

RE-EMERGENCE OF TAMIL TIGER CELLS IN SRI LANKA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS TO TERRORISM PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract— *Ethnic conflict had created political, economic, and security influences in Sri Lanka. From the late 1970s until 2009, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam known as LTTE conducted a massive violent campaign against the government of Sri Lanka due to decades of political disparity and the policies of central government, political and economic disparity and repression. Brutal terrorist struggle expanded over 30 years, which made the country a war zone due to suicide bombings and other deadly attacks. In 2006, the Sri Lankan military launched a major offensive against the LTTE, bringing the entire country under their control and defeating the LTTE militarily. However, it is indicated that there could be a possible re-emergence of the LTTE cells in Sri Lanka. This study identifies causes and effects of re-emergence of the LTTE cells in Sri Lanka and how does terrorism re-emergence as cells, a comparative analysis of terrorism perspectives. Further, an analysis of these perspectives demonstrates that due to long standing unsolved socio-economic and political issues augmented with external factors such as Tamil diaspora and Indian Tamil Nadu influence, could contribute to re-emergence of LTTE cells in Sri Lanka. The author will adopt mix method to gather data relevant to the subject matter.*

Keywords— **LTTE cells, re-emergence, repression, socio-economic, brutal**

I. INTRODUCTION

Ethnic conflict of Sri Lanka is a well-known issue in the international forum. From the late 1970s until 2009, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam known as LTTE conducted a massive violent campaign against the government of Sri Lanka due to decades of political and economic disparity, the policies of central government, and repression. Brutal terrorist struggle expanded over 30 years, which made the country a war zone due to suicide bombings and other deadly attacks. Since 1983, 80,000 to 100,000 people including Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim civilians have been killed due to the ethnic conflict. In 2006, the Sri Lankan military launched a major offensive against the LTTE,

bringing the entire country under their control and defeating the LTTE militarily. However, intelligence reports reviewed indicate that there could be re-emergence of the LTTE cells in Sri Lanka. But, how does the LTTE re-emerge after three decades of deadly war to fight for a separate state? Therefore, this paper will argue that due to long standing unsolved socio-economic and politics issues augmented with external factors such as Tamil diaspora and Indian Tamil Nadu influence could contribute to re-emergence of LTTE cells in Sri Lanka. As such, this scholarly paper unfolds as follows: part one: historical background to the conflict; part two, causes and effects of the re-emergence of the LTTE and part three, how does terrorism re-emerge as cells, comparative analysis of terrorism perspectives and finally, findings and conclusion.

The research method used for this study is “qualitative analysis method” based on primary data. The research objectives are to identify; one, will there be any re-emergence of LTTE cells in Sri Lanka in the post conflict scenario; two, the contributing factors for re-emergence of LTTE cells in Sri Lanka; three, identify factors contributing for re-emergence in terms of terrorism perspective. The research question was formulated based on the research problem to find answer for how does the LTTE re-emerge after three decades of deadly war to fight for a separate state? The analysis was carried out based on the theories applied in terms of terrorism perspective to answer the research hypothesis that due to long standing unsolved socio-economic and politics issues augmented with external factors such as Tamil diaspora and Indian Tamil Nadu influence could contribute to re-emergence of LTTE cells in Sri Lanka.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT

B. *Pre-conflict Era.*

The disparity between Tamils and Sinhalese goes back to the time that Sri Lanka achieved independence in 1948 from the British government. However, rivalries of two ethnic groups emerged even before, in times of the external threats from South India after the formulation of clear Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic or cultural identities in the

9th century. Forces of Sinhalese nationalism perpetuating notion of eternal conflict with Tamils had been gathering momentum over time. Moreover, until early the 1980s, ethnic conflict concerned mostly to political violence with minimal destruction of property and life. Velupillai Prabhakaran, the founder and supreme leader first came to public attention in 1983, when he shot and killed the mayor of Jaffna. Since then, war entered cycles of combat and negotiations. Neither externally nor internally has efforts brought about solutions. The Indo-Sri Lankan accord and the induction of Indian peacekeeping forces were classic examples of major external action in the initial history. Apart from that, many peace negotiations took place under different presidents and governments without any viable solutions. However, in mid-2006, the government of Sri Lanka declared war against the LTTE and conducted a large-scale offensive to end the thirty years' civil war. With the death of the LTTE supreme leader Prabhakaran, this war ended in 2009.

C. Post-conflict Era.

After three decades of long battle, apart from the restoration of normalcy in the North and East, there are major challenges that the government of Sri Lanka has to face, in terms of humanitarian crisis, establishing rule of law, maintaining macro-economic stability and most importantly countering extremism and terrorism. At present, there are over 12000 ex-combatants who have surrendered or a detained at the end of the war (Keenan, 2010), who need to be released and re-integrated to the society; while fare numbers remain in detention without proper/pending legal prosecution. Above factors are issues of greater importance that the government of Sri Lanka needs to address in its reconciliation process in the post conflict scenario. At present, the government has established a Commissioner on Reconciliation to address the post conflict situation including humanitarian issues pertaining to the conduct of the war. On the other hand, the demilitarization of the North and the East and actual implementation of 13th amendment (de-evaluation of power) to the constitution are other impending issues which, GOSL needs careful consideration. So far, the process could not be implemented because of lack of required majority in the parliament.

III. CAUSES FOR RE-EMERGENCE

The nationalistic motives of the Tamil people could also be a root cause for re-emergence of the new LTTE cells in Sri Lanka. As Daniel Byman points out, "Ethnic terrorist groups begin to struggle by strengthening ethnic identity,"(1998, p. 150). Two different nationalist ethnic identities different from religious, language and other cultural values contested for a small piece of land to be ruled by them. The Sri Lankan society is a multi-ethnic and ethno-religious society with clear religious divisions.

Further, to a certain extent, ethnicity and religion also have a strong regional basis, which is significant enough for the Tamil Tigers to demand a separate state in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. On the other hand, the relationship between Tamil and Sinhalese is strained from the ancient times. This resulted after the periodic external threat posed by the South India, thus demonstrating further social cultural deviation.

Access to political and economic resources made socio-economic division among the Tamil and Sinhala communities. Donald Horowitz, in *Ethnic Groups in Conflicts*, has contributed the major theory to explain the root causes of ethnic conflicts and secessionist movements, both highly applicable to the Sri Lankan context (2008, p.3-5). According to Horowitz, an ethnically based party system, especially when the major group in control is divided by intra-ethnic party divides, can exclude minority groups (2008, p. 1-5). The Tamil people in Sri Lanka exposed to a number of disparities that provoked feeling of a frustration and discontent that caused violent group mobilization and conflict among the ethnic groups in the past. At present, many issues pertaining to politico-economic have been addressed by the existing government. But, as claim by the Tamil people, there are number of issues to be addressed based on the 13th Amendment.

The emergence of an active Tamil diaspora is a novelty because it has produced a different dimension to the conflict. In *What Next for the Tamil Tiger*, author John Thompson highlights that support for homeland terrorism among immigrants and the exiled group goes back to the old story of Russian socialists and Irish Republicans in nineteenth century. LTTE did not have a diaspora to draw support at the beginning, so they created one. The diaspora concept is different from other entities, the nature of the role, however, depends on how the central government deals with its Tamil population in the country.

The next issue is that the de-militarization in the Northern and the Eastern provinces. As Jonathan Tonge highlights, the military presence and reaction of the British forces in Northern Ireland, a similar military concept to Sri Lanka during its conflict. Tonge points out that when there is greater military presence, violence increases and the relationship between government forces and people declined due to security policies and measures (2006, p. 63-67). During the war, a large number of troops had been deployed in the North and East to fight the terrorism. According to the new aspiration of the Tamil community, de-militarization is one of the most important agenda in their political context.

Naturally, the Sri Lankan government has maintains a significant military presence even after reducing some

elements in the area because the country has seen some LTTE movements and links with Islamic states that have been reported in Sri Lanka in the post conflict situation. Keeping the security view of militarization, the majority of the Tamil people have opposed military presence in the North and East. As Ami Pedahzur and Arie Perliger identified, the military aggression over Palestinian Arabs increased the violence in the Israel during the Israel-Palestine conflict (2008, p. 352-355). The controversial environment in Sri Lanka could also create an unpleasant situation among the Tamil people in the North. As such, this situation made possible for the Tamil Nadu and Tamil diaspora to support LTTE cells to operate in the Northern Sri Lanka as an underground organization.

Lastly, if any state support from the region or outside the region to nationalistic/terrorist elements in the north; there is a danger of resurgence of terrorism. As every other terror organization, LTTE also needs external support to exist. As Robert J. Art and Louise Richardson identified, "External actors play a number of parts both positive and negative," and most of the time they do support terrorist movements to achieve political rights (2007, p. 95-97). According to the Donatella della Porta, "In this context strong ties are more important than weak ties" (1992, p. 15). As such, apart from the political parties in Tamil Nadu, various non-political groups like students, Chennai Branch of the all India Bar association and element of writers contributed their support to the Tamil in Sri Lanka, their ultimate demand is to support for the creation of a Tamil Eelam as a solution to the ethnic problem. These indications are the legacy of the Tamil tigers continues to live on with different perception in post conflict situation.

III.EFFECTS OF THE RE-EMERGENCE

An increase in criminal activities could be a critical indication of a new approach to terrorist movements. According to Louise Shelley, a professor of crime and terrorism argued that terrorist often supported by crimes, and frequently changes identities as criminals and terrorists (2008, p. 342-345). While the guerrilla force has been defeated, the new Tamil tigers can provide many opportunities to conduct covert illegal activities. The covert operations included global mafia, the activities in terror network, and criminal activities. Professor Rohan Gunaratna, the head of the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research highlighted that people smugglers have organized more asylum seekers transported to Australia by boat from Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia. Further, former LTTE combatants smuggle people across the globe. Even after dismantling the LTTE in Sri Lanka in 2009, their overseas network is intact and the group remains active in Tamil Nadu in India, Northern Sri Lanka, Western Europe and Australia, collecting money,

raising funds and holding financial resources, businesses and properties in overseas for future terrorist activities.

Recent insurgents' activities are classic indications of the re-emergence of the LTTE cells. Martha Crenshaw identified a "Distinct pattern of organizational evaluation;" basically Crenshaw points out that over time groups form, split, merge, collaborate compete, decline and grow (1981, p. 379). This theory is more applicable to the present Sri Lankan context because approximately 2,000 or more ex-combatants who escaped the arrest during the Humanitarian Operation, live in Sri Lanka or Tamil Nadu India or abroad. Since 2009, several attempts have been made by the LTTE to regroup and reorganize inside and outside the country from 2012 to 2014.

The first attempt was made on March 2012, by former LTTE cadre known as Kumaran who lived in Paris recruited 15 ex-LTTE cadres in Tamil Nadu for clandestine operations in Sri Lanka. Further, these groups have been organized into three cells of five members to carry out killings at Trincomalee; however, the mission did not succeed due to betray by themselves.

The second attempt was reported in December 2012, a group of ex-LTTE cadres including a top leader, expert in explosives, with financial assistance from overseas, entered Tamil Nadu to recruit and indoctrinate Sri Lankan Tamil youth with the LTTE ideology, but, the police arrested them at Chennai house in India with incriminating documents, electronics circuits and panels.

The third attempt occurred in March 2014, the hunt of former LTTE cadre, Gopi who opened fire on a policeman during a routine check in the Kilinochchi area. The government forces immediately cleared the area and arrested Gopi with a metal detector that allowed him to find arms and explosives dumped by the LTTE during final stage of the battle. These isolated indications suggest of undercover operations by the small cell LTTE combatants in this post conflict situation.

IV.ANALYSIS OF TERRORISM PERSPECTIVE

Having identified the causes and effects of re-emergence of the LTTE in Sri Lanka let us now identify how the terrorism can exist in democratic countries, and a comparative analysis of terrorism perspectives.

D. Ideological aspects of terrorism

Terrorists ideology can be considered as beliefs, values and objectives of a group that finally lead to achieve political objective or end state. In practice, most of the groups' ideologies are common to each other specially, separatism, religion, liberalism, anarchism etc., These ideological categories are "Not mutually exclusive and it is perfectly possible for a group to hold more than one

political aspiration”(Drake, 1998, p. 52). The leaders of different terror and political groups usually have specific ideology with clear political objectives. On the other hand, ideology stands out as an obvious choice of distinguishing characteristics such as groups that aspire to change political status of certain political region, which include a degree of independence from existing nation-state. Classic examples are Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain and the Irish republican Army in Northern Ireland (IRA) and Hamas for Palestine independent state that had their ideology to establish independent states. According to terror ideology, as Martha Crenshaw discussed, nationalist ideologies are moderate, stronger and cognitive to radicalization because of their roots in a community are united by memory and tradition (2006, p.5-9). As such, the LTTE in Sri Lanka also have the ideology of creating a separate state, which has appeared over a period, because of their aspirations are stronger, united by memory and tradition. The LTTE manifested with separatism ideology to draw attention of Tamil population to attain political objectives of new facet of terrorism.

E.. Motivation and underground organization

Motivation is a driving factor for the individuals to join terrorist organizations. Many scholars have identified that individual choices and rational for such choices may lead individuals to join the terrorist organization. As Donatella della Porta identifies, social networks play a vital role in political socialization and personality building (1992, p.4-5). Porta main points is that participation in interpersonal networks is more important, because it allow more time an individual to spend political activities and contact with political comrades, thus allowing individuals to take part in more and more militant activities (1992, p. 5-9). This was clearly displayed by the Irish militants in Northern Ireland. On the other hand, Martha Crenshaw discusses that individual motivation towards underground organization (2006, p. 6-9). The general idea of the argument is what motivates individuals to become terrorists and what degree of ideology actually influences individual motivation to join organization. The findings point out that atmosphere of violence has a particular influence on those who are just beginning to take interest in political activates. The Palatine militants against Israel, IRA in Northern Ireland are classic examples. Furthermore, when youths are from lower family background, especially lower-middle class such as farmers, craftsmen, tradesmen, skill workers or employees are more attractive in underground organizations, this was well displayed in ETA and IRA. After the conflict, LTTE often operate in Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu and other Western countries. LTTE main aim is to attract more youth and fight for their political objective. New groups are vulnerable because of the experience that they had during the brutal battle against government forces and the other groups who have no experiences,

since they have fled to Western countries during the escalation of the military actions. Therefore, individual motivation towards organization and conduct violence to achieve political objective is critical factor of terrorism perspective.

F. Diaspora and terrorism

According to different scholars, the debates on diaspora and conflicts have many aspects. One aspect is that diaspora can create negative and positive impact to conflict situation. According to Paivi and Adile “The best way to conceived of the role of diaspora in conflict is to think of the various phases or stages of conflict (conflict emergence, continuation escalation, termination and post conflict reconstruction) and then to evaluate the possible role diaspora may play in each phase”(2009, p 6-7). In terms of negative perspective, these communities are more effective in fundraising, recruitment, procurement of weaponry and lobbying of adopted government. For example, Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) has engaged in political and fund raising activities, half of the organizational budget came from the Kurdish diaspora in Europe. Additionally, lobbying also plays a vital role in conflicts, the IRA affiliated USA diaspora did not allow United States to sale arms and ammunition to Britain. Diaspora members are generally remaining away from the conflict zone and contribute via financial and political means. Tamil diaspora has its long-standing history of contributing all negative aspects to the conflict in terms of financing, recruitment, procurement and maintain transnational government of Tamil Eelam. Despite the military defeat of the LTTE, Global Tamil forum network remains intact, and at present actively pursuing the objectives of the LTTE.

G. .Organizational structure of the terrorist

A terrorist organization’s structure, membership, resources and security have its impact on capabilities and reach. Any organization has its own concept to function efficiently and effectively. Many scholars argue that the period before nineteen century was marked as traditional or old terrorism, which can be divided as ethno-nationalist, separatist terrorism and left- right wing terrorism. Above all Martha Crenshaw also identified that distinct pattern of organizational evaluation, as group from, split, merge, collaborate, compete, shift ideological direction, adopt or renounce terrorism, grow, shrink, and eventually decline over time (2010, p. 5-8). Martha’s view is important to understand, how terror groups emerge from set of competition groups to dominate violent against the government (2010, p.7). Provisional IRA in Northern Ireland is a classic example of re-emergence after some time to take the lead to straggle against the British crown, and old IRA was renamed as Official IRA, which continued over a period to conduct limited terrorist campaign. Terror organizations develop simply because of

political or religious grievances. New threats or organizations develop due to the motivation and rational of the groups itself and more importantly the community that provides the terrorist with support. Considering past experience of terror organization and how they re-emerge as violent political threats, it is obvious that LTTE could also develop their organization with splinter groups of ex-combatants, diaspora, Tamil Nadu refugees to achieve their political aspiration.

H..Leadership and terrorism

Leadership in the terrorist organization is vital in the large protracted conflict. Leaders are likely to emerge sequentially, hold the positions of power at the same time. There are generations of leaders such as early leader, follow-on leaders, continuity leaders and third generation leaders. Early leader, who formed, established and lead terror groups during the initial existence of the organization. The PIRA in 1969-1975, and ETA from 1950 to early 1980, and recent history al Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden classic example of early leaders category. Most significantly, third generation "embryonic" leaders are important because they are young and highly motivated and modify and expand the organizational goals according to new strategies and directions. LTTE in Sri Lanka at present lacks proper leadership; however, the younger generation could play a role in fulfilling the leadership vacuum. Raised and educated in the West and holding many university degrees, most of the young Tamils have become more active in the Tamil diaspora and Global Tamil forum. As such third generation "embryonic" leader could replace the vacant leadership of ex-military leader Vallupillai Prabhakaran and modify the political goal of the LTTE in near future.

IV.FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

So far, this paper has discussed the causes and effects of re-emergence of the LTTE, and how terrorism can be re-emerged with a comparative analysis to terrorism perspective. Accordingly, following factors have identified as possible contributing factors for re-emergence of LTTE in Sri Lanka. First and foremost, long-standing unaddressed political grievances are critical for re-emergence of the LTTE since minority rights have been undermined by the government of Sri Lanka from the ancient history. Socio-economic instability, devolution of power, Sinhalese nationalist ideology with Sinhala as a main language triggered the grievances of the Tamil people. Even after thirty years of deadly battle, still some grievances are claimed to be untouched. Secondly, as every other diaspora in the conflicts, Tamil diaspora also played a vital role in Sri Lanka in terms of coordination of Tamil terror network, financing, and maintaining Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam, which

empowered to coordinate all terrorist activities in Sri Lanka. Thirdly, Tamil Nadu as a close partner to Sri Lanka cannot be overruled in its influence over the clamour for Tamil Eelam. So far, three decades of long battle Tamil Nadu approach towards the Tamils of Sri Lanka have historical ethnic linkage, the impact on Dravidian movement and Tamil nationalism assume enormous significance in re-emergence of LTTE cells in Sri Lanka.

The demonstration, violence, criminal activities and insurgents' movements in the recent past have drawn the attention of the government of Sri Lanka and many foreign countries. So far, there had been three attempts in North to mobilize insurgents' activities, but could not activated due to extensive military intelligence operations in the North. However, political demonstrations, aggression against the security forces are common in nature. All of these indications would be subsequent actions of re-emergence of LTTE in Sri Lanka.

In order to identify the rationale behind the re-emergence of terrorism, the paper analysed factors leading to terrorism in perspective of terrorism. The findings conclude as follows: one, most of the underground organizations splintered and remerged according to the organizational structure. Two, leadership in the terror organization is vital to conduct effective campaigns against government, the terror groups' ideology are common and all have one objective to achieve. Ethno-nationalist and separatists' terror has common ideology of achieving political end state. Three, organizations at time fragmented, merged campaigns, however, leaders replace the position of leadership sequentially as per their tern. Four, diaspora plays a pivotal role for the existence of terrorism in terms of coordinating, funding, and procurement.

In conclusion, the catalyst for the re-emergence of the terrorism in Sri Lanka is a classic example of the re-emergence of IRA in Northern Ireland. Tamils in North Sri Lanka did not enjoy their political rights from the ancient history. Devolution of power and socio-economic disparity has led the minority Tamils to take up arms and fight against the government, but the struggle terminated in 2009 because of total defeat of the LTTE. However, the Tamil people have not abandoned the struggle for separate states. Tamil diaspora, Tamil Nadu and other external influences strengthen their struggle to exist with a separate identity. So far many attempts have been taken place to carry out new insurgency movement in the North, but could not succeed due to large-scale military presence in the North and East. Lack of leadership, coordination slowdown the movement of the terrorist activities, but LTTE network abroad conduct covert operations to support re-emergence of the LTTE cells in the post conflict

situation. As such, this paper identified that due to long standing unsolved socio-economic and party-political issues augmented with external factors such as Tamil diaspora and Indian Tamil Nadu influence, could contribute to re-emergence of LTTE cells in Sri Lanka.

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