the Tigers. President Rajapakse had also been under tremendous pressure from hardline parties like Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) ever since he signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with them during his bid for presidentship in 2005.⁵ One of the conditions laid by the two parties for supporting Rajapakse as president was abrogation of the CFA. Rajapakse successfully evaded the promise for nearly two years, but could not do so for long.

‘Declared war’ commenced with the government forces launching a four-pronged attack on the LTTE-controlled areas (comprising the full districts of Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi and parts of Mannar, Vavuniya and Jaffna). Task Force 1 and 58 Division were entrusted with the Mannar front; Task Force 2 and 57 Division took care of advancing from Vavuniya; the newly raised 59 Division was put in charge of the Weli Oya area; 53 and 55 Divisions guarded forward defence lines (FDLs) along Muhamaalai in the northern front. The plan was to gradually encircle Kilinochchi, the LTTE’s administrative capital, from all sides.⁶

However, the advance of government forces at the Mannar front was relatively rapid. In April 2008, Madhu was captured. In July, Viduthalaitivu, one of the key bases of the “Sea Tigers”, fell. By August, the military took control of Vellankulam, Kalekuda jetty, Thunkkai, Uyilankulam, Palamoddai and Thannimuruppukulam. During the year, the army captured several other strategic positions like Adamban, Illuppaikaduvali, Nachikuda, Akkarayankulam, Devil’s Point, Pooneryn, Nedunkerni, Mankulam and Paranthan from the LTTE. Kilinochchi, the administrative capital of the LTTE, fell on 2 January 2009 and the strategic Elephant Pass a week later.⁷ This was considered as major blow to the LTTE and a clear indication of the end of its conventional capability. As of end-April 2009, the Tigers were restricted to few square kilometres in the district.

The Sri Lankan Air Force (SLAF) and Navy (SLN) ably aided the army in the advancement. The SLAF – that gained sophistication to overcome the air defence systems of the LTTE – played a vital role in supporting the ground troops and as well as destroying the Tigers’ military installations and conventional defences. Precision aerial bombings to kill LTTE leaders, based on specific intelligence, have also been the SLAF’s additional task.⁸ The SLAF has also been mandated to neutralise the air power capability of the LTTE. The SLN has been used to mainly cut the maritime supply lines of the LTTE and, at the same time, weaken the “Sea Tigers”. Cooperation of the Indian Navy was crucial in this regard.⁹ With the addition of the Rapid Action Boat Squadron that uses rigid hull inflatable boats, the SLN was able to operate even in shallow waters.

It should be pointed out that the overall professionalism of the Sri Lankan armed forces has improved in the recent past. New training modules, coupled with increased training tenures, attractive monetary compensation, sophisticated weapon systems, new fighting strategies and tactics, etc have increased the confidence of the government soldiers. The employment of deep penetration units (under long range reconnaissance patrol) by the Sri Lanka Army, for instance, was a novel, unconventional method to take on select LTTE targets.¹⁰ This paid rich dividends in not only neutralising some important LTTE commanders, but also in penetrating the thus far impregnable LTTE-controlled territories. Significantly, this was ably backed by a strong and determined politico-military leadership in Colombo. The government skilfully exploited the international environment against “terrorism” to grind its axe against the Tigers. In addition, the Sri Lankan military has been benefitting from liberal military help from various countries like China, Pakistan, Israel, India, United States, Ukraine and Iran.¹¹ The GOSL has also been fairly successful in obtaining the diplomatic support of important countries like India and the United States in stifling the LTTE’s supplies – monetary and material – from outside.

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On its part, during 'Eelam War – IV', the Tigers have been following three broad military strategies against the government forces. Firstly, at the conventional level, the main aim of the Tigers was to resist the rapidly advancing Sri Lankan Army with air cover. The LTTE, however, failed miserably in this strategy that resulted in shrinking of their territory from 15,000 sq km in 2006 to just about 15 sq km in April 2009. The Tigers have been overwhelmed by both superior fire- power and numbers of the government forces. Secondly, the LTTE has been using 'hit and run' tactics in the east and Jaffna to make its presence felt, but also to keep the security forces occupied. As the conventional capability dwindled, the Tigers started falling back on guerrilla tactics as the dominant mode of resistance. The idea is also to kill "informers" and "traitors", especially those belonging to non-LTTE Tamil groups like Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP), Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP), People's Liberation Organisation for Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and Eelam People's Revolutionary Front (EPRLF.) Thirdly, the Tigers use suicide tactics to hit vital targets across the Island. The LTTE also uses its air wing to launch sporadic air attacks on important targets and also to keep alive an element of surprise.¹²

Despite these triple strategies, the LTTE had to face a severe military setback due to a few important factors. Firstly, Karuna, one of the able LTTE commanders from the east, deserted with a chunk of cadres in March 2004 to connive with the government forces. Karuna's men knew the terrain well, and also provided timely and useful intelligence to the government forces. They also, to a greater extent, stifled local support for the Tigers in the east.¹³ Secondly, during the same period, the LTTE started facing international isolation for various reasons. The international community was irritated over the LTTE's obduracy and not being willing to negotiate, except on its own terms. The way the Tigers violated the CFA further annoyed the international community, which, especially after 9/11, was equating any use of illegal violence by non-state actors to "terrorism". Meanwhile, the "international safety net" woven by the previous Ranil Wickremasinghe regime worked. As a result, as of early 2009, the LTTE was banned by as many as 31 countries, the latest being Sri Lanka itself.¹⁴ This severely impinged on arms and funds flows to the Tigers. The LTTE's network with various Indian militant groups indirectly pushed New Delhi to cooperate with the Sri Lankan state to dent the Tigers' military capability.¹⁵ Thirdly, the LTTE has lost some of its best leaders in the recent past. The list includes, apart from Karuna, Shankar, the founding chief of the LTTE air wing; Anton Balasingham, the political adviser and ideologue of the LTTE; Tamilselvan, chief of the LTTE's political wing; Balraj, considered

as one of the chief military strategists of the LTTE, who led the Tigers in many successful military missions; Charles, head of the LTTE's military intelligence and considered an able fighter. The fall of these "important pillars" obviously weakened the LTTE.

To make a turnaround, the LTTE has been desperately looking for a lifeline. During his "Hero's Day" speech delivered on 27 November 2008, the Tiger chief Prabhakaran appealed to the international community "to understand the deep aspirations and friendly overtures of our people, to remove their ban on us and to recognise our just struggle." He, especially, requested the leaders and people of Tamil Nadu "to raise their voice firmly in favour of our struggle for a Tamil Eelam state, and to take appropriate and positive measures

to remove the ban which remains an impediment to an amicable relationship between India and our movement."¹⁶ Since the LTTE chief was not sure of a positive response from New Delhi, the appeal was made through Tamil Nadu. However, the support for the LTTE is not overwhelming and recent protests in the southern state were mainly against the humanitarian crisis of the ongoing war.¹⁷

However, as resource flow from other sources dwindled, the LTTE was adept in renewing supply lines from India. India is not only geographically closer, but also easier for building networks due to the ethnic factor and the presence of a large number of Sri Lankan Tamils in Tamil Nadu. The list of smuggled materials includes paraphernalia needed for making bombs, steel or aluminum ingots for improvised explosive devices, detonators, chemicals, batteries, rations, fuel, medicine, resin, boat parts, clothes, adhesives, walkie-talkies, global positioning system (GPS) devices, mobile SIM cards, lifejackets and multitester meters, torchlights, and satellite receiver phones.¹⁸ The procurement modules are directly controlled by LTTE agents operating in the southern states of India. The modus operandi is that the requisite materials are procured from all over India and smuggled via fishing villages along the coasts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. In Tamil Nadu, the network operates mostly along the Rameswaram-

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Tuticorin-Cuddalore stretch. Both Indians and Sri Lankans are part of the network. Fishermen who are used as couriers are identified carefully. There is no pattern to frequency and timing of the movement of supplies. However, the smuggling takes place mostly by night, under the cover of darkness. Supplies of lethal nature are camouflaged by food materials taken for personal use. Goods are delivered in mid-sea or near the shore.¹

The Cost of Conflict

The ongoing conflict has inflicted severe human and material costs.

The contours of the humanitarian crisis range from people caught in the conflict areas, the plight of those internally displaced in the northeast and those who flee from the country as refugees. By conservative estimates, at least 40,000 civilians are still trapped in the crossfire in Mullaithivu district. Appreciably, the government has suspended heavy firing and aerial raids which would have caused numerous casualties.²⁰ Yet the situation is life threatening. There is severe shortage for food, life-saving drugs and other essentials like water. People are surviving on the food convoys from the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). They are too little and too late, however. It has become difficult even to evacuate the sick and wounded to the hospitals located in the government-controlled areas.²¹

The government has designated “safe zones” for the trapped civilians to cross over. But, the “safe zones” have not been really safe. While the GOSL wants use these zones to filter out LTTE cadres from non-combatants, the Tigers wish to infiltrate into government-controlled areas through “safe zones”. Fearing further loss of territory and attrition, the Tigers do not like the civilians to move from these “safe zones”. As a result, the sanctity of the “safe zones” is lost. The Sri Lankan government is unwilling to allow aid agencies and media into the “safe zones”, citing safety. In reality, however, the government thinks that the presence of media personnel and aid agencies would hinder military push to capture the remaining territory from the LTTE.²²

Civilians who have crossed over into government-controlled areas remain displaced, taking shelter in camps and welfare centres. Overall, about 600,000 are displaced internally, including 235,000 in the past few months; over 30,000 have fled to India as refugees during ‘Eelam War-IV’, braving arrest by either the Sri Lankan Navy or the Indian Navy.²³ The numbers are expected to increase further as the forces advance.

Economically, the island is suffering from expensive short-term foreign

debt, declining foreign exchange reserves and a high deficit. Present foreign exchange reserves of about \$1.5 billion are enough only to finance two months of imports. Although the oil prices are currently down, fluctuations may gobble up the current reserves sooner. The ongoing global economic crisis has added to the woes by hitting key export sectors like tea and garments.²⁴ The garment industry, especially, is in peril due to the threat of permanent suspension of lucrative trade concession by the European Union (EU) if the Sri Lankan government continues to ignore human

rights concerns. Called the “GSP+ scheme”, the concessions helped Sri Lanka net a record \$2.9 billion from EU markets in 2007, or 37.5 per cent of the total export income.²⁵ In addition, travel advisories from important countries like the United States, Australia, Germany, Canada, Russia, Britain and New Zealand have constrained tourist flows—tourism is one of Sri Lanka’s main sources of foreign exchange. The eastern parts of the island, one of the best tourist attractions, have not yet been made safe for visitors.

Foreign remittances, yet another major foreign exchange earner, have helped to meet the balance of payments crisis. However, there are concerns that these inflows would decline as there has been a sudden change in the economic fortunes of oil-producing countries, where many of the Sri Lankan expatriate workers are concentrated, with the decline in oil prices. This apart, in the global context of economic recession, there is a significant fall in the foreign direct and portfolio investments.²⁶

Appreciably, inflation has come down, but is still a cause of concern to the common man whose real income has not kept pace with inflation. Rural areas, President Rajapakse’s main power base, have largely been shielded from economic woes through populist budgets and development projects. However, how long this can be sustained is the big question.²⁷ The government is counting on aid flows meant for post-war reconstruction to bail itself out of the crisis. But too much reliance on post-dated cheques is economically unwise. At the same time, one cannot discount the fact that durable peace can bring a turnaround to the ailing economy. Agriculture and fisheries are promising sectors in a peaceful northeast. In addition, Sri Lanka is emerging as one of the key backyards of the services sector, especially business and knowledge outsourcing.

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Thorny Path to Peace...

APRC Report and Polls in the East

The Rajapakse government appointed the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) in 2006 to “fashion creative options that satisfy minimum expectations as well as provide a comprehensive approach to the resolution of the national question”.²⁸ The committee, in its interim report submitted in January 2008, advised the president to implement the 13th Amendment to the Constitution.²⁹ Even after 63 meetings of deliberations for over 18 months, the committee could produce nothing “creative”. It just did what President Rajapakse wanted it to do to demonstrate to the international community that there was “good progress” on developing a devolution package.³⁰ In reality, however, the problem with the APRC is its unrepresentativeness. Important Opposition parties like the United National Party (UNP), Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) and Tamil National Alliance (TNA) are not part of the committee deliberations. Thus, the principal objective of “generating a consensual political document” on the ethnic issue is lost. Unless this shortcoming is overcome, all efforts of the APRC would be in vain.

It is appreciable that President Rajapakse conducted elections firstly to local councils in Batticaloa district in March and then to the now demerged Eastern Province in May 2008. Contesting under the ruling United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA) patronage, the militant group turned political party TMVP returned 11 out of 19 members in the Batticaloa Municipal Council, while the main opposition, the UNP, and the main Tamil party, Tamil National Alliance (TNA) boycotted the polls.³¹ This laid the foundation for the conduct of Provincial Council polls for the Eastern Province on 10 May 2008 to bring forth a “new dawn in the East”.³² Except the pro-LTTE TNA, all Opposition parties participated in the elections that took place after 20 years. This gave more legitimacy to the polls in which the UPFA and TMVP combined won a majority to form the Provincial Council government. Condemning the results as “irreparably flawed”, the Opposition announced a mass agitation. Brushing aside Opposition allegations, the government interpreted the results as a green signal to its war against the LTTE in the north.³³ However, the post-election governance in the east under the 13th Amendment does not look promising. Unfortunately, the Rajapakse regime is planning to emulate this model in the north as well, which is not appreciable.

Truce Offer

The LTTE's call for a ceasefire since February 2008 was not surprising since they have now been cornered in a small geographical area of the Mullaithivu district. The LTTE, therefore, required a breather in the form of a ceasefire. Through such an offer, the LTTE also wanted to demonstrate to the international community that it was a "liberation group" and was ready for a negotiated settlement. As expected, the Sri Lankan government rejected the offer and asked the LTTE to "lay down arms and surrender unconditionally".³⁴

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From Colombo's viewpoint, its forces were on a winning spree and any ceasefire at this juncture would be demoralising to them. Secondly, the GOSL thinks that the Tigers are desperate and, therefore, requesting for a halt to the ongoing military operations only to regroup. But the GOSL wishes to "finish them off" at one go. Also, the Tigers do not have a good track record of abiding by ceasefires. Thirdly, President Mahinda Rajapakse needs a convincing military victory over the LTTE to face the parliamentary elections due next year. Riding on a military victory, he might even advance the presidential elections to bid for a second term.

However, a truce, if not a ceasefire, can be considered between the two antagonists on humanitarian and political grounds. If there is a genuine concern for rescuing the civilians trapped in the cross-fire, a truce would facilitate their safe cross-over to the "cleared" areas. This could, in fact, be made one of the conditions of the truce. Such a shift in civilian base would deny the LTTE any new recruits and a "human shield". Will it then not be easy to tackle a segregated LTTE? Hence, any truce at this juncture will not be militarily disadvantageous to the GOSL – the first time ever in the history of the ethnic conflict. Thus far, ceasefires between the two parties came either due to 'hurting' military stalemates or to the advantage of the Tigers. As a result, the LTTE dictated terms during the negotiations. Now, there is an opportunity for the GOSL to have an upper hand over the LTTE on the political front as well. Such a gesture would be seen positively not only by the international community, but also by the minority Tamil community, which is apprehensive of an imposed solution in the aftermath of military triumphalism.

A Role for India?

India's consistent position on the island's ethnic issue has been in favour of "a

politically negotiated settlement acceptable to all sections of Sri Lankan society within the framework of an undivided Sri Lanka and consistent with democracy, pluralism and respect for human rights.”³⁵ New Delhi has repeatedly conveyed to the GOSL that peace through war is not a good option and is unsustainable in the long run. India wants the GOSL “to put forward a credible devolution package at the earliest”.³⁶ In this regard, New Delhi “expressed readiness to share our constitutional experience.” Ideally, India pushes for a “13th Amendment plus plus formula” as a final solution and the implementation of the 13th Amendment as an interim measure until a final solution is reached through the processes of the APRC. At the same time, having realised the importance of a bipartisan agreement between the two main Sinhala parties of Sri Lanka (the UNP and Sri Lanka Freedom Party–SLFP), India has urged UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe to work with President Rajapaksa in finding a consensus on the ethnic issue.³⁷

Although India discouraged the GOSL from exercising the war option, it did not restrain herself from providing non-lethal military supplies to Sri Lanka and training of Sri Lankan security personnel. This is where India is caught in a dilemma: to maintain good relations with Sri Lanka in all spheres, but, at the same time, taking into consideration sentiments from Tamil Nadu and the interests of Sri Lankan Tamils. The Tamil Nadu factor, however, has always come as an intervening variable as and when New Delhi wants to upgrade its defence relations with Sri Lanka.³⁸ At the same time, Tamil sentiments in India have not prevented India either in extending the ban on the LTTE or cracking down on the Tigers’ supply lines from India.

Such Indian actions, however, are perceived by the LTTE as “biased against the Tamil community”. It is for this reason that the Tigers do not favour a direct role for India in resolving the ethnic issue. The LTTE argues that “until the Indian central government approaches this [ethnic question] intellectually and recognises that ours is a struggle for survival by an oppressed people in the land of their birth, India cannot make any healthy, fruitful contribution.”³⁹ In this, the Tigers have partners in the Sinhala hardliner JVP, which sees any Indian role in Sri Lanka as “hegemonistic”. It needs to be noted that the earlier Indian involvement in Sri Lanka in 1987-90 was bitterly opposed through armed means by the same actors.

Nevertheless, India should not get discouraged by the opposition. It is in India’s interests that peace is established in Sri Lanka. However, it is important to avoid a direct role—it should be through a consortium of the international community. The consortium should comprise those international actors that

are capable of exercising leverage on both antagonists to discourage hostilities and lead them to the negotiating table.

Conclusions

Sri Lanka has been witnessing unprecedented violence, resulting in numerous casualties, human suffering and economic loss. Despite facing a severe military setback, the LTTE was obdurate in its resistance, ignoring Colombo's repeated calls for a surrender. For the militant group, it was a "final war." On its part, the GOSL pursued its "war for peace" programme and went on to "tame the Tigers". The ultimate victims of this war, however, are innocent civilians, who are being trapped, killed, wounded, constantly displaced, starved, and suffering all kinds of abuses. Both antagonists, disregarding the humanitarian dimension, have stuck to their 'maximalist' position.

In the absence of the LTTE, the responsibility of the international community comes to the fore to exercise maximum leverage on the GOSL to deliver a meaningful devolution package to the minorities. India can take a lead role in this. Any meaningful devolution should go beyond the present 13th Amendment. It is true that for the Sinhala hardliners even the 13th Amendment is unacceptable. But, in reality, devolution under the 13th Amendment is not only 'too little and too late', but also unsustainable in the long run. Devolution of powers based on the federal model is durable and viable. It is the only mid-way to accommodate plurality and end the cycle of violence once for all. The fear of the majority Sinhalese that "federalism is the first step towards separation" is exaggerated, that too in the current context when the pro-separatist LTTE has been weakened.⁴⁰

The international community should also make sure that the present military victory over the LTTE should not result in triumphalism on the part of the Sinhala-dominated regime over the Tamil minorities. A suitable reconciliation method could be adopted to construct bridges among all the communities of the island. This is where a good interim arrangement aimed at ameliorating

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the sufferings of the affected populace and, at the same time, that could build confidence between the majority and the minority, is vital. Relief, rehabilitation, resettlement and reconstruction require urgent attention. Else there is clear and present danger of militancy regaining legitimacy and strength.

It is important that both interim and final arrangements are consensual to all the parties; otherwise, it may not be sustainable. All Sinhalese parties and, at the same time, non-LTTE parties and Muslims should be part and parcel of the process. One of the main drawbacks of the earlier peace process was that it failed to address the Muslim factor, which continues to be a 'weak link' in the entire peace chain. The two main Sinhalese parties – the UNP and SLFP – should give up their confrontational politics in the interests of the country. Bipartisanship on the ethnic issue is a must for the settlement. This is yet another challenge which requires more energy and maturity. One only hopes that plebiscitary politics does not return to haunt the ethnic question.

Any peace process will not be credible as long as human rights abuses and humanitarian crises continue. These issues require immediate and serious attention. It will be difficult for the government to win over the Tamil population as long as the security forces are the major cause of human rights abuses. For this, the current regime has to shed its present authoritarian behaviour and switch to the democratic mode. Shattered democratic institutions require rebuilding. Else, Sri Lanka will continue to figure among the failed states.

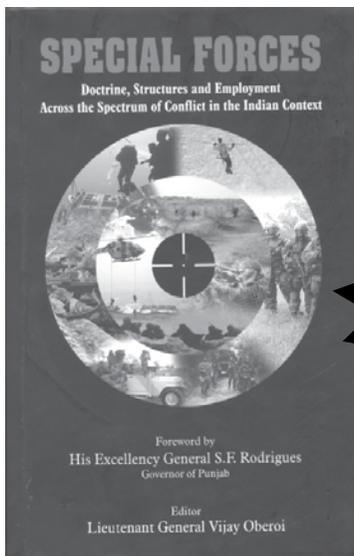
Notes

1. Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, while rejecting a Bangladesh type intervention in Sri Lanka on behalf of the Tamils, said in the Indian Parliament "India stands for the independence, unity and integrity of Sri Lanka.... However, because of the historical, cultural and other such close ties between the peoples of the two countries, especially between the Tamil community of Sri Lanka and us, India cannot remain unaffected by the events there." See A J Wilson, *The Break-up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (London: Christopher Hurst, 1988), p. 203.
2. The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord was signed by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J. R. Jeyewardena on 29 July 1987 at Colombo. For the detailed discussion on the provisions of the Accord, see S D Muni, *Pangs of Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993); V Suryanarayan (ed.), *Sri Lankan Crisis and India's Response* (New Delhi: Patriot Publishers, 1991); N Seevaratnam (ed.), *The Tamil National Question and the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1989).

3. Ranasinghe Premadasa, who was prime minister and took out an anti-Accord procession when the Accord was signed, carried on his stand when he became president in 1988 and asked the IPKF to vacate the Island.
4. B Muralidhar Reddy, "Ceasefire with LTTE Invalid, says Sri Lanka Government," *The Hindu*, 3 January 2008.
5. "JVP and JHU Sign Agreements with Premier," *Daily News*, 8 September 2005.
6. For more details of military operations from a government perspective, see "Situation Report" at <http://www.defence.lk>
7. During the colonial period when road transport was uncommon, elephants were used to carry goods to Jaffna peninsula from the mainland across the shallow salty waters of the isthmus, giving it the name "Elephant Pass". The Elephant Pass area is also one of the largest slatterns of Sri Lanka producing thousands of metric tonnes of salt annually. Realising the strategic importance of the Pass, successive colonial rulers maintained a garrison in this area. A military base in the modern sense, but in a small way, popped-up only in the 1950s, mainly to check smuggling and illegal immigration from India. However, when armed militancy came to the fore since the early 1980s, the Elephant Pass acted as a transition base for troop movement into the volatile Jaffna peninsula from the mainland. Since then, it has become the military epicentre of the ethnic conflict and the 'mother of all battles' of the island were fought in this area. As a result, over a period of time, it became heavily fortified with concrete bunkers capable of withstanding aerial bombings and artillery shelling.
8. "LTTE's Days Numbered – Fonseka," *The Hindu*, 1 July 2008.
9. "India-Sri Lanka Naval Cooperation 'Extremely Successful'," *Colombo Post*, 15 January 2008.
10. DBS Jeyaraj, "Deep Penetration Squads Notch Up Success Against the LTTE," <http://transcurrents.com/tamiliana/archives/489>
11. "Pakistan, China Role Limits Indian Influence in Sri Lanka," *Daily Times*, 30 January 2009.
12. With the last remaining aircraft, the LTTE launched a 9/11 type of aerial attack on a highrise building in capital Colombo on 22 February 2009. Presently, there is no evidence of LTTE possessing aircraft.
13. Eastern Sri Lanka had always remained one of the largest recruiting grounds for the LTTE, especially after Jaffna came under government control in 1995.
14. "Sri Lanka Reimposes ban on the LTTE," *The Hindu*, 8 January 2009.
15. "Maoists Approaching LTTE, ULFA for Arms Procurement," *Indian Express*, 9 September 2008.
16. For full text of the speech, see http://www.sangam.org/2008/11/Prabakaran_2008.

- php?uid=3169
17. "Protests in Tamil Nadu even as DMK Slams LTTE, India," *The Times of India*, 30 January 2009.
 18. "India Breaks Another LTTE Smuggling Ring," *Hindustan Times*, 5 April 2009.
 19. "Politics of Tamil Eelam in TN - II," *News Today*, 10 September 2008.
 20. "Army Ordered to Stop Using Heavy Weapons – Govt.," *Daily Mirror*, 27 April 2009.
 21. "Clock Ticking' for Sri Lanka's Civilians, Warns UN Humanitarian Chief," *UN News Centre*, 8 April 2009.
 22. "Trading Danger for Captivity," *The Economist*, 5 March 2009.
 23. "More Lankan Refugees Arrive in Tamil Nadu," *Daily Mirror*, 22 April 2008.
 24. "Economic Gloom the Stimulus Package Failed to Brighten," *The Sunday Leader*, 4 January 2009.
 25. "Stripping Garments of GSP Plus," *The Sunday Times*, 31 August 2008.
 26. K R Pushparajan, "How the Global Economic Crisis Affects Sri Lanka," *Mawbima Lanka News*, 28 March 2009.
 27. "Lanka's Inflation will Slide Below 18% after 2010 – ADB Country Director," *Sunday Observer*, 21 September 2008.
 28. President Rajapakse's address to the first joint meeting of all Party Representative Committee and Panel of Experts, 11 July 2006. For full text of the address, see http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca200607/20060711all_party_conference.htm
 29. The 13th Amendment outlined devolution to the provinces in the aftermath of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord of 1987.
 30. Kumar David, "APRC Report is a Sham," *Island*, 3 February 2008.
 31. "Who Really were the Victors of the East?" *Daily Mirror*, 13 March 2008.
 32. Address by President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the "Neganahira Navodaya" – New Dawn in the East – celebration, Colombo, 19 July 2007. For full text of the address, see http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca200707/20070719terror_cannot_liberate_tamil_people.htm
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40. Interestingly, the federal idea firstly came from the Sinhalese when they made representations before the Donoughmore Commission in the late 1920s to make the entire Sri Lanka into three units – northeast, Kandyan and coastal. The idea, however, was discarded.



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