Human Security and Extremism in Sri Lanka: Synergy and Conflict

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Over the last sixty years, the country has overcome three major insurgencies, the last being the biggest and costliest, not only in terms of human and material costs but also in terms of the deep divisions that have been created in our society with a lack of tolerance and appreciation of those who held different views. It is tragedy for democracy when society accepts with resignation extra-judicial violence and killings, abductions and the arbitrary arrests, intimidation and death threats to dissidents labeled as 'traitors'... The LTTE did the same thing to its dissident or traitors. Having crushed the insurgency, we now need a new beginning, not clone the terrorist by adopting their methods. (Shanie, The Island, 31 October 2009)

Introduction

The military collapse of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), with the total annihilation of its leadership in the final battle at the Nanathikkadal lagoon in the Mallaittivu District in May 2009 marked the dramatic end of nearly three decades of armed struggle associated with the demand of a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka. The LTTE has long been considered the most ferocious and well organized terrorist group in the world, with a sizable suicide squadron of its own, in addition to having the naval and air arms. It carried out guerilla cum conventional warfare using sophisticated military hardware and modern communication technology. With the military defeat of the LTTE, Sri Lanka has reached a crucial historical juncture with many possibilities for diverse directions in future political developments. The transition from
conflict to post-conflict society is not a simple process and a *fait accompli* with the silencing of the guns. Apart from enormous social and political implications of the war, some pressing residual issues such as a large number of internally displaced people (IDP) make the process of transition from conflict to post-conflict society more challenging. In the background of the high human toll, the extensive physical destruction and the enormous financial cost caused by the protracted war, the fundamental issue that needs to be answered in this context is whether the military defeat of the LTTE can be transformed into a foundation for a durable and positive peace in the country. What factors really contributed to the military defeat of the LTTE at the hands of the forces of the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL)? Can one explain it purely in terms of military-strategic factors?

A proper analysis of the reasons of the military defeat of the LTTE who relied heavily, if not exclusively, on armed power and military strategy, rather than on political strategy and broad social forces, would help to answer the fundamental question: how to transform the military defeat of the LTTE into a durable positive peace. The crisis of the Sri Lankan state and the resultant human insecurity of collective identities create the conditions for the emergence of extremist ethno-political forces that use terror as a political weapon. The sheer disregard for human security by the LTTE in turn contributed to its final downfall. Accordingly, this paper argues that the ‘human security’ approach that challenges the conventional ‘national security’ paradigm would provide a necessary analytical perspective to understand not only the emergence but also the collapse of the LTTE and other extremist political movements who use terror as a political weapon. At the same time the human security approach offers a viable policy propositions towards sustainable peace. As terrorism has been used as a political tool, in order to address the issues relating to
extremism and violence in Sri Lanka, it is necessary to locate the agency of terrorism in a broader matrix of socio-political development in post-independence Sri Lanka and the roots of insecurity of the post-colonial Sri Lankan state.

**Human Security**

By the end of the Cold War, it was increasingly felt that the conventional concept of national security has failed to grasp the totality of insecurity problems that were confronted by the states and the people and to offer any credible policy propositions to ensure and enhance security. Being based on the classical 'nation state' framework, the conventional national security paradigm projected the state as the only reference of security and it remained exclusively within the domain of the state and its prerogative. The security of the state is defined mainly as the protection of territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state *vis-à-vis* military threats that originate from external sources. The internal security of the state is taken for granted and if there is any internal security concern it is expected to cover under the rubric of law and order. In reality, it is not possible to have a clear demarcation between internal and external aspects of security due to the multiple linkages of issues and actors. In the context of a world-wide tendency to politicize ethnicity, the insecurity of sub-national collective identities that are not integrated into the state-denoted identity has serious implications for the security of the state itself. The scale and intensity of violence linked with internal conflicts reveal the importance of taking into account the domestic roots of insecurity. State-violence and anti-state violence of groups/agencies with cross-border linkages underscores the need to take into account the multi-layered properties of insecurity, especially when one takes the individual and the community also as a reference of security.
The integration of the collective identities, civil society and the individual citizen in the security analysis as referents of security, in addition to the state, compel us to take non-military and non-political dimensions of security also into consideration. With the recognition of people as a reference of security in their own right, a variety of threats and vulnerabilities enter into the forefront of security analysis with different types of agents and sources of threat. In presenting an alternative paradigm, human security places human beings - rather than states - at the focal point of security considerations.

Human security captures many aspects vital for survival of the people who remain outside the traditional security analysis. Human security and human development are closely related. Survival means protection from violence as well as from malnutrition, diseases and natural disasters. Going beyond the direct survival issues, human security also brings human dignity as an important element of human security. Violation of human dignity is definitely a human security issue. Human security emphasizes the complex relationships and often-ignored linkages between disarmament, human rights and development. The Commission on Human Security defines human security as protection of "vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms—freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strength and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity." Accordingly, human security reconfigures security centering on people not on states. The focus of attention here is survival, livelihood and dignity and these three elements of human security are projected from the point of view of the people.
Human insecurity begets extremism and violence. Extremism and violence further exacerbates human insecurity. The symbiosis between human insecurity and violence and extremism underscores the need to address the roots of human insecurity in order to counter extremism and terrorism. In addition to direct violence, structural/indirect violence needs to be taken into account. Structural violence includes avoidable deaths caused simply by the way social, economic and other structures were organized. The structure is the medium through which indirect violence is transmitted. Indirect violence comes from social and political structures themselves. Therefore, extremism, violence (both state and anti-state) and terrorism are directly related to the crisis of the post-colonial state. The essence of a political crisis, according to Antonio Gramsci, is crisis of the hegemony of the ruling class. This may occur because (a) the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking expected of it, or (b) they forcibly extracted the consent of the broader masses (or identity groups) or (c) because the huge masses have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity. "When such crisis occurs, the immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent solution, for the activities of unknown forces, represented by charismatic men of destiny."2

Crisis of Post-colonial State and Extremism

The phenomena of extremism and violence in Sri Lanka should be analyzed in the context of the crisis of the Sri Lankan state. The brief history of political development in Sri Lanka since independence illustrates the stages and evolution of the structural crisis of the state and its accompanying extremism and violence. The political social order that prevailed in Sri Lanka at the time of independence after two and a half century
of British rule in 1948 appeared to be comparatively stable. There were no large scale population dislocations or civil wars in Sri Lanka in contrast to the situation in the Indian subcontinent. The unitary form of constitution, the majoritarian democratic arrangement and the tightly interlocked elite monopoly of political power remained the main features of the political order that Sri Lanka inherited with independence. The apparent political stability and the broader hegemonic overtures of the rulers in post-colonial Sri Lanka in 1948 were based on three columns - maintenance of the liberal democratic form of government, co-option of leadership of 'other' ethnic identities into the ruling political bloc, and distribution of a wide range of welfare goodies. The parliamentary opposition consisted of the Marxist left and left-of-center socialist elements. The Marxist parties and their leaders were very versatile in using revolutionary rhetoric but in practice they proved that they were faithful adherents of the Westminster model of parliamentary democracy. There was another undercurrent that had real potential to threaten the political stability forged in 1948. It was the political dynamism associated with aspirations of the Tamil collective identity who demanded the recognition of their own national identity and national self in political and social spheres. Hence, one of the challenges that the new leadership had before them was to guide and direct the post-colonial state-formation and national integration to embrace the multi-ethnic social order on the basis of equality and partnership. In order to meet this challenge, it was required to restructure the institutions of power and governance to accommodate all the ethnic identities in the decision-making process and to rebuild the national economy to empower economically the marginalized sectors and regions. The failure of successive regimes in this political undertaking paved the way for the emergence of extremist political tendencies that challenged and rejected the political
and constitutional status quo and democratic political practices. The uprisings led by the Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) in 1971 and again in 1987-89 and the demand for a separate Tamil state (Eelam) and the armed struggle led by the Tamil militant groups were really manifestations of the multi dimensional structural crisis of the state.

**The Ethnic Dimension of the Crisis**

The outbreak of the Eelam war that devastated the country did not come as thunder from a clear blue sky. The deterioration of ethnic relations in the country was a gradual process. In this process several crucial junctures were passed without making a breakthrough towards a viable solution to the national question. When the transfer of power was in sight after the Second World War, the main ethnic groups in Sri Lanka who re-defined their ‘self’ in terms of national identities in the context of the structural changes set in motion during British rule, presented their claims to have their share of the new arrangement of power more vigorously. The main Tamil leadership of the day, G. G. Ponnambalam of the Tamil Congress, insisted on balanced representation, i.e., fifty percent of the seats for minorities including ‘Ceylon Indians’ – the term used then to identify the Tamils of Indian origin. Finally, the Tamil Congress agreed to settle for the unitary form of constitution with balanced representation based on the 60:40 formula negotiated by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike on behalf of the Ceylon National Congress. One of the first steps taken after independence was the enactment of the Citizenship Acts of 1948 and 1949 that changed this arrangement, making the earlier formula of distributing seats to provinces meaningless.\(^3\)

Its implications for the new political environment as well as for Tamil political circles were far reaching. Within the Ceylon Tamil Congress a group led by S. J. V. Chelvanayakam left the party to form the Federal Party on a regional agenda. At first,
however, the regional agenda put forward by the Federal Party did not have any serious impact on Tamil politics and in the 1952 General Elections the regional agenda was clearly rejected by substantial margins in the north and the east in favour of the Ceylon Tamil Congress candidates.

This situation rapidly changed in the period 1952-1956. It became clear after the 1956 General Elections that the Federal Party was a force to be reckoned with on the Tamil front. The power-sharing at the center, the political agenda of the Ceylon Tamil Congress, was abandoned in favour of the regional agenda propagated by the Federal Party. The form of the state and the manner in which state power was exercised became a crucial factor in the political discourse with the entry of new political forces into politics after 1956. The Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (Peoples’ United Front) regime of 1956 initiated a series of changes to satisfy the social elements from which it received its support. In this process, in June 1956, Sinhala was declared the official language. The expansion of the social base of the state in 1956 by incorporating intermediary layers did not benefit the Tamil counterparts who continued to remain outside the corridors of power. The Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact (BC Pact) attempted to address the issue in a practical way and delineated a space for the Tamils proposing a regional council for the north and the east and Tamil as a language of administration in the north and the east. The unilateral obliteration of the BC Pact in the face of the opposition in Colombo belied the hope of having a compromise solution. The first attempt to restructure the state that was inherited in 1948 failed. The frustration and feelings of alienation of the Tamils and the Sinhalese reaction kindled the ethnic tension and anti-Tamil riots, unprecedented in modern times. It was the beginning of more political calamities. After the failed BC Pact, a sathyagraha campaign was staged intermittently by the Federal Party and other Tamil
forces against the language policy and other issues in the early 1960s. State power and emergency regulations were widely used to suppress the *sathyagrahas* and other protest campaigns organized by the Federal Party.

Another attempt to build harmonious relations by accommodating the interests of Tamils was made in 1965. The Federal Party joined the United National Party (UNP) to form a coalition government and the Senanayake-Chelvanayakam Agreement was reached. It covered three issues: the language rights of the Tamil people, granting of land in colonization schemes and regional devolution of power. It was agreed, under Article 3 of the Agreement, to establish District Councils in Ceylon vested with powers over subjects to be mutually agreed upon between the two leaders. The Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act was passed in the Parliament in January 1966 amid strong protest by the opposition parties. After much faltering, a White Paper on proposals for the establishment of District Councils was presented to Parliament in 1968. The SLFP boycotted the debate in the Parliament and campaigned against it outside. In view of a possible backlash on the part of the Government caucus itself, Prime Minister Senanayake decided not to go ahead with the White Paper.

The frustration and alienation of the Tamil community in the early 1970s against this background were clearly visible. The failure of the bargaining strategy adopted by the political leadership of the Tamils and the reluctance on the part of Colombo to devolve power to regional units to have a widened democratic political space for the Tamils began to change the political climate in the north. This frustration crystallized over key issues – devolution of power to regional-level units, the recognition of Tamil language rights, fair allocation of state resources including land, and pure merit-based educational and employment opportunities. Especially, the introduction of the
language-based standardization and district quota system in the selection of students to the universities fueled the fire which was already burning over other issues. The political practices and behaviour based on simple majority in the formation of the 1972 constitution further alienated Tamil Parties in the Parliament. It was in this context that new forces in the north and the east came to the political forefront and began to decide the direction of politics in those regions. The militarization of politics in the north and the east was paralleled by the entry of new forces into the political arena in the region.

Southern Militancy and the JVP

The first armed challenge to the Sri Lankan state came from the south in 1971. The crisis and divisions of established left parties gave birth to several youth revolutionary groups in the late 1960s. The JVP led by Rohana Wijeweera emerged out of the fratricidal competition as the main clandestine political group dedicated to the revolutionary capture of power by 1970. The youth, who rose in the armed uprising in 1971, directed their anger not only against the existing socio-economic structure but also against the established political leadership of the country. It is true that simultaneous secret attacks on 92 police stations in one night had a certain element of romantic youthful revolutionary flavour. Why did these youths reject the democratic parliamentary political practices and adopt the strategy of the armed capture of power? Why could the established left parties not absorb these social forces who came forward to challenge institutions of power and authority violently? It cannot be explained simply as a result of derailing of youths by political opportunists. More than anything else, the 1971 April uprising highlighted the emergence of a generation which had no confidence or faith in the existing political and socio-economic system and were
ready to use terror as a political weapon. The failure of the consecutive regimes to offer viable solutions to the growing socio-economic problems and oligarchic nature of political parties explain why politically aspirant youths resorted to alternative courses of political action. They observed that the grip of a small group of people at the center of political power who were socially and economically connected to each other irrespective of their political colour had not been loosened. The continuation of a narrow band of political leadership meant that the political system lacked autonomy over new political forces. In a society affected by rapid social change and continuous political mobilization, political parties need to have a mechanism to absorb new elements into the system and to ensure their place in the political sun. Once the legitimacy of the political system is in question, the entry of new political forces sets the conditions for political instability as they do not identify with formal political institutions and mechanisms.

The 1971 April uprising changed the notion of political stability of the country and the credibility of institutions of power and governance. The youths who took up arms challenged not only the entire system but also rejected accepted means and avenues to lodge their protest. The JVP could not sustain its military action for long and the uprising was crushed by military force. When the uprising was over there were 17,953 people in custody, 11,748 were arrested and 6,205 had surrendered. With the outbreak of the uprising, military coordinating officers were appointed and districts were placed under their control. Excesses on the part of law enforcement officers in establishing law and order became a main security concern of the people. The uprising brought home to Colombo the internal dimension of security. On the one hand, in the face of the activities of the JVP the state became a source of security. On the other, it acted as an agent of threat when it
exceeded its limits. It was evident more forcefully during the second uprising of the JVP in 1987-89.

The new left phase of JVP ended with the defeat of the 1971 insurrection. The social democratic phase of the JVP began after the leadership was released from the prisons in 1977. It seemed that the JVP was willing to enter mainstream democratic politics. Their participation in the Parliamentary by-elections of the period and the Development Council Elections held in 1981 reflected their changed political behaviour. It contested the 1982 Presidential Election and effectively built an island-wide election organization. The proscription of the JVP in 1983 marked the end of its first parliamentary experiment. The party was compelled to go underground. In three years time, the JVP emerged as an organization in the south capable of violently challenging the state and organized an insurrection which lasted another three years.

The Second JVP Uprising

The second uprising led by the JVP, which injected a high degree of violence and terror on an unprecedented scale, was closely related to the multifaceted crisis that Sri Lanka witnessed in the late 1980s. The deep-rooted socio-political crisis was manifested in many spheres and the ‘southern militancy’, symbiosis of response to the crisis on the part of marginalized sectors and regions in the country, had many aspects. Broadly speaking, four types of interrelated revolts were embodied in the southern militancy. Firstly, the student revolt associated with the crisis of education constituted the main element and forceful manifestation of this militancy. The organized protest of university students reached a new radical turn in early 1990 as educational authorities took a confrontational attitude towards student movements. In
keeping with violent government reactions, the student movement led by the Inter-University Student Federation became more extremist and violent in the early 1980s. In this process, the JVP came to dominate the student movement and transform it into a mass recruiting ground for JVP politics. The crisis in higher education institutions spread to schools very quickly. The radicalization of school students began after their participation in the protest against the Education White Paper of 1981. For the first time, school students came out on the streets in defiance of law and order during the protest of 1981. It became a common scenario after 1987. Secondly, increasing frustration and unrest of marginalized youth elements, created by prolonged unemployment, set the socio-economic conditions for youth radicalism. Issues such as unequal distribution of resources and other economic problems were aptly utilized by the JVP to mobilize them on a suicidal course. The optimism generated by the introduction of the open economic package in 1977 began to dissipate gradually after 1983. After 1983, it suffered a serious setback resulting in rising unemployment. As the state withdrew from the welfare-motivated intervention in 1977, the ultimate safety net that the rural poor relied on was broken down. The withdrawal of protection and subsidies given to the small-holding peasants had serious implications in the rural countryside. The widening income gap and class polarization due to the new economic order of the open economic package made the JVP ideology more attractive to the young generation of rural poor. A new life style, value system allegedly associated with ‘open economic forces’ thrust into society at a rapid pace, created a ‘strain’ in society. Strain is the necessary precondition for collective behaviour. Thirdly, the southern militancy embodied the discontent with state-sponsored political violence and the subversion and state manipulation of the electoral political process. The measures taken by the UNP regime of J. R.
Jayewardene in 1977 to have political security and stability appeared to be effective in the short run. However, these very measures provided the catalyst for insurrectionary politics in the country and pervasive insecurity in all aspects of society. The manipulation of the constitution for political advantage became a common practice after 1977. Using the two thirds majority of the ruling party in parliament, the constitution was amended sixteen times over a period of ten years, at the expense of the legitimacy of the constitution. Many adverse aspects of constitutionally sanctioned authoritarianism became more and more clear after the infamous 1982 referendum. The undated resignation letters obtained from MPs and the practice of appointing so-called 'chit MPs’ destroyed the legitimacy of the system. State-sponsored political violence and terror against the opposition became a norm of the Jayewardene regime after 1982. Some notorious underworld thugs were mobilized to disrupt any political activities of the opposition. Government intolerance of even the slightest criticism was demonstrated more than once. The main opposition party, the SLFP was in disarray and torn apart by internal conflicts and divisions. When President Jayewardene changed the rules of the game after 1978, opposition parties were totally unprepared to meet the challenge. In this context, the JVP came forward to fill the void. At the beginning, the terror and violence of the JVP acquired some legitimacy due to state terror. Finally, Sinhala nationalist reaction to developments in the north was organized by the JVP to develop a mass protest movement. It was the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987 that provided the breakthrough to the second JVP uprising. Indian involvement in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict, first as the patron of Tamil rebel groups and later as the mediator, rekindled anti-Indian sentiment among the Sinhalese. Indian coercive diplomacy against Sri Lanka and the way the Accord was signed ignited the south.
The actions carried out by the JVP and its front organizations during the period of the second uprising provide a clear example of the vicious cycle of political, economic and societal insecurity, violence and counter-violence. Broadly speaking, four elements of the JVP strategic plan could be identified. Mass mobilization of people on the streets in protest, mainly against the Indo-Lanka Accord and the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), constituted the first category. The actions taken to paralyze the system such as hartals, the stoppage of transport services, curfews, and the closing of business establishments constituted the second element. These were presented as peoples’ actions but in reality terror and coercion were applied to get people to participate in the actions imposed by the JVP. The third element was brutal assassinations of ‘traitors’. The other element was to carry out pre-planned attacks on government military establishments. At first, the space for an extremist political agenda was created by human insecurity and state-sponsored violence. Then, the violence and terror associated with the extremist political agenda generated more violence and more human insecurity. The threat posed by the JVP was not only against the regime but it undermined the security of the society at large and that of the unarmed individual in civil society. At the peak of the insurrection, insecurity became a pervasive feature of every aspect of human life and the two systems of authority prevailed during day and night. Freedom from threat and fear became a priority and it brought to the forefront the importance of human security in the analysis of security. When state monopoly of violence is misused by going beyond legally-sanctioned parameters, the state itself becomes the agent of insecurity and threat. However, when human life and other basic elements of the security of society are threatened by non-state agents of insecurity, without presenting any viable alternative, people ultimately turn to the state and seek protection from it. One of the key lessons taught by the second JVP uprising was that
extremism and violence is counter-productive in the long run as it provides a rationale for counter-violence on the part of the state. The suppression of the insurrection by killing almost all the top rung of the organization was possible because the JVP failed to understand the fact that obtaining the allegiance of the people by force and threat was not a real consent of the people to the JVP political agenda. Being disillusioned by the protracted conditions of dire human insecurity, the JVP was dislodged at the crucial hour of conflict by the people who turned towards the state for security. It was repeated once again in 2009 in connection with the LTTE.

Rise and Fall of the LTTE

After 1977, ethnic dimension of the crisis of the state entered a new phase. In 1976, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was formed to present a separate sovereign state of Tamil Eelam, instead of regional autonomy, as their demand. However, when TULF put forward the demand for a separate state at its convention held in Vaddukodai in May 1976, many believed it was a mere bargaining chip for regional autonomy. In 1977, J. R. Jayewardene promised to summon an All Party Conference to take all possible steps to remedy the grievances of the Tamil speaking people. However, what followed the election victory of UNP in 1977 was a series of anti-Tamil riots. In less than a month after the new government assumed office, anti-Tamil riots started. It was reported that over 300 Tamil people were killed during the riots. More widespread ethnic riots were reported once again in 1981. The burning of the Jaffna Public Library, a very important cultural and historical monument of Jaffna society, rocked Tamil Nadu politics. The 1983 July riots were a turning point. The riots led to very strong protests in Tamil Nadu and a delegation from Tamil Nadu made representation to the Indian Prime Minister
Indira Gandhi about the situation and she assured the delegation that New Delhi “was dealing with the Tamil question in Sri Lanka as a national issue affecting the whole country, not merely as a problem concerning Tamil Nadu alone.” In the meantime, the Government of Sri Lanka introduced the 6th Amendment in 1983 which required each Member of the Parliament to take an oath pledging allegiance to the state. In October 1983, all the TULF Members of Parliament tendered their resignations. These developments paved the way for the establishment of a youth extremist leadership that relied on armed struggle at the expense of the established Tamil leadership.

In the last twenty five year period (1984-2009), the main element of conflict architecture in Sri Lanka which permeated insecurity to an unprecedented degree was LTTE terrorism and counter-terrorism on the part of the government. At the beginning of 1984, it was clear that a qualitatively different new phase was evolving in the conflict as the armed offensive of the Tamil militants grew in sophistication and intensity as a result of the armed training they received in India with overt and covert Indian government support. At the same time, India came forward to play a role as a self-appointed mediator. The Eelam war evolved in four phases, each phase being demarcated by a short spell of ceasefires and the cessation of hostilities. The first phase of the Eelam war began gradually in 1984 and ended in 1987. With the failure of the early political initiatives, such as the All-Party Conference convened by President Jayewardene in January 1984 and the Thimpu talks held in August 1985 under Indian patronage, the country was in the thick of unhindered military conflict. The first phase ended in 1987 with the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord and the arrival of the IPKF in Sri Lanka. The cessation of hostilities initiated by India lasted only for ten weeks. The presence of the IPKF and the establishment of Provincial
Councils changed the political climate and conflict contours of the country and marked the second phase of the armed conflict.

The second phase of the Eelam war began in October 1987 after open war between the IPKF and the LTTE flared up in the north and the east. The first attempt of the Sri Lankan Government to talk to the LTTE directly was during the Premadasa administration in the last phase of IPKF operations in May 1989. These talks dragged on till June 1990 but collapsed miserably with the IPKF leaving Sri Lanka. Armed confrontation began once again in June 1990, following a short truce during the talks. The ferocity and intensity of renewed fighting surpassed the violence of the period that preceded the truce.

At a time when the People’s Alliance (PA) government came to power in 1994, Sri Lanka was weary after a decade of continuous conflict, political violence and social turmoil. The PA promised a new approach to the ethnic problem and emphasized the need for a negotiated political settlement. After an exchange of correspondence between the leader of the LTTE and Chandrika Kumaratunga, an Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities was signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE on 8 January 1995. The euphoria of a quick peace based on a negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict was shattered after the collapse of direct talks with the LTTE in April 1995. Eelam War III began in April 1995. The renewed armed conflict surpassed in violence the one that preceded the talks. After a fierce battle, government forces were able to liberate Jaffna from LTTE control in October 1995. In late 1998, the Government tried to open a land route to Jaffna but it failed at severe human and material cost. In late 1998, the Kilinochchi, Mulleitivu and Elephant Pass military camps collapsed. The armed forces experienced continuous setbacks on the military front in the period 1999-2000. The military stalemate and the assassinations and attacks on
selected targets in the south resulted in a very gloomy atmosphere once again.\(^{13}\)

In this context, the United National Front (UNF) that came to power in December 2001 also took new initiatives for peace. The Agreement on a Ceasefire was signed with the LTTE on 22 February 2002. As part of the Agreement, a team of International Monitors came to the island to monitor the ceasefire agreement. The peace process initiated by the UNF regime had three components. The main element of the peace process was the Ceasefire (CF) Agreement. The second element of the peace process of the UNF government constituted direct talks with the LTTE. The first round of talk was held in September 2002 in Thailand. This process consisted of six rounds of talks.\(^ {14}\) The third element of the peace process was the Sub-Committee activities covering, not exclusively, but mainly rehabilitation and reconstruction. The peace initiatives of the UNF also reached an impasse by November 2003 as the LTTE adamantly insisted that any future peace talks must be based on the proposed Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) drafted by them. At this stage President Kumaratunga decided to use her executive powers and dissolved Parliament. The no war-no peace situation that prevailed during the last days remained even after the change of the government in 2004, and of the Presidency in 2005.

The speedy escalation of violence reached the level of full scale war once again after the Mavil Aru battle in August 2006 which marked the beginning of Eelam War IV.\(^ {15}\) From the very outset of Eelam War IV, the winds on the battle front blew against the LTTE. The GOSL forces were able to clear the territory militarily controlled by the LTTE in the Eastern province in September 2007. After that the GOSL forces embarked on the second phase of its military offensive against the LTTE in the Mannar District in the Northern Province. In the face of the advancing GOSL forces, the territory held by
the LTTE in the Wanni area contracted rapidly confining it to a narrow strip of land in the Nanathii kadal lagoon in the Mallaitivu district in May 2009.

**Synergy and Conflict**

The rise and fall of the LTTE is a unique phenomenon in the post-colonial history of Sri Lanka. The emergence of the LTTE is closely related to the structural crisis of the post-colonial state which exploded at its weakest point, i.e., the state-nation relationship. The socio-political forces who took the reins of power since independence failed to integrate all the ethno-national identities in the country into the decision-making process. All attempts taken earlier by the ruling parties to restructure the state were abandoned in the implementation stage, even after the signing of agreements with Tamil parties, in the face of political pressure from a small section of Sinhala Buddhist extremist in the society. There were stages in the course of alienation of Tamils from mainstream politics and from the state. The political leadership of the main parties who were in power alternatively failed to grasp and respond positively to the many early warning signals. It must be emphasized that recognition of the fact that there is an unresolved ethnic problem that gave birth to an organization such as the LTTE, does not justify all the extremism and violence perpetrated by the LTTE. The modus operandi of the LTTE presents a clear example of extremism and terrorism associated with ethnic conflicts and ethno-political mobilizations in South Asia.

In the common sense of the word, extremism is a relative condition as well as a loaded term. Therefore, this term should be understood in a structural sense in relation to the given concrete socio-political situation. In the present South Asian historical and political context, it is not difficult to identify key properties of the phenomenon of extremism. In view of South
Asia's central location in the Indian Ocean and its age-old historical intercourse with a wider geographic area in Asia, a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-religious complexion constituted the fundamental character of entire South Asia. The acceptance and recognition of this fundamental feature is a *sine qua non* for co-existence, stability and peace in South Asia. The importance of notions and respect for plurality, tolerance, coexistence and accommodation of mutual interests in the political and social spaces needs to be understood in this context. Any violation of these fundamental features either in theory or practice generates a chain reaction and destabilizes the entire society. Extremism is manifested not only in ideology but also in political practice and behaviour. It is not definitely a one-way process. Extremism, though takes different stances, ideologically sustain each other in the long run and provide mutual justification for each other's behaviour. The dialectics of Sinhala and Tamil extremisms can be cited as a case in point. The extremist social and political ideologies and practices are a manifestation of a broader socio-political crisis. In Gramsci's words, when the body politic is in crisis, morbid symptoms appear everywhere. Indeed, extremism represents one of such morbid symptoms in our body politics.

Many properties of extremism and its accompanying violence are well manifested in the political agenda, strategy, behaviour and organizational structure of the LTTE. Its political alternative to the structural crisis of the state and to the failure to accommodate the multi-ethnic social order in the system of power and governance is a mono-ethnic state for Tamil people. The stark reality is that the majority of Tamil people in Sri Lanka live outside the proposed political space of Tamil Eelam. In the multi-ethnic context, many non-Tamils also live within the territory demarcated for Tamil Eelam. The attack on the 'outsiders in the homeland' and irredentist flushing out attacks on others to demarcate the traditional
homeland created a serious human security crisis. In 1990, the Muslims who had lived in the north for generations were given only 24 hours to leave. The self-righteousness associated with ethnic zeal sets no limits to violence.

The strategy that the LTTE adopted to achieve its political objective was overwhelmingly based on terror and violence. Suicidal missions and ‘cyanide capsules’ became the hallmark of the political culture of the LTTE. The political assignations using suicidal attackers constituted a main element of its strategy. On the one hand, it targeted political leaders such as heads of states, presidential candidates, ministers and other political personalities. On the other hand, the LTTE conducted systematic assassinations of other viable Tamil political leaders to don the mantle of the sole representative of the Tamils. Bomb attacks on economic and civilian targets in the south remained another aspect of its strategy. By conducting such attacks, the LTTE wanted to take the entire community in the south as ransom and to pressurize the state to yield to its demands.

The overtly militaristic behaviour of the LTTE had not changed in accordance with the global politico-strategic environment. The LTTE originated as a war-machine and it remained so throughout. There was a political section but it was always an appendage to the military section. In politics, after a careful analysis of possible opportunities, it is necessary to compromise and bargain. There is no room for that in extremism. The LTTE failed to grab many opportunities offered by the Sri Lankan government because of over-reliance on its military strength. The authoritarian character of the organization and its leadership cult deprived it of the means of hearing the true pulse of the Tamil people living under its control. The LTTE was of the wrong perception that the Tamil people would be behind them under any situation because it was fighting for the Tamil cause.
The misperception of the LTTE about the allegiance of the Tamil people paved the way for its final debacle. In order to understand the modus operandi of the LTTE in its last phase, it is necessary to read its strategy correctly. The LTTE was very well aware of the fact that it was not possible to have its Eelam by military means only. The recognition of a new state is very restricted according to prevailing international conventions and practices. During the ceasefire environment the LTTE tried to have a transitional arrangement by presenting a proposal for an ISGA in November 2003. If it had been implemented, there would have been only one or two steps to cross the Rubicon after five years. The plan failed due to the intervention of President Kumaratunga. The LTTE has realized by then that even a very long period of military tenacity over a tract of land does not politically baptize a separate state. The Bangladesh case of genocide and oppression on ethnic grounds could be a valid reason for secession. After the failed attempt of establishing the ISGA, the LTTE hoped to create conditions for a ‘grave humanitarian crisis’ that warranted international intervention, a subsequent transitional authority under UN supervision and a plebiscite after a certain time frame. The LTTE was planning for these three steps to achieve its political objective of Eelam. The LTTE systematically planned this scenario by taking over two hundred and fifty thousand ordinary people with them and hoped to keep them till such an eventuality took place. The LTTE firmly believed till the last minute that these Tamil people would remain with them. But, as soon as the GOSL forces broke the siege, the people deserted the LTTE leaving them vulnerable to attack.

The collapse of the LTTE cannot be adequately explained only in terms of the factors and conditions operating on the military strategic plain. The defeat of the LTTE was possible due to its own political collapse. Terrorism has a limit as a political tool. The relentless killing of Tamil political
opponents and its failure to utilize the space opened up by the ceasefire to change its image politically weakened the LTTE. The terrorist face of the LTTE, rather than of the liberation fighters, was illustrated more and more by nihilistic-type assassinations. The extortions and other forms of intimidation of the people in the North and the East by the LTTE became more intolerable during the ceasefire. At the same time the validity of the political alternative of the LTTE to the structural crisis of the Sri Lankan state has been questioned more and more in the light of global socio-political trends and geopolitical realities in South Asia. Disillusionment with the LTTE goal of a separate sovereign state for Tamil people and the enormous destruction and severe pain caused by war eroded the earlier support base. War-weariness of the people in the war-torn area was reflected in every nook and corner of society. Over-reliance on arms and military strategy rather than on social forces and political strategy, and the ruthless suppression of ‘other’ voices in Tamil society dissipated the moral justification of their struggle. The continuous displacement and destruction of livelihood denied the Tamil people the bare minimum of civilized life. The culture of violence and the creation of a garrison community destroyed the human dignity and spirit of the people who once laid claim to a rich and dignified culture and instilled a feeling of pervasive helplessness.

It must be noted that it is not possible for Sri Lanka to be transformed from a conflict to a post-conflict society over night, simply after the military victory over the LTTE in May 2009. The transition from a conflict to a post-conflict society is a long and multifaceted process which needs a clear vision to be accompanied by proper planning, determination and dedication on the part of a wide range of stake-holders. The defeat of the LTTE does not automatically solve the ethnic conflict. It should not be forgotten that it is the unresolved
The military defeat of the LTTE has definitely provided a new space for embarking on a long-term solution to the ethnic problem. It is true that security remains an overriding concern for sometime to come. However, true security could only be ensured by empowering the Tamil and Muslim communities in the North and the East and by integrating them into the Sri Lankan polity. Without delay, to begin with, the full implementation of the 13th amendment of the Constitution is necessary not only to give the people in the North a necessary opening for political democracy after a long period of garrison life but also to make them an integral part of a constitutional arrangement of power and governance. However, realistically speaking, there is a long way to go before entering into the path towards a post-conflict society. Sri Lanka needs a clear vision and a programme of action with short-term and long term objectives to fully utilize the space opened up by the defeat of the LTTE to develop a healthy multi-ethnic state involving all the communities on the basis of true equality and partnership.
In the short run, the issues relating to the internally displaced people must receive priority attention. The handling of the IDP issue in the East was relatively less complicated compared to that of Vanni. In the East, the government was successful in the initial step of mobilizing government, UN and non-governmental agencies to attend to the immediate humanitarian needs and emergency relief, restoration of essential services to the population of the IDP. The proper management of rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes in the direction of laying the foundation for a viable economy, and access to an inclusive, sustainable, development programme is a sensitive and challenging task. The IDP situation in the Vanni area is different from that of the East. Not only the magnitude but also the complexity of issues involved with the IDPs in the Vanni has made resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction more challenging. In the post-conflict reconstruction process, political and governance issues are more important in the long run. In this respect the participatory process and good governance plays a key role. As the Joint project of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on post conflict reconstruction observed, "Governance involves setting rules and procedures for political decision-making, and delivering public service in an efficient and transparent manner. Participation encompasses the process for giving voice to the population through the development of civil society that includes the generation and exchange of ideas through advocacy groups, civic associations, and the media."16

In order to move from a conflict to a post-conflict environment with confidence Sri Lankan state needs a new vision and mission that is capable of setting the norms and guidelines for addressing the requirements of the building of the Sri Lankan nation. The ideology of the state must cut across ethnic boundaries and political loyalties. The ideology of the state must facilitate the incorporation and accommodation of
all ethnic identities of the Sri Lankan society. This incorporation and accommodation should be reflected in the system of governance. Participatory democracy and human security is the anchor in the march towards a post-conflict society.

Conclusion

Human insecurity that prevailed in Sri Lanka in the last five decades brought into focus the synergy and chain reaction of violence and extremism that undermined basic human values and democratic practices vital for peace, stability and collective coexistence. The security of the state should organically be linked with the security of all collective identities, communities and the individual as a member of civil society. In a context where the authority of the state is challenged on ethnic lines, the entire ethnic collectivity would be treated as a security problem by the state. When the state treats a section of its own citizenry as a national security threat, the very foundation of the security of the state is shaken. The use of terror and violence against the state provides a convenient rationale for the state to employ violence against all other political opponents curtailing the democratic space of the country further. It would exacerbate the insecurity of the individual, as well as the ethnic collectivity as a whole. The concept of human security which emphasizes the importance of multiple references of security and diverse aspects of security essential for human life provides a possible way out of this vicious circle. The military collapse of the LTTE offers Sri Lanka an opportunity to move from conflict to post-conflict society. In order to go forward in that direction Sri Lanka needs a new security agenda. The evolving concept of human security and participatory democracy could provide the necessary guidelines for a new security agenda.
Endnotes

7 People identified the alternative authority as ‘punchi ānduwa’ (small government) which was sometimes influential than the state.
9 India Today, March 1984, presented a vivid picture of the activities of Tamil militant groups in operation in Tamil Nadu. In mid-1980s, it is reported, Tamil Nadu harboured 39 military training camps in which 300 Tamil guerillas were undergoing training.
10 On 3 May 1986, a LTTE bomb exploded an Air Lanka jetliner killing 14 passengers. Four days later a bomb near the Central Telegraph Office (CTO) in Colombo killed 14 people and
wounded more than 100. Anti-state violence thus came to the heart of Colombo.

11 Altogether, six rounds of talks were held until 11 April 1995. During these negotiations and also in the exchange of letters, the LTTE carefully avoided discussing any political issues directly related to a sustainable solution to the ethnic problem. The LTTE demand during this period of dialogue that the Sri Lankan army should vacate key military positions indicated that they were not yet ready to think of a negotiated settlement.

12 This military operation, code-named 'Riviresa', was carried out at a heavy price. About 600-700 soldiers were killed and 3000 wounded.

13 The strategy of the PA government seemed to be two-pronged: military and political. In July 1995, the concept paper on constitutional reforms which was identified as the devolution package was published. The government initiated a dialogue with the main opposition party on the devolution package and started the legislative process to have a new constitution to give political expression to multi-ethnicity. The new constitution initiative of the PA government saw a dismal end when ‘A Bill to repeal and replace the Constitution’ was finally rejected by the opposition in August 2000.

14 The second round was held at Rose Garden in Thailand from 31 October-2 November 2002, the third one was in Oslo, Norway during 2-5 December 2002, the fourth round was held again in Thailand during 6-9 January 2003. The fifth one was in Berlin during 7-8 February 2003 and the sixth one was held in Hakone, Japan, during 18-21 March 2003.

15 It began after the LTTE closed the sluice gate of the Mavil Aru reservoir on July 21 and cut the water supply to 15,000 villages in government controlled areas. Initial negotiations and efforts by the SLMM to open the gates failed. The GOSL Air Force attacked LTTE positions on July 26 as ground troops began an operation to open the gate.