CHAPTER V

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INTRODUCTION

India’s involvement in the Sri Lankan conflict had an impact on the decline of TULF. Subsequent to the anti-Tamil violence of 1983, most of the leaders migrated to India. However, while a few leaders, particularly, Amirthalingam and Sivasithamparam continued to be involved in the Tamil issue, rest of the leaders were inactive, living either in India or in various Western countries. The TULF leadership engaged itself in supporting India’s efforts to find a negotiated settlement for the Tamils with the Sri Lankan government. Since the leaders who were in Sri Lanka were dormant, the TULF physically lost ground and Sri Lankan Tamils were left without any representation. Therefore, the militants took charge of the situation. The TULF was representing the Tamils in the negotiations, while, the recognition to their representation was questionable among the Sri Lankan Tamils. Actuality, at ground level, the militants were leading the movement and the TULF was losing ground.

INDIAN INVOLVEMENT IN SRI LANKAN TAMIL POLITICS

The ethnic problem of Sri Lankan Tamils began to echo in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu, since 1958. Protesting the anti-Tamil violence of 1958, in Sri Lanka, DMK leader C.N. Annadurai led a solidarity rally in Madras.  

1 Around the same time, Rajaji, in his newspaper *Suvathanthira*, wrote, ‘The solution to the Sri Lankan Tamil crisis is federal system.’  

2 Chelvanayakam visited India in 1972, subsequent to the introduction of the Republican Constitution, thus, pioneering the lobby in India for the Tamil cause. He met all the important leaders and eminent

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2 Ibid.
citizens of Tamil Nadu to prepare the ground for his expectation of effective intervention of India in Sri Lanka in favour of the Sri Lankan Tamils. He wanted to request Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to, ‘help Sri Lankan Tamils, like she helped the independence to the people of Bangladesh’, but, he did not get the opportunity to meet her. However, since this visit Tamil Nadu political leadership and intellectuals expressed their solidarity and sensitiveness towards the Tamil’s struggle in Sri Lanka.

Later, Amirthalingam in the capacity of the main opposition leader of the Sri Lankan Parliament continued his lobbying in Tamil Nadu as well as with the Indian Union Government since 1977. The dominant trend of international political behaviour is to build up interstate relations. In case of internal conflicts, one State tends to support the other State and not the internal forces that are conflicting with the State, except it has its own vested interest or any political compulsions to intervene. Therefore, no government would simply offer support for separation. Sivasithamparam observed, ‘No country, including India was ready to support for separate State.’ Therefore, the approach to the Eelam lobby led by the TULF in the pre-1983 period in essence was to search for face-saving solutions to sustain its leadership and parliamentary politics. As observed elsewhere, Amirthalingam’s effort to seek the help of Morarji Desai was an ample evidence to understand the type of his lobby that was for some kind of power-sharing. Based on this expectation of the TULF, India seemed convinced that reasonable regional autonomy would satisfactorily solve the aspirations of the Sri Lankan Tamils. From this conviction, Indira Gandhi announced in 1983 that a solution was required to be found out within the united framework of Sri Lanka.

Until the anti-Tamil violence of 1983, the Indian government treated the Sri Lankan Tamil issue as an internal affair of Sri Lanka and maintained the policy of non-interference. During the anti-Tamil violence of 1981, some of the Indian citizens and hundreds of plantation Tamils (Indian origin Tamils) were killed or seriously affected. Indian External Affairs Minister responding to the query of the Lok Sabha members regarding the safety of Indians and other Tamils, said:

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3 Ibid, p. 4.
4 Author’s interview with M. Sivasithamparam, Chennai, 16 July 2001.
These events are essentially an internal affair of Sri Lanka... since they affect a large number of persons of Indian origin, and possibly some Indian citizens... the present difficulties would soon be resolved and no shadows are cast on the traditional close relations which exist between India and Sri Lanka.

However, in 1983 riots, India acted swiftly by sending its Foreign Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao to Colombo to assess the situation to protect the Tamils. What were the political factors that contributed to this drastic change in India’s Sri Lanka policy?

**Causes of India’s Intervention**

There were two major causes attributed by scholars to the India’s intervention in Sri Lanka’s ethnic conflict. Firstly, India’s geo-political and security interests; and secondly, India had to positively respond to the pressure from Tamil Nadu. Problems of the Sri Lankan Tamils always had impact on Tamil Nadu both socially and politically. However, some studies attribute Indira Gandhi’s personal grudge on Jayewardene as an added reason for her decision to involve into the Sinhalese–Tamil conflict.

Despite the pro-West policy of the UNP regime that was generally a concern to India’s interests, two major developments occurred since 1981. First, Jayewardene government was persistent to provide facilities on Sri Lankan soil to the US for its military purposes. India perceived this as serious ignorance on the

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6 In the election campaign, while, Jayewardene compared the politics of Srimavo Bandaranaike and her son Anura Bandaranaike with Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi, derogatorily referred as ‘cow and calf’ in India and Sri Lanka that naturally provoked Indira Gandhi. He also subtly attacked Indira Gandhi for her arrest of Morarji Desai under Emergency in the banquet speech on his visit to New Delhi in 27 October 1978. See Avtar Singh Bhasin, *India in Sri Lanka between Lion and the Tigers* (New Delhi: Manas Publication, 2004), pp. 66-67.

7 Sri Lanka is known for its pro-West foreign policy. It has also ignored India’s security interest as it was not supportive of India at the India–China war. Further, Sri Lanka allowed Pakistan planes to refuel in Colombo, which were engaged in the war against India in 1971. In the issues of international importance such as Soviet troops in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka took pro-American stance while India took pro-Soviet stance.

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part of Sri Lanka on its security interests. Considering the escalation of ‘rivalry between super powers, India, a country of strategic importance to both USA and the Soviet Union finds itself enmeshed in the web of strategies, arms deployment and Cold War rhetoric’.\(^8\) India had to address this issue.\(^9\)

Second, the government and all parties of Tamil Nadu strongly reacted to the 1981 anti-Tamil violence. Karunanidhi led a huge rally to persuade the Union Government to intervene in the Sri Lankan Tamil issue to protect them. MGR also flew to New Delhi with all party leaders and persuaded Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.\(^10\) Both Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam (DMK) and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam (AIADMK) had their petty selfish political interests involved. This localisation of the Sri Lankan Tamil issue also contributed to the split among Sri Lankan Tamil militants after 1983. This paradoxical nature of the support to the Sri Lankan Tamils proved fatal in the end.\(^11\)

In the latter part of the same year, V. Prabakaran of the LTTE and Umamaheswaran of People’s Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) were arrested in a shooting incident at Pondy Bazaar, Madras.\(^12\) These two militants were wanted by the Sri Lankan police in connection with a number of criminal activities. The Government of Sri Lanka tried to get them extradited. Sri Lankan Tamil leaders naturally had more influence than the Sri Lankan government in Tamil Nadu. They countered the move of the Sri Lankan government.\(^13\) This issue created a situation of triangle politics centered on Sri

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\(^8\) S.N. Chopra (former Indian diplomat), *The Island*, Colombo, 21 November 1983.


\(^11\) DMK leader M. Karunanidhi used to claim himself as the leader of world Tamils and had the habit of using such claim for electoral gains and to belittle the opponents. This competition was one of the major reasons that led MGR to foster LTTE after 1983. This helped for an asymmetrical growth of the LTTE that led to eliminate other militant organisations and had contributed to the peaceful solution and democratic culture in the Sri Lankan Tamil politics.

\(^12\) In 1981, Prabakaran attempted to assassinate Umamaheswaran in Chennai. The police arrested them. Sri Lankan government asked India to extradite them to Colombo, but in vain. This issue drew the Tamil Nadu state and Central Government leaders to have policy to deal with Sri Lankan Tamil issue.

Lankan Tamils.\textsuperscript{14} Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran confirmed his strong support to the militants when he said:

\begin{quote}
We do not bother what these youth did in Sri Lanka. We enquire whether they disturbed peace in India. Mahatma and Netaji were branded by the imperialist as traitors, but for us they are freedom fighters. Similarly, the arrested youth are freedom fighters for the Sri Lankan Tamils.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Between 1980–81, most of the militant leaders were in Tamil Nadu or frequently visited Tamil Nadu and engaged in garnering support for Eelam. Significantly, the EPRLF had named its office Eelam Peoples Information Centre (EPIC) in Madras. It was engaged in Eelam campaign widely. They came out with regular news bulletin \textit{Eelam News} (Tamil and English) and a party magazine \textit{Eela Muzakkam} (Thunder of Eelam).\textsuperscript{16} Moreover, Amirthalingam used to brief Indira Gandhi about the developments every year since 1981.\textsuperscript{17} Premachandran said, ‘Since 1981, militant leaders or their representatives had a number of meetings with important ministers and bureaucrats both at the Centre and the State level in India.’\textsuperscript{18} Thus, Indian political leadership was considerably cultivated in these two years.

The first time India raised its voice against the inclusion of anti-human rights clauses in the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) in June 1983.\textsuperscript{19} The clauses gave power to the army and police to bury the bodies of those killed by them unaccountably. These clauses were enacted while army atrocities against Tamils in Trincomalee were at the peak.\textsuperscript{20} Sri Lankan Parliament protested that ‘India’s concern’ amounted to interference in its internal affairs.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[14] This issue drew the Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu state and the Indian Union Government into a sensational political discourse.
\item[17] Amirthalingam, n. 1, p. 7.
\item[18] Author’s interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001
\item[19] Indian government called the Sri Lankan High Commissioner and conveyed its concern over the adaptation of these clauses. Also Indian High Commissioner in Colombo conveyed the concern of the Indian government to the Sri Lankan government in Colombo. See Amirthalingam, n. 1, p. 9.
\item[20] These clauses were enacted to empower all the forces including police free from any accountability, thus gave absolute freehand to eliminate Tamils.
\end{itemize}
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The anti-Tamil violence of July 1983 continued for a week, resulting in drastic changes within the country and in the relations between India and Sri Lanka. Around 2,000 Tamils were reported killed in Colombo only. There were 57 political prisoners including leaders of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO); Kuttimani and Thangathurai were brutally killed in prison. About 79,000 people were rendered homeless. About 1,50,000 people lost their jobs. Loss of property was estimated at Sri Lankan rupees 2000 million. Government imposed curfew after more than twenty-four hours. Many cruel attacks against Tamils and the array of shops in flame were telecast in many countries either through video films taken by the tourists or through satellite. The international media described the violence as genocide and as barbaric act. The rioters smashed the car of the Deputy Indian High Commissioner and burnt the Indian Overseas Bank. More than a 1,00,000 Sri Lankan Tamils came to India as refugees. Wider coverage of these atrocities by the international media drew the attention of the international community towards the issue of Eelam and gained sympathy for their plight.

All sections of the Tamil Nadu citizens and the all the political parties of Tamil Nadu showed their utmost solidarity with their fellow ethnic community by staging huge protest rallies and hunger strikes. The State government led one-day strike in the State. Chief Minister MGR led the hunger strike. Members in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha expressed their disappointment with the Sri Lankan government’s failure to protect the Tamils and the Tamil interests. They urged for stringent measures to tackle the problem of the Tamils. Tamil Nadu mounted pressure on the Centre to intervene and protect Sri Lankan Tamils. Moreover, internationalised majoritarian attitude of the Sri Lankan State and its spillover effect in India gave political, and moral advantage to India to involve in the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka.

Indira Gandhi decided to intervene effectively in the issue to pursue its twin interests in Sri Lanka. In her telephonic conversation with Jayewardene, she

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21 See Bhasin, n. 6, p. 61.
22 The anti-Tamil violence started on 24 July 1983 afternoon, but government imposed curfew on the next day evening.
23 Rajasingam, n. 5.
24 Author was engaged in facilitating to see the interests of the Tamil refugees with the Tamil Nadu rehabilitation authorities in 1984.
conveyed the 'grave concern' of India on the developments in Sri Lanka. The same day she sent the External Affairs Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to Colombo to evaluate the situation. G. Parthasarathy followed him to find ways for a political settlement between the Sri Lankan government and the Sri Lankan Tamil leader. Informing her conversation to the Lok Sabha, she said:

I reassured the President (of Sri Lanka)... We want the unity and national integrity of Sri Lanka to be preserved. At the same time, I pointed out to the President developments in Sri Lanka affect us also. In this matter, India cannot be regarded as just any country. Sri Lanka and India are the two countries who are directly concerned. Any extraneous involvement will complicate the matters for both our countries. We live in a region where many forces are at work, not all of who wish India or our neighbours well. Forces of destabilisation are at work. Hence, we must make every effort to minimize any opportunity for foreign elements to weaken us.\(^\text{25}\)

Subsequently, in the meeting with the special envoy, H.W. Jayewardene, brother of President Jayewardene, Indira Gandhi reasserted the legitimacy of India to involve in support of the Tamils, 'because of the historical, cultural and such other close ties between the people of the two countries, particularly, between the Tamil communities of Sri Lanka and us; India cannot remain unaffected by such events there'.\(^\text{26}\)

India's official stance was: (a) India would not support a separate State in Sri Lanka; (b) India has moral and legal authority to intervene in the conflict; (c) India would not tolerate any threat to its security interests by Sri Lanka by involving any other country or forces on its soil.

The Eelam issue was also linked with the Cold War rivalry. While the US led, pro-US forces\(^\text{27}\) joined hands with Sri Lankan State, though in mutual interests, India became close to the Tamil militants. It may be noted here that the active involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and MOSSAD (Official Intelligence Agency of Israel) was to subvert the Eelam Struggle and India's efforts in the issue. Even though this study is not intended to see the Cold

\(^{25}\) Bhasin, n. 6, pp. 75–76.
\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 77.
\(^{27}\) British, Israel, Pakistan and South Africa.
War dimension of the Eelam issue, it would be imperative to corroborate a few evidences to understand the impact of the Cold War dimension in this issue. Within India, the Deputy Director of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Unni Krishnan was arrested red-handed, a few months before the Indo–Sri Lanka Accord and put in Tihar Jail, on the charges of CIA connection. He was in charge of the southern zone and dealing with matters concerning the Tamil militants and the Union Government.28 The LTTE was given training by MOSSAD in Israel alongside Sri Lankan Army but in two different nearby camps without knowing each other. Meanwhile, the LTTE was getting training in India also.29 A separate study in this dimension would provide comprehensive understanding of this issue.

To implement this policy, while Indira Gandhi asserted the concern of India in the wellbeing of the Sri Lankan Tamils, she offered Sri Lanka, the good offices of India to work out a solution to the problems of Tamils without affecting the unity of the country.30 Jayewardene hesitantly accepted India’s offer of mediation.31 However, Jayewardene, while soft-pedalling with India’s initiatives, was hectic in strengthening Sri Lankan forces with the intention to find a military solution. Indira Gandhi knew that Jayewardene was a shrewd politician, well-known Sinhalese chauvinist and anti-Indian leader and thus it would be difficult to bow him for desired solution. She decided to strengthen the Tamil militants as military arm of this endeavour to exert enough pressure on the Sri Lankan government and use the TULF as her political arm to engage in negotiations.

Twin Strategy Adopted by India

Indira Gandhi adopted carrot and stick policy to deal with Sri Lanka. She began strengthening the militants by giving training and weapons to protect the Tamils from the Sri Lankan forces and to exert pressure on the State. At the same time, she offered India’s good offices to Sri Lanka to mediate between the Sri Lankan

28 Personal discussion with EPRLF Secretary General K Pathmanaba, New Delhi, July 1987.
31 Muni, n. 9, pp. 68–73.
government and the Tamil leadership, i.e. the TULF. She found the TULF
credible, and the right party to negotiate with the Sri Lankan government because
it had the constitutional and legal expertise with the added credibility of being the
main opposition party in Sri Lanka.

She invited Amirthalingam to New Delhi to involve them in this task. He was
invited at a time when the TULF had lost its direction and there was frustration
due to the failure of the DDC, and subsequent loss of its Parliament seats. She
treated Amirthalingam almost like leader of a State. She arranged a meeting for
him with the leaders of the opposition parties in the Parliament building. 32 He was
given a seat beside the Deputy Prime Minister of Soviet Union (chief guest), in the
India’s Independence Day ceremony at the Red Fort. 33 She organised an
international press conference in Delhi to enable Amirthalingam to internationalise
the issue of anti-Tamil violence in Sri Lanka. She also requested them to perform
duties to campaign among leaders of important countries on the racial nature of
the Sri Lankan State, prepare drafts for the negotiations and to represent the
Tamils in the negotiations. This recognition as the legitimate leader gave the
TULF the opportunity for its revival.

Even though the TULF enjoyed the reputation as representatives of Tamils
outside its constituency, in real sense, their credibility among the Tamils had
come down substantially after 1981. After 1983, in the face of Army atrocities,
mass arrests and humiliations in their traditional homeland, their support and
sympathy was shifted to the militant organisations. 34 'The TULF, even after losing
its position as a middle class, moderate parliamentary party, continued to play the
role of an election organisation and not that of a political party to lead and liberate

32 The meeting with opposition leaders of the Indian Parliament was held on 14 August
1983. By this meeting, burden of Indira Gandhi was reduced to convince the
government’s policy on Sri Lanka to the opposition parties. See Amirthalingam, n. 1,
p. 11.
33 This respect to the Amirthalingam itself was a message to the world and especially Sri
Lankan government that India was there to uphold the rights and dignity of the Sri
Lankan Tamils.
the Tamils.\textsuperscript{35} It rather became a woeful irritant for the entire Tamil militant organisations for its three decades long monotonous political culture without any worthy political benefit. The experience from B-C Pact to DDC raised the doubts on their negotiation skill among militants. Hence, the militants had the question of the bona fide of the TULF as representatives of the Tamils.\textsuperscript{36} Even though the militants wrested the political leadership from the TULF, undoubtedly, many of their exposure to the politics was not matched with the heavyweight approach of the Indian and Sri Lankan governments. These shortcomings of the TULF and dominant section of the militants were not rectified unto the last lead to the disastrous end.

The Indian government dealt with militants through Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) particularly until the demise of Indira Gandhi.\textsuperscript{37} Despite reservations on the leading role of the TULF, three reasons could be attributed to the cooperation of militants with India: (a) Firstly, All the leaders wanted to strengthen their respective organisations militarily, until such time they decided not to press their own agendas. (b) There was general believe and understanding that the hardening anti-Tamil and anti-Indian attitude of the Sri Lankan polity and their increasing ties with the forces inimical to India's interests would lead to a Bangladesh like situation and that would help to influence the stance of India in their favour, i.e., Eelam. (c) Finally, they had the conviction that they would get the recognition in the process and for that they have to have good relations with India.\textsuperscript{38}

A number of assumptions supported their optimism of getting India's support for Eelam. Firstly, they had the conviction that India would demand for at least a federal system whereas Jayewardene would not even consider such a demand. Secondly, considering the intention of Jayewardene for military solution would increasingly provoke India. They believed that India's open stance of 'find a


\textsuperscript{36} Author's interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001 and T. Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} Author's interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
solution within the united Sri Lanka' was merely a diplomatic approach. According to the possible political developments separation appeared to be inevitable and in such eventuality India would change its stance. This belief stemmed from the discussions of the Tamil leaders with Indira Gandhi. She never denied them her support for Eelam. Instead, she said, ‘our step should be internationally justifiable.’ And said, ‘You (Tamils) have to gain strength.’ She assured, ‘We are with you, and we will be with you unto the last.’ Even though she did not openly pronounce the support for Eelam, almost all the leaders perceived that she would not mind support, if the political developments lead to such situation.

However, politically weak and ambitiously high the TULF, playing the role of negotiator was a matter of concern to the militants. Such a leadership, they felt, would damage their calculations regarding future political moves. Militants were firmly determined for Eelam, a complete separate State, and not for any patch up solutions. Contrarily, the TULF was not firm with any kind of solution. They were ready to settle with much less, but they tried to save convincingly enough in the faces of the militants and their own constituency, who suffered a lot under the Sri Lankan military operations. The TULF was aware of the doubts of the militants on them; therefore, it became necessary on the part of the TULF to clear the doubts on them and maintain a good relation with militants to consolidate the gains, especially in a period, when at least a dignified solution was on the card.

**Militants Gaining Ground**

Militants emerged as different groups due to the failure of the TULF in leading the Eelam movement. Young militants were emotional; further, emotional public speeches of the TULF were the main knowledge source of most of the leaders of the narrow nationalist camp. Many of them formed organisation with the emotion to fight the State but did not have any ideological clarity or various dimensions of

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40 Ibid.
41 Indira Gandhi assured the support during a meeting with K. Pathmanaba. Author's interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
the issue and the interests of the forces involved in it. Hence, most of their political understanding and decisions were short-sighted and emotional, rather than rational. In this backdrop, the struggle reached a crucial juncture due to the entry of India. This necessitated the militants to build themselves up as full-fledged politico-military organisations capable of leading a liberation movement and to fill the vacuum created by the TULF.

With the involvement of India, the ground reality in Sri Lanka began to rapidly deteriorate. Whereas on the one hand, Sri Lankan government was engaged in the expansion and strengthening of its forces, on the other hand militant organisations boomed and stepped up both offensive and defensive operations against the security forces. The Sri Lankan government increased its enforcement in the Tamil provinces, a number of new army camps cropped up in every strategic point to contain the mobility of militants. All the forces were enhanced with special training furnished with powerful armoury, and full legal freedom to act on their wish. State military machine was expanded by introducing new elite forces such as Special Task Force (STF), and established new intelligence department called National Investigation Bureau (NIB) in support of the forces, with the foreign helps from Israel, South Africa, Pakistan and the British mercenaries. Sri Lankan Defence Ministry already announced, 'The armed forces and the police in the north are to be given legal immunity from judicial proceedings and wide ranging powers to search and destroy.'

This announcement set the stage for indiscriminate killings of Tamils. Furnished with absolute power, Sri Lankan forces acted like waging war on an enemy country. They adopted methods to terrorise the society by massacre of the civilians, probably thinking that it would prevent the youngsters from joining the movement. In one such instance, 36 civilians including three-months-old infant were stabbed to death using swords and knives by the Navy, while travelling in a trawler from the Delft Island to the main land. Tamil males aged between 14 and 40 were defined as terrorists. They used to round up villages and arrest Tamil people belonging to this
age group. Hence, the able-bodied Tamil men became scared and began migrating
to other countries.45

Forces also began artillery attacks from various army camps to the residential
areas; shelling from the sea; and bombing from the air led to indiscriminate killings
of civilians and all-out destruction of properties. Previously, Tamils were attacked
mostly by the Sinhalese chauvinistic forces and that was largely in the Sinhalese-
dominated areas in which mostly the security forces were silent spectators. The
1981-attack on Jaffna was the indication to wipe-out Jaffna. After 1983 violence,
Sri Lankan defence forces got directly engaged in the act of physical annihilation
of Tamils at their own homes in Tamil provinces. Mass arrests, custody deaths,
and disappearance at the arrests became very usual. The military campaign was
used to terrorise Tamils.

People were left with no leadership to complain about their tragedy and to
guide them to deal with the situation. In the absence of the traditional
representation, prominent citizens organised themselves to form Citizen
Committees. These committees addressed the pressing issues of the people,
especially, the issues of arrests and disappearances of Tamil youth by the security
forces. These committees addressed these issues to the government authorities and
at times to the human rights organisations. Enhancing the efforts of the Citizen
Committees, Mothers’ Fronts was formed as pressure group to protest the
indiscriminate arrests and demand release of the detainees. These organisations
consisting of mothers of the youth under arrest and those who disappeared after
arrest. These formations witnessed the transition from the traditional elected
leadership of the TULF to the militant leadership.

Militant organisations began demonstrated various political activities. Most
of the organisations began publishing their propaganda materials both within the
country and outside to expose the state violence against Tamils and to highlight
their organisational activities. They organised various mass protest activities
against the anti-Tamil atrocities of the State forces. Their main aim was to
strengthen their military, widening their organisational network and the support

45 Personal experience of the author.
base. Immediate aim of all the organisations was recruitments, trainings, and military operations.

There were two visible trends that prevailed between 1977 and 1983. The EROS and EPRLF represented one, concentrated to work amongst the grassroots. However, after the split in EROS, and the formation of the EPRLF, strength of EROS diminished. It began reflecting more of Tamil nationalist flavour than revolutionary ideals. EPRLF worked through many of its mass organisations, especially the General Union of Eelam Students (GUES). This trend involved, 'building up village level organisations of communities, economically viable and conscious of their dignity and rights as persons and communities. Their main weapon was to express, non-violently, a feeling of public anger and outrage when this dignity was violated.'46

Even though EPRLF shifted its importance to build up its military wing and to engage in the military operations after the India's entry in the Tamils issue, it has continued to engage in the mass mobilisation until it was decimated by the LTTE in December 1986. Rajini Thiranagama observes, From the beginning the EPRLF had to swim against the dominant trends in Jaffna Society.47 EROS became primarily a militant organisation. The other tendency was represented by the LTTE and the PLOTE. They did not have the programme of working among the people. Instead, their hit-and-run attacks against the security forces were creating a momentum of their own. This tendency underwent rapid expansion after July 1983, marginalising the people from the struggle.48

Even though all these organisations claimed their ideology as socialism, they could be classified broadly as two camps. One camp, consisting of LTTE, TELO and the PLOTE, could be characterised as narrow Tamil nationalists. The social base of these three groups was also the same. Even though the LTTE had an edge over of others as it successfully propagated them as disciplined organisation, seems felt that the growth of these two parties naturally swallow its support base.

46 Thiranagama et. al., n. 43, p. 40.
The other camp consisting of EROS and the EPRLF, could be seen as Tamil nationalists with the Marxist perspective. Within one camp shade of differences in approach were prevailed. Initially, general Tamil populace were not aware of these internal differences within a camp. Therefore, all the organisations had to differentiate themselves from others in order to remain attractive to the youth. In addition, every organisation had to have reasons to reject other organisations. Therefore, their campaigns developed a jealous competition.

The LTTE claimed its goal as Socialist Tamil Eelam in its initial mobilisation campaign. However, except by a few of its leaders stopped talking about ideology after 1984. In practice, it doesn't give any such ideological education even to its cadres. The ideology was not reflected even in its organisational structure as it was structured purely as a military establishment. Regis Debray's 'Revolution in a Revolution' had considerable impact on the ideology and the organisation of the LTTE, in which he argues 'guerrilla warfare is essentially political, and that for this reason the political cannot be counter posed to the military.' Reflecting the approach of the TULF, the LTTE also, without going into details of specific issues and programme, said that the Socialist Tamil Eelam would solve all the social and economic disparities among Tamils. For instance, earlier, the LTTE had the rule that its members should not have any relationship with women because the men would lose their sense of purpose and it would make the secrecy of the organisation vulnerable. Later, it began recruiting women, especially, due to lack of men to recruit. Women of the LTTE said, 'Women should not stay too far away from the roles set by the society.' They are submissive to their male counterparts and not assertive.

After the split in the EROS and the formation of the EPRLF, EROS largely lost its left flavour and acquired the middle class progressive outlook. It had strong


* LTTE claims it to be published from ‘Tamil Eelam’ and thus the same has been mentioned as ‘place of publication’.


51 See Thiranagama, et.al., n. 43.

52 Ibid, p. 149.
support base in Trincomalee. The EPRLF and EROS believed that politicisation of the people and their cadres was necessary for a revolutionary struggle. Rejecting this approach, the LTTE members used to say in their recruitment campaign, 'One successful guerrilla attack would mobilise the people than hundred seminars and public meetings.'\textsuperscript{53} The LTTE’s meetings were meant to recruit youth into the fighting ranks. They glorify the martyrs and their bravery in their meetings to attract the youngsters, especially, the brave deeds of its leader, his character and his discipline were highlighted. Until his marriage, his anti-women stance was highlighted as an example of highest discipline.\textsuperscript{54} They also advocated carrying cyanide capsules to maintain secrecy and to enhance fighting morale.\textsuperscript{55}

Contrary to the LTTE, the EPRLF advocated and largely practised the necessity of the politicised militant wing. It also believed that the military wing should be subordinated to the political leadership. It had strong base amongst the downtrodden people in the North, section of the progressive middle class and strong support in the Batticaloa and Ampara districts. Therefore, the EPRLF was a formidable organisation in terms of ideology and support base.

This difference was reflected while the LTTE engaged in the annihilation drive on the EPRLF. ‘The LTTE men were trained to carry out the orders from the top blindly... other groups displayed the same kind of courage in confronting the Sri Lankan Army... but when it come to open confrontation with fellow militant group... there was a certain amount of inhibition about killing fellow Tamils.’\textsuperscript{56} The EPRLF militants hesitated to fight against the LTTE as they realised the disastrous consequence of the internecine fight to the Eelam cause. Citing an incident in an EPRLF camp in Uduvil, UTHR (J) notes, ‘there was a split amongst the ranks as to whether they should go in for a bloody fratricidal confrontation with the LTTE or simply go into hiding. Before this could resolve, the LTTE came and caught them unprepared.’\textsuperscript{57} In another instance, in the same the LTTE

\textsuperscript{53} Regis Debray, quoted by LTTE members. Personal discussions with LTTE members, Jaffna, 1983–84.
\textsuperscript{54} Personal discussion with the LTTE members, Jaffna, 1983–84.
\textsuperscript{56} Thiranagam et. al., n. 43, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
offensive against the EPRLF in the Mullaitivu District, the LTTE sent its women fighters in the front column against the EPRLF while their male members were hiding behind. The EPRLF militants never expected any offensive from women and hesitated to fire on them. However, the LTTE women did not hesitate to fire and kill a few the EPRLF fighters.\(^{58}\)

In case of TELO, 'it never had any pretence about intellectual lineage.'\(^ {59}\) Organisationally, the TELO was also almost like the LTTE; a pure military organisation. It did not have any ideology except the superficial understanding of the TULF campaign for Eelam. It had encashed the popularity of their martyred leaders Kuttimani and Thangathurai for their recruitment. In order to attract new recruits, they also said, 'Once our target of trained forces is ready, the war would start soon and the Eelam would be a reality.'\(^ {60}\) Their talks did not have any substance, it was merely a tactics to recruit the youth.

The PLOTE, even though pretended itself as progressive and principled organisation, it had two trends within it. It reflected a blend of some outlook of the LTTE and some outlook of the EPRLF. Initially, the PLOTE too was involved in a few hit- and-run attacks against the State forces. They did not involve in any major military operation after 1983. It began criticising the guerrilla attack as it would result in disastrous repercussions to the innocent civilians; it said that they were preparing the organisation for the full-fledged war with the State. Attracted by the role played by the GUES, LTTE, TELO, and PLOTE formed their student wings after 1983, especially, as a source for recruitment. However, conflict between these two tendencies within the PLOTE, soon led to massive internal killings and fragmentation that weakened the organisation badly. These differences and the recruitment drive of each organisation created a jealous competition amongst the organisations. Instances of subtle form of slandering one against the other and sabotage one's growth by the other were witnessed.

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58 Personal discussion with Sunthar, Chennai December 1986. He was a Mullaitivu District Committee Member of EPRLF. He was assassinated by the LTTE in 1988.

59 Thiranagam, et.al., n. 43, p. 49.

60 Author attended a few TELO meetings, Jaffna, August–September 1983.
Despite these differences and irritations among them, all these organisations emerged as dominant forces in Jaffna peninsula with different calibre of military ability. By the end of the first quarter of 1985, the militant organisations had reached a position to confine the Army into their barracks. Since then, nearly for two years Jaffna peninsula was completely under the control of militants, particularly under the EPRLF, TELO and the LTTE. The Tamils respected all the militants, and they affectionately called the militants as engada podiyaz (our boys). Militants and their activities received prominence and media highlighted the affairs of the militant organisations. To the people, the TULF became irrelevant and it had almost become a forgotten party.

**Issue of Unity among the Tamil Leadership**

Naturally, a small minority of Sri Lankan Tamils compared with vast majority of Sinhalese desperately needed international backing to cope with the tyrannical State. The fragmented leadership proved to be virtually an impediment. Hence, unity among Tamil leadership was a necessary at a time when India entered into the scene decisively in support of Tamils. The Tamil leadership had to deal with the Sri Lankan State that increasingly took characters of fascism in meeting the Tamil resistance. At the same time, they also had to deal with India to get her favour to the Eelam cause. Therefore, the Tamil leadership had to demonstrate an extraordinary political and military capability to deal with the two states to find the best possible solution. To achieve this task, the Tamil leadership needed common approach and had to talk in one voice. This required the unity at three levels: firstly, unity among militant organisations, to demonstrate formidable strength against the Sri Lankan forces that could maintain the balance of power in favour of Tamils; secondly, unity between the militants and moderate the TULF was paramount to work out the solution and negotiation strategy; and finally, the unity of the united Tamil leadership with the Indian State was important for harmonious approach to persuade the Sri Lankan government. The role of the TULF and the cooperation of the militants in accomplishing this task needs the scrutiny.
The TULF and the Issue of Unity

Despite the jealous competition among militants, the fact was that the increasing strength and the role of the militants both in Sri Lanka and abroad projected them as key force in finding any solution to the Sri Lankan Tamils. It was also the fact that the support to the militants was laid on their commitment on establishing a separate Tamil State. There emerged a situation when the TULF politics didn’t have any recognition without its militants. Considering India’s stand and approach on finding a solution within the united framework of Sri Lanka and the firm stand of the militants for a separate State, it was the cardinal responsibility of the TULF as the negotiator to bring unity among the militants.

Considering the stance of the militants regarding the TULF, the task was not an easy one. Even though difficult, this task could have been performed by the TULF, if they had vision to deal with the new situation positively and the programmes to bring the cause in favour of Tamils at its best. Confidence could have been created, by giving due recognition to the militants in this process and the TULF too, as equal partner along with the militants. Recognition of the Indian government could have been exercised by involving them in the negotiation process either directly or indirectly.

The TULF was the only organisation equipped with necessary facilities to achieve this task. They had the recognition, peoples support, experience and Amirthalingam had fairly good relation with the PLOTE. Amirthalingam’s junior colleagues Yogeswaran, and Thangathurai had good access to some other militant organisations, although militants were not recognised until the 1985 Thimpu talks. At the time of 1983 riots, except the EPRLF and the EROS, other

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61 After 1983 local government elections in Jaffna, in which LTTE threatened the TULF candidates, the relation between Amirthalingam and Prabakaran was strained. Soon, Umamaheswaran re-established his relations with Amirthalingam. Tamil Eelam National Army (TENA) lead by Amirthalingam’s son Bahirathan had the understanding with the PLOTE. Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo and Bahirathan, London, 14 September 2000.

62 Only these two organisations identified themselves to the mass and engaged in constant mass work in general and particularly among deprived caste section and in widely in the Eastern Province for long. They were in a position to mobilise the mass at any point of time since late 1970s.
organisations did not have any specific support base, and above all Amirthalingam enjoyed the respect and cordial relationship with Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran of Tamilnadu. and with the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Had the TULF taken a genuine attempt, it could have succeeded. Premachandran raised serious doubts on their sincerity on this issue, he states, ‘The question was whether they had any programme to work out this issue, and whether they really had the intention to do so.’ In fact, the TULF made two half-hearted attempts, but, both were not from its own realisation of the interests of the people. Instead, one was due to the request of Indira Gandhi and the other was due to the request of Rajiv Gandhi. Mavai Senathirajah states, ‘Indira Gandhi and later Rajiv Gandhi told us that you militants and the TULF have to work together.’

The TULF made an effort in January 1984 to have a unity conference in Madras, however, the militants did not show enthusiasm, hence the TULF dropped the effort. Two reasons attributed to the failure of that effort: one was the problem in the attitude of the TULF. Approach of the TULF leaders towards the youth was one of a master and as subservient. They were still in the mindset of their heydays when they treated militant leaders as humble boys expecting for their orders. They could not think in terms of talk as equal partners across the table.

While the TULF was calling for meeting, effort for unity among militants initiated by Pathmanaba was in progress. Moreover, ‘Pathmanaba was known among Tamil political circle as ‘multifaceted personality’ among militant leaders.’ Therefore, it could not be seen that he was against the unity. Reasoning for such superior attitude of the TULF, Premachandran said:

63 Until 1983, other organisations were known to the people by name only, not the persons except some leaders who were arrested by the police, because, from the beginning they were engaged in assassinations and robberies, hence, they had hiding life.
64 Author’s interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
65 Author’s interview with Mavai Senathirajah, Colombo, 6 July 2001.
66 Rajasingam, n. 35.
68 Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
Only they were called by the Indian government to deal with the political and negotiation matters. They also viewed the militants as mere militants and once their need is over they would wither away. Based on this, it was assumed, when a political solution is reached, India would give the ruling power to them. Probably, it was this ambition prevented Amirthalingam from taking such effort.\(^69\)

Sidharthan put this in another way, he observes, the ‘TULF means Amirthalingam. The inability of the TULF, stem from Amirthalingam’s personal character. He personalised the political and ideological differences of the militants with them.’\(^70\) Therefore, an undercurrent of vengeance reflected in his attitude.

The TULF blamed the militants for the failure. Mavai said, ‘Militants had contradiction among themselves. One organisation leader sent a note that if he was appointed or rather accepted as General of the military wing we will participate.’\(^71\) Probably that particular organisation was LTTE. Mavai said that it was impossible. Other organisations would not accept it. Considering the facilities the TULF had and the responsibility they had to accomplish, Mavai’s reasoning seems to hide the weakness of the TULF. Differences and contradictions among militants were quite natural. Even there were differences within the parties. If there is no contradiction, there would not have been many militant groups and the question for unity would not have arisen. An efficient leadership would study the contradictions and find ways to solve it. The formation of Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) consisting of EPRLF, EROS and TELO shows that the TULF version was not fully right.\(^72\)

Considering the attitude of the TULF towards the conflict within the LTTE—between Prabakaran and Umamaheswaran—the TULF did not demonstrate the responsible leadership quality. As noted earlier, the LTTE functioned almost as the militant arm of the TULF and these two militant leaders were close confidantes and long time loyalist of Amirthalingam. But when conflict cropped up between the two, Amirthalingam never tried to find an amicable settlement

\(^69\) Author’s interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
\(^70\) Author’s interview with Sidharthan, Colombo, 11 July 2001.
\(^71\) Author’s interview with Mavai Senathirajah, Colombo, 16 July 2000.
\(^72\) Three organisations together formed ENLF in Chennai, April 1984.
between them. Instead, he said, 'let them solve the attack on each other, we cannot do anything.' It was the period when the relationship between the TULF and the LTTE leaders were soaring. Either Amirthalingam might have thought that they were no more useful to his purpose, hence did not bother about their fate, or he might have thought that once both get weakened, they would come back to him. But in both cases, his thinking was not in the interest of the Eelam cause. Contrarily, it shows that the TULF needed a militant arm to empower them for negotiation.

The second attempt for unity was taken in late 1984 and early 1985. According to Bahirathan, this attempt was made on the request of Rajiv Gandhi. The Indian government was well aware of the formation of the ENLF and it was continuing the talks to bring LTTE and PLOTE into the fold. In this backdrop asking the TULF to form a United Front seems that the Indian government wanted the militants either under the leadership of the TULF, or both militants and moderates under one organisation.

The TULF had marathon meeting with all the four major organisations individually in one month gap to each meeting, except with the EROS. It seems the difference of opinion developed as the TULF strategy was to break the ENLF by excluding the EROS and including the PLOTE which had close understanding with his son's organisation TENA, so that the TULF could be in a dominant position. Other militants provoked by the sinister motive of the TULF and its unchanged attitude. They did not want to allow this move of the TULF to come to reality.

Meanwhile, the ongoing process of expansion of ENLF reached another stage with the inclusion of LTTE into it. In fact, expansion of ENLF, made easier the effort of the TULF as major part was achieved by the militants themselves. ENLF continued the effort to include PLOTE. Task of the TULF was to accommodate itself into ENLF and make it stronger. Or else, the TULF could have created

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73 Author’s interview with Bahirathan, London 14 September 2000.
74 Ibid.
75 LTTE joined ENLF in April 1985. Among five major organisations, only PLOTE did not join, but the efforts continued to bring them too.

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another stage of unity by having alliance with the ENLF. On the contrary, the TULF perceived this as counter move to their effort and stopped their mission. It seems that the TULF suffered from defeated mentality compared to militants and wanted to use the card of India’s recognition to regain its lost leadership, instead of making necessary compromises with the militants for the wider interests.

By all accounts, the TULF failed to demonstrate farsightedness, nor did it have any programme to articulate the Tamil issue even after India’s involvement. It seems that they simply laid the responsibility on the Indian government to ensure the rights of the Tamils and position of the TULF. Its role in negotiation was largely involved in assisting desk work to the India’s efforts and not shaping the events. To shape the events, it required close ties or understanding with the militants. Thus, it not just missed an opportunity to maintain its leadership, but also ignored an important responsibility that later proved disastrous.

This negligence of the TULF left the ground precarious for the growth of healthy struggle. Militants had to accomplish the responsibility of finding mechanism among them that was in a way paradoxical as they had different ideology and approach despite common goal. Unity among militants was necessitated for a number of reasons. Firstly, organisations partly relied on the Tamil people, both in Sri Lanka and abroad for their financial assistance, propaganda and solidarity. When every organisation individually approached the people for such supports, it was an overburden for the people to respond positively to all. Therefore, Tamils felt that it was easier to give meaningful support to the militants if they work together. Secondly, the jealous competition among militant organisations and the inter-organisational tension in the narrow nationalist camp was a matter of concern to some of the militants and generally the people. If such tension was not addressed, the contradictions among them might lead to dangerous clash among them selves that would weaken the struggle. Finally, while the militants represented 12 per cent of the population against the State that supported by 72 per cent of the population, aiming for big goal from such naturally weaker side always needed to increase strength to face such strong force. Unity gives physical and moral strength. If the militants continue to be fragmented, it may give space to the forces that are looking opportunities to weaken the struggle and also it
would divide the society along lines of their supportive organisations. Such development would be a serious impediment to the Eelam struggle.

EPRLF leader Pathmanaba realised the importance of the unity. He tried to form a united front. Beginning with most like-minded organisations in the late 1983 the succeeded in bringing the EPRLF, EROS and TELO together and formed the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF) in April 1984. 'This gave considerable moral boost to the Tamil population.' The LTTE came into ENLF in April 1985. While the member organisations maintain their separate identity and programmes, it was agreed that the ENLF would decide all possible joint actions (such as mobilisation of fund, internationalisation of the Eelam issue and joint military operations) unanimously. Balasingam said, 'Unity among the four groups will be both political and military. All four groups will be formulating our political approach and making political statements in future only after mutual discussion.' Premachandran observes, 'These agendas were discussed in some of the meetings, even though members theoretically accepted some of the programs, before it made any headway, inter-relations between LTTE and TELO and later LTTE and EPRLF faced strains.' The EPRLF and The TELO had shown considerable sincerity in maintaining the unity. The EROS was characteristically a fence-sitter, hence, looking for both sides. Urmila Phadnis assessing this unity, observes, 'Aapparently, the hidden agenda was the power and therefore personality conflict amongst them as to which group will control Eelam if it became reality at although violent means.' As she perceived, the LTTE's marginalisation spree on member organisations to establish its supremacy since mid-1986 diminished the importance of ENLF and eventually withered away. The achievement of ENLF was that it helped the militant leadership to gain recognition as representatives of the Sri Lankan Tamils and made all the six organisations including the TULF speak in one voice while talking to the Sri Lankan government, across the table.

76 Thiranagam, et. al., n. 43, p. 45.
78 Author's interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
The TULF and the Thimpu Talks

Initially, the approach of Jayewardene was to establish the Tamil issue as 'terrorist' problem. He was of the view that if India stopped them from crossing the Palk Strait he would solve the problem with the moderates. Thus, Indira Gandhi had to declare that only with the TULF the Indian government was dealing and not with the militants. The TULF participated in the All Party Conference (APC) from January to December 1984 on the request of Indira Gandhi which proved to be a time-buying excuse of Jayewardene as his proposal was within the ambit of District Councils that had failed twice. Conveying the disappointment of the TULF on the proposal and the one year exercise of the APC, Sampanthan said, 'If the TULF was given cause for slightest inclination that the political solution contemplated was to be within the ambit of District Councils, the TULF may not have attended this conference at all.'

After the demise of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi was not willing to downplay the recognition of the militants. He had discussion with many militant leaders and their representatives. The Indian government wanted to include militants in the negotiation at a suitable stage, mainly to persuade them to leave their dream of Eelam. While, Indira Gandhi’s approach was to strengthen the militants and give maximum pressure to Jayewardene to negotiate, Rajiv Gandhi’s approach was the opposite. He readily accepted the preconditions of the Sri Lankan government for the negotiation. From these understandings, they called for ceasefire prior to the Thimpu talks and militant activities curbed in and across Palk Strait. Though it was a disturbing change for the militants initially, this was not perceived by them with suspicion. They thought that this arrangement was to pacify the Sri Lankan government to agree for the talks.

Jayewardene evaded a negotiation and concentrated on military option to wipe out 'terrorism' especially for two pressing reasons. Firstly, the war of Tamil militants on the Army was far more deadly. Jaffna peninsula was virtually under

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80 R. Sampanthan, former MP from Trincomalee TULF (participated in the APC under the banner of FP), and statement made at the APC on 2 September 1984, in Sri Lanka: Tamil Efforts for Peaceful Solution (Chennai: TULF, 1984), p. 64.

81 Muni, n. 9, pp. 77-78.
the control of the militants. The LTTE’s attack on civilians in Anuradapura panicked the Sinhalese people and the government. Secondly, the government was spending large amount of money for defence expenditure that were given by donor countries for the economic and infrastructural facilities. Ceasefire was declared on 18 June and the AID Consortium Meeting was held on 20 June, shows the desperation of Jayewardene as ‘US persuasion was decisive to ensure peace.’ After 1983, one can observe that the usual practice of Sri Lankan government is that it was forced to relax its anti-Tamil war and create a temporary peace during the meetings of Sri Lankan AID Consortium.

Both the reasons for the acceptance for talks by Sri Lankan government reveal that it was not the TULF that forced the government, but, the war was forced. It was possible only because of the sacrifice of the militants. To both, the Sri Lankan government and Indian government, this was the dilemma. They needed the TULF to restore their credibility, their role as primary actor and, an authentic and moderate voice. But, in reality it was militants who made the resumption of talks possible, and Indian government arranged the meeting. This questioned the role of the TULF.

Jayewardene and Rajiv Gandhi came out with joint statement that ‘immediate steps were to be taken to create a proper climate for progress towards a political settlement acceptable to all.’ This statement indicated only the resumption of talks with Tamil leadership. The 40 years of political experience proved that a solution to the Tamil issue ‘acceptable to all’ meant that it would be another time passing tactics of Jayewardene. However, Amirthalingam welcoming the joint statement said:

82 LTTE penetrated more than thirty miles into the Sinhalese area and reached Anuradhapura, a historical and sacred city went on to open fire on civilians and killed more than hundred people. This created panic and proved the distractive capacity of the militants and mounted pressure on government.


The Tamil people of Sri Lanka are very thankful for the concern and sense of urgency shown by the Prime Minister of India in devoting so much time to the problem... We welcome the joint statement... We hope that India will play a more positive role towards the achievement of a solution acceptable to all.85

Amirthalingam also told to the Sun that, the ‘TULF wanted to bring the Tamil militant groups together to speak with one voice. Otherwise each group will try to prove they are more extremist than the other.’86 This statement seems to undermine the function of ENLF, in which only the PLOTE was left out. Moreover, only the PLOTE, was on talking terms with the TULF. Contrary to the TULF statement, ENLF demonstrated its maturity in accommodating the TULF and the PLOTE together to talk in one voice during the negotiation.

Initially, militants got irritated by the TULF’s attitude of overstepping in welcoming the joint statement, as they felt that it would enhance the already negative stance of India in supporting Eelam. However, they were yearning for recognition as ‘liberation fighters representing the interests of the Sri Lankan Tamils’ and thus wanted to utilise this opportunity.87 The Sun stated, ‘The ENLF is still in close door sessions. They will discuss the cease-fire and the possibility of talks further tomorrow.’88 the PLOTE’s decision to participate in talks, its leader said, ‘would depend on the conditions put forward by the Sri Lankan government.’89 However, he too changed the decision like the ENLF. It was only FP/TULF which represented the Tamils in all the negotiations since 1956. The B–C Pact of 1957 and D–C Pact of 1965 were negotiated and signed by FP. However, with invitation of the Indian government to the militants as part of the negotiators, this supremacy of the TULF as the only legitimate representative was lost.

86 Sun (Colombo), 11 June 1985.
87 Author’s interview with Sidharthan and Premachandran, Colombo, 10 & 11 July 2001.
88 Sun, 11 June 1985
89 Umamaheswaran, Secretary-General, PLOT, Press conference, Madurai, Sun, 11 June 1985.
Prior to the summit in Thimpu, all Tamil parties\textsuperscript{90} met and discussed for a stand and selected the leaders to articulate their stand in one voice. Despite the fact that almost all the representatives of the militant organisations were politically sound and articulate, they unanimously suggested the TULF leaders to articulate their voice in the summit.\textsuperscript{91} Even though the TULF leaders were supposed to raise the collective voice, the privilege they were given was a pointer to the matured approach of the militants. Reciprocally, protesting the terming of militants as ‘terrorist’ by the chief negotiator of the Sri Lankan government, H.W. Jayewardene, Amirthalingam said,

The TULF has earned the right to represent the Tamil people by being the accredited the representatives duly elected by a preponderant majority and the five (militant) groups of freedom fighters by their valiant struggle for the liberation of the Tamil people, their sacrifice and suffering have earned a right to represent the Tamil people.\textsuperscript{92}

In the negotiation, the Sri Lankan government delegates put forward a proposal of slightly improved version of District Council System that was rejected in the APC. Tamil leaders unanimously rejected it again in Thimpu and responded with the ‘cardinal principles’, and said, ‘Any meaningful solution to the national question of the Island must be based on the following four cardinal principles’\textsuperscript{93} (popularly known as Thimpu principles): (a) Recognition of the Tamils of Sri Lanka as a distinct nationality; (b) Recognition of an identified Tamil homeland and the guarantee of it territorial integrity; (c) Based on the above, recognition of inalienable right of self-determination of the Tamil nation; (d) Recognition of the right to full citizenship and other fundamental democratic rights of all Tamil, who look upon the Island as their country.\textsuperscript{94} However, subsequent change of attitude of

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{90} Tamil organisations that participated in the Thimpu talks were: TULF, EPRLF, EROS, PLOTE, LTTE and TELO.
  \item \textsuperscript{91} Author’s interview with K. Premachandran Colombo, 10 July 2001.
  \item \textsuperscript{93} Ibid, p. 17.
  \item \textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
the India towards the militants raised doubts on India’s sympathy and support to
the Tamils.

THE ROLE OF THE TULF: TOWARDS INDO–SRI LANKA ACCORD

Romesh Bhandari attitude towards the Tamil delegates\(^95\) in Thimpu,\(^96\) and the
subsequent deportation of three representatives of two militant organisations\(^97\)
reflected change of approach and tactics of the Rajiv Gandhi government from that
of Indira Gandhi.\(^98\) Even though two of the deportees were allowed to come back
after the pressure mounted from Tamil Nadu political leaders and the Sri Lankan
Tamil leadership,\(^99\) the militants sensed that Indian government was in a hurry to
wind up the Tamil issue with some kind of solution, and India would not support
their aim of Eelam. It was disappointment to the beliefs and expectations of the
militants. The changing scenario compelled the militants to change their strategies,
setup and working programme. The changing approach of the Indian government
had serious impact over the evolving unity among militants and the goodwill
developed between the TULF and the militants in Thimpu talks that eventually
made impact on the entire exercise.

Role of the TULF and the Militants in the Tamil Issue after Thimpu

Rejecting the proposal of the Sri Lanka government, the TULF agreed on further
negotiation only if the recognition of the four cardinal principles could be
considered by the government. However, according to the TULF, subsequent to
the Thimpu talks, pro-Sri Lankan lobby was dominant in Delhi for some time.\(^100\)
The Indian government began indicating that the militants needed to step down

\(^95\) After Rajiv Gandhi came to power, he changed almost entire foreign policy team. Romesh Bahndari was appointed as Foreign Secretary and assigned the responsibility of chief negotiator in place of G. Parthasarathy.

\(^96\) Personal discussion with L. Ketheswaran, Chennai, 1985. He was former spokesperson of EPRLF and one of the representatives of EPRLF in Thimpu talks.

\(^97\) LTTE Spokesperson Anton Balasingam, TELO representatives S.C. Chandrahasan and N. Satyendra were deported to London and USA respectively. The reason for the deportation was never revealed.

\(^98\) Muni, n. 9, pp. 76–83.

\(^99\) Amirthalingam, n. 1, p. 16.

\(^100\) Ibid, p. 17.
further from their stand, but they were not ready. From the experience of the Thimpu talks, India had come to a conclusion that talks between the Tamil leadership and the Sri Lankan government would not lead to a solution as both were firm in their respective demands. Probably this conclusion made India to play the role of negotiator rather than that of a mediator. From this understanding, Sri Lankan emissaries and the Indian External Affairs Ministry came to an agreement for a broad basis for a solution.\textsuperscript{101} The broad understanding seems devolution of powers to the provincial units. If the Thimpu proposal of the Sri Lankan Government was another version of the D–C Pact, Province based devolution was near to the B–C Pact. Naturally, it could not be appreciated by the militants.

Considering the change of attitude of the Indian government and its resultant agreement without the consultation of the Tamil leadership, the TULF too thought that India may decide the fate of the Tamils unilaterally and it was scared that it would affect the good relation between the Tamils and India and the entire efforts taken by India for a solution. In order to prevent such eventuality and to set the track right, the TULF sent a communication to Rajiv Gandhi, mentioning that they would not give up the integrity of the Tamil homeland, land, and power on law and order in the Tamil region.\textsuperscript{102} While writing this response, Amirthalingam made a claim that ‘We felt that all the organisations together have to convey our opinion to Rajiv Gandhi regarding this agreement... We discussed with the militants’\textsuperscript{103} In fact, the TULF did not consult any majority militant group. Premachandran rejected his claim, said, ‘the TULF never discussed or informed the developments of negotiations with the EPRLF’ and he asserted that ‘until the meeting with Rajiv Gandhi prior to the Indo-Sri Lanka accord we (militants) were not asked for, or we never accepted, any solutions other than that recognise Thimpu principles.’\textsuperscript{104} It points towards two problems of the TULF. Firstly, it seems that the TULF had its prejudices or fear over one or more organisations thus

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Author’s interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
discussed such matters only with selective militant groups. As already noted, one was probably the PLOTE. He categorically mentioned on another occasion that they had discussed with the LTTE and the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF).\footnote{Amirthalingam, n. 1, p. 21. ENDLF led by Paranthan Rajan, was the splinter group of the PLOTE. It was formed in Chennai, established links with the Indian government.} Secondly, it seems that Amirthalingam suffered with guilt-feeling for his independent moves contrary to joint stand taken by the militants.

The three points that were noted, did not satisfy the Indian government. Militant leaders were taken to Delhi and had discussion in which they reasserted the Thimpu principles. However, India wanted a counter-proposal from the Tamil leadership to continue the talks. The TULF responded with a counter-proposal that envisaged almost like an Indian federal system.\footnote{\textit{Tamil United Liberation Front towards Devolution of Power in Sri Lanka main documents August 1983 to October 1987} (Chennai: TULF, 1988) pp 46–49.} After the 1977 elections, the TULF all along kept mentioning the stand that people had given them mandate for Eelam. However, it was emphatic for alternative proposal from the government. It maintained that if the government could present an alternative proposal to Eelam they would submit it to the people for their approval. Also, contrary to their position, the TULF itself gave the alternative proposal to its policy of separate Eelam and said, ‘In order to maintain the friendship of India and to protect the militant organisations from any difficulties, we submitted the proposal to the Indian Prime Minister.’\footnote{See Amirthalingam, n. 1, p. 17.} This statement outlines the contradictions and raises two set of questions. Whether the TULF wanted to maintain India’s friendship, by the proposal or for the proposal? And, whether they wanted to protect the militants by the proposal or for the proposal? Dealing with the Sri Lankan government for a solution, India was the pull factor and the militants were the push factor. In this view, basically the TULF depended on India and the militants to materialise the proposal. Considering that the interests between the militants and India were mutual to some extent, India would not have simply let down the militants as the TULF was scared; instead, they would have come to terms with.

Even if the TULF wanted to give a proposal to resume the talks, the question arose as to why it chose the Indian model? Considering the character of the Sri
Lankan State and the Sinhala polity, the ethnic combination, and the nature of the conflict were fundamentally different from India. Therefore, sustenance of Indian model is doubtful in Sri Lanka. Also, knowing the fact that Sri Lankan government would water down even this proposal in the process of the negotiation, instead of convincing the Indian government for the need of comprehensive constitutional change with a sustainable power sharing, the TULF proposal shows its desperation to find some sort of power sharing and settle with it. Assessing the importance of the TULF in this political scenario, *Lanka Guardian* observes, ‘The TULF is not as vital a political factor as it was pre-1983, it still remains the parliamentary voice of the Tamil of the North and the East. By offering devolution scheme, the Indian government regards as good enough for the serious consideration of the Tamil leaders.’

Naturally, the TULF’s proposal encouraged the Indian government to proceed with the negotiation a the hope it had given to the Sri Lankan government. Further negotiations were held based on this proposal. Therefore, the firm stand taken by militants in Thimpu and after, compelled Sri Lanka to take a big leap to consider a federal proposal from its position of thrusting a DC proposal. Though the Sri Lankan government theoretically accepted it as a base for further negotiations, practically did not like to adhere, using time-passing tactics and giving far more diluted version as response. Meanwhile, Jayewardene concentrated on military option by continuing the attacks using all the three forces apart from Sinhalese and the police. It intensified its attacks constantly and hundreds of Tamil civilians were killed in every offensive as they were indiscriminate and random. Sri Lanka’s half-hearted and lethargic responses and the cruel methods of terrorising the Tamils reversed the hope of Rajiv Gandhi that he had on the cooperation of the Sri Lankan government in finding a ‘dignified’ solution.

India raised its voice, supportive of Tamils, at times of attacks on Tamils. With the submission of counter-proposal, the TULF got back to the negotiation process. It was India which negotiated or led the negotiation. Since the TULF

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109 See Amirthalingam, n. 1, p. 18.
addressed the issues, it played the role to enhance the negotiation by identifying the necessary devolution subject and the amount of powers on each subjects. It was careful not to allow the Sri Lankan government to misinform or misguide the Indian negotiators. The TULF was doing skillful desk work in preparing necessary documents and facilitate the Indian negotiators to negotiate on the line of the Indian model.\textsuperscript{110} "The TULF was engaged in shaping the Proposal for a Provincial Council (PPC) system. It has sent documents to the Indian government, some powers were included in the Provincial list with modifications and some included in the concurrent list."\textsuperscript{111}

After many exchange of documents, and hesitations from the Sri Lankan government side, the framework of the proposal reached near to the Indian system. The deadly blows of the militants on security forces surely helped chances of better negotiations. Commenting on the development of the proposal, Chidambaram observes, 'The skeletal frame is now much clear but more flesh and blood are needed.'\textsuperscript{112} If the militants could be seen as instrumental to the Thimpu talks, the TULF could be seen as instrumental to break the ice and put the negotiations on track after Thimpu.

On the militant side, after Thimpu, they wanted to establish their bases on the ground since they needed liberated territories. They wanted to accelerate the offensive for two reasons. Firstly, they wanted to change the track of the struggle from negotiation to Eelam. Secondly, they wanted to expand the liberated territories to enable them to have bases and maintain seccrecies. Except the PLOTE, other four organisations were militarily active on the ground. Different organisations demonstrated different military capability. Jaffna was practically controlled jointly by LTTE, TELO and EPRLF. The LTTE had powerful backing of the Tamil expatriates and their handsome contributions than any other organisations. Hence, it was able to purchase arms in black markets, hence more


\textsuperscript{111} See for details Lanka Guardian, Vol. 9, No. 11, 1 October 1986, p. 5.

independent. It had the power of small arms and communication network and well-knit military force. It has successfully done many meticulously-planned military operations against the security forces.

Militarily, the TELO too was appreciated by the people for its meticulous operations that inflicted heavy casualties to the army and police, but it had internal gropings and indiscipline. The EROS was rather smaller in size and weaponry, but, it was known for having more educated personalities. It was the first organisation to have engaged in operations in Colombo city.

In case of EPRLF, it had a powerful military force with biggest women army named, People Liberation Army (PLA). Compared with the LTTE and TELO, EPRLF had less small arms. However, it was popular for its own made small kind of artillery in different range named SS 85. This would travel up to three kilometers and carry up to 20 kg explosives. This played the main role in keeping the state forces confined in the barracks in Jaffna. EPRLF continued with mass mobilisation and the mass organisations parallel to the military activities. No other organisation had such organised mass under them.

Such rapid growth of military power and the steadily increasing heavy operations on police stations and army camps compelled the government to close down all the police stations in Jaffna peninsula except the head police station in the town. Even in other districts, many smaller police stations were closed. Even though a failed operation, the PLA had ten-hours-long battle to overrun the well fortified Karainagar naval base. This was the longest battle in the Eelam struggle, which created new hopes and trust on militants among the people. Militants also had anti-aircraft guns and shot down a helicopter that compelled the helicopters and flights to fly in higher zone. Despite their own petty differences militants showed encouraging unity dealing with the enemy. ‘There had been instances where forces surrounding an LTTE camp found themselves surrounded in turn by militants of other group.’

These operations began terrorising the forces and the government and thus made Jayewardene to respond positively to a federal type of proposal, i.e., PPC.

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despite his chauvinistic character and authoritarian nature. However, while the negotiations were on under the leadership of Chidambaram in Colombo, the LTTE sought for supremacy, began devastating attacks on TELO and later at the end of the year on the EPRLF.\textsuperscript{114} This internecine warfare undoubtedly had negative impact on the negotiation process. On the one hand Jayewardene began further dragging on the responses and was adamant not to give the operational powers.

There were three reasons which attributed to the causes for the LTTE attacks on TELO and the EPRLF. Firstly, TELO and EPRLF were emerging popular and increasing in strength since 1985. The LTTE began visibly irritated demonstrated its jealousy by unduly interfering in the affairs of there organisations. It also demonstrates its authoritarian attitude. Previously, only the LTTE enjoyed the popularity in military activities; the emergence of TELO and the EPRLF in men and material virtually reduced its singular supremacy.

Secondly, TELO was seen by LTTE as India-loyal and the EPRLF had the open stand that advocated the importance of maintaining good relations with India. Since, the TULF continued to have links with LTTE and reported the developments in negotiation, LTTE might have thought that India would thrust the solution soon. It was scared if these two organisations cooperated with India, solution would be implemented and that would invalidate the Eelam struggle.

Finally, considering the fact that LTTE got its training in Israel, another view attributes the international dimension. It says that the LTTE fell into the fold of CIA/ MOSSAD since 1985. Aim of these forces was to use LTTE against the other, especially, the India-friendly organisations to jeopardise India’s effort and the Eelam struggle. However, it needs a separate study to understand the role of the CIA/ MOSSAD in the Eelam struggle comprehensively and the view of the Indian government on the LTTE despite its connections with the forces that were detrimental to the India’s interests.

LTTE got involved in killing members of other organisations. It LTTE killed one TELO fighter in a lonely place but it went unclaimed. Two EPRLF members

\textsuperscript{114} TELO was attacked and banned by the LTTE in early May 1986. EPRLF was banned in December 1986.
were also killed in a few months' interval while there many witnesses. TELO took
offensive but all the LTTE men went underground for nearly a week. Later they
after came out a half-hearted settlement by few influential personalities. EPRLF
approached differently. It made the first killing of an important PLA leader Regan
as a political campaign in all over Vanni and Jaffna by loud speaker. Exposing the
'fascist' face of LTTE, it demanded that LTTE stop such activities forthwith, and
ask for public apology. The second murder rallied huge masses. The body was
taken in a procession for 12 miles with massive rally. In both the cases, EPRLF
did not go for military response, as it realised that such fight would distract from
the Eelam struggle and would end the cause. However, they were not aware that
these killings were prelude to the plan of outright elimination.

LTTE was waiting for a suitable situation for the showdown. When TELO
was engaged in internal conflict, LTTE launched a sudden attack on them. It and
launched simultaneous attacks on many camps while most of the fighters were in
deep sleep killed more than one hundred. It continued for four days. Those who
ran for hiding were shot in the leg and burnt alive in daylight on the roads in front
of many people. On last day, LTTE killed the TELO leader too. People who
went for protesting (all were above fifty years of age) were frightened by throwing
grenade and firing in Kalviyankadu. It was literally a terrorisation, not only of
other organisations but the people too. There were some people and shop owners
who appreciated them and treated with tea and coke.

The only Tamil organisation condemned these killings and launched a long
protest march was EPRLF. The TULF did not take any effort to stop these killings
by its influence with the Indian government or with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister

115 Author's interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo, 10 July 2001.
116 Thiranagama et al., Broken Palmyra, n. 43.
117 LTTE's attack on TELO on 1 May 1986 which ended on 4 May 1986.
118 Discussion with K. Nagammah, Colombo, June 2001. She is a native of Kopay,
Jaffna. She was an active supporter of TULF and later EPRLF. People were provoked
by LTTE's killing spree; most of the people got panicked; however, some including
her, dared to protest to stop this, but returned due to LTTE threat.
119 Discussion with K. Nagammah, Colombo, June 2001. She was an activist; provoked
by the LTTE's killing spree, most of the people got panicked. Some including her,
dared to protest to stop this.
MG Ramachandran. It had failed to mobilise the international opinion or even Sri Lankan Tamil opinion against the attitude of the LTTE that was detrimental to the Eelam struggle. This is another area where the leadership role and the social and political duty of the TULF were completely ignored. Probably, it was the vengeance of TULF on TELO that prevented from its duty, as it was responsible for the murder of two TULF leaders a year back. But the response of the TULF was same when PLOTE and EPRLF were attacked one after the other. This attitude reinstates the character of Amirthalingam who personalises the political and ideological differences.

Based on these facts, the TULF appears to have got relieved by the elimination of most of its political opponents. Indicating all these aspects, the Lanka Guardian observers, ‘It seems pretty clear that the TULF is in disarray, it’s leadership torn between the desire to continue playing the role of the parliamentary moderate and need not to offend the militants, especially the “Tigers”.’

LTTE adopted almost the same approach towards EPRLF after seven months, while it was facing an internal conflict. However, they could not kill important leaders. In many villages people protected many EPRLF cadres. Women were guarding at the entrance of the village with chilly powder and knives. In Siruppiddy and Eevini, the guarding women challenged even the LTTE Jaffna Commander, Kittu and did not allow them to enter into the village. However, hundreds were killed in the fight and under custody. After bloody fight in the East and Vanni they retreated into the jungles of Vanni, Trincomalee and Batticaloa, and stayed until the EPRLF leadership came back to Sri Lanka, subsequent to the Indo–Sri Lanka Accord.

Meanwhile, encouraged by the inter-militant war, Jayewardene dragged on the negotiation process by taking months for every issue and adopt flip-flop attitude even in matters that were decided. ‘They agree to something and then go

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120 Lanka Guardian, Vol. 9, No. 5, 1 July 1986, p. 3.
121 Kittu alias Krishnakumar was former LTTE commander for Jaffna. He led the attacks on other organisations. He blasted himself along with the LTTE ship while India cordoned the ship and ordered to surrender in 1992.
back on that. They again agree partially but again change their mind.\textsuperscript{122} This attitude kept the Indian government in a dilemma or rather prevented them from taking any drastic action. The last communication by the Sri Lankan government was made on some amendments to the PPC Draft Constitution on 30 September 1986.\textsuperscript{123} After three months, only the demarcation of Tamil province was decided between the two governments (December 19 plan).\textsuperscript{124} Important areas in the Draft Amendment to the Constitution, were yet to be discussed and incorporated. The TULF sent the counter-proposal through the Indian government and waiting for the response of the SLG.

With the ban on EPRLF, LTTE claimed it as the sole representative of the Sri Lankan Tamils. It has become the lonely force. It was not powerful enough to face the Sri Lankan army offensive at that point of time. By annihilating a major part of the militant force and earning hatredness from their supporters, LTTE accomplished large part of the task of the Sri Lankan Army. Jayewardene regime decided to go for full-fledged military option.

**The Operation Liberation and the Indian Intervention**

Jayewardene was fully engaged in military options because, 'Its (Sri Lankan government's) most desired goal was a military victory. The negotiation process was a time-buying exercise.'\textsuperscript{125} The Sri Lankan army began attack on the Eastern Province with the support of air cover and battle tanks in which more than two hundred civilians were killed. It was gearing up for a flush-out operation in Jaffna. India conveyed its protest to the Sri Lankan government against the offensive on the Tamils.

\textsuperscript{122} Rajiv Gandhi to *India Today*, quoted in Bashin, n. 6, p. 148.
\textsuperscript{124} According to this plan, Sri Lankan government accepted for Northern Province as one Eastern Province minus Ampara District as one (Ampara would go separately as one province). These together would form the Tamil Province temporarily and within a stipulated period permanent merger would be decided by a referendum.
Meanwhile *The Weekend* published a story saying, 'Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are on the road to setting up a de facto administration in the Jaffna peninsula from this month.' Subsequently, Jayewardene ordered for economic embargo on Jaffna. Government stopped petrol, kerosene and medicines, and also the movement of vehicles. Food scarcity increased, leading to starvation. Government disconnected the telephone communication to Jaffna and began random air attacks and attacks on the coastal settlements from the sea. At this point, while responding to the question, Rajiv Gandhi said, 'India has stopped offering its good offices to ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and we are thinking of other options.' Pressure mounted from Indian and Sri Lankan Tamil organisations and parties on Indian government to make humanitarian intervention. The TULF had the meeting in Delhi with the government followed by a number of communications, requesting, 'to send food ship to Kankesanthurai with the escort.' The India was probably seriously contemplating proper action. Indian government gave a large quantity of weapons to the LTTE to fight against the army and MGR gave them US $3.2 million. These massive boosts further strengthened the LTTE morally and materially.

Sri Lankan forces started the long planned 'Operation Liberation' using all three forces to flush out the militants and to take control of Jaffna. Houses and buildings were razed. Hundreds of people died. Thousands of refugees reached Rameswaram by boats. Large area, including entire Vadamarachi, was captured by the army within four days. While the army was in the offensive, LTTE was literally on the run. If it had continued for some more days, army could have captured the entire peninsula. The Eelam struggle would have been reversed to the starting point. India’s exercise too would have gone in vain. India wanted to arrest the situation to protect at least whatever achieved.

131 Author’s interview with many refugees, Rameswaram, May 1987.
The TULF, for the first time since 1983, entered into action. Its leaders with hundreds of people went on hunger strike in Madras. India sent strong protest message, in which it requested to stop the military operations in Tamil areas forthwith, remove the economic embargo; reinstate the telecommunication facility to Jaffna; and to accept the December 19 plan as basis for the negotiation. The Sri Lankan government failed to respond satisfactorily. Rajiv Gandhi took further strong stand expressing the apprehension of India and warning the Sri Lankan government said:

The calculated and cold-blooded slaughter of thousands of Sri Lankan citizens by their own government cannot promote a solution... while India was patiently and painstakingly working towards a political solution, it is apparent now that the Sri Lankan government was buying time for pursuing the military option... the time to desist from a military occupation of Jaffna is now. Later may be too late.\textsuperscript{132}

Unmindful of India's message, the National Security Minister, Lalith Athulath Mudali, visited the captured areas (almost a no man's land) in Jaffna and pledged to 'liberate' the rest of the Jaffna people from the militants. India intervened by dropping the food parcels, codenamed 'Operation Poomalai' (operation flower garland) that has stopped the entire military operations by the Sri Lankan government. The subsequent hectic parleys between the two governments led to the Indo-Sri Lanka accord.

**THE CHALLENGES OF THE INDO–LANKA ACCORD**

The accord envisaged a system called Provincial Council (PC) system. Sri Lanka is divided into nine provinces, in which the Tamils-dominated Northern and Eastern Provinces (NEP) together formed one council under the condition that a referendum would be conducted within one year to decide its permanent merger. In this system, powers were devolved to the provincial councils on 70 subjects (both fully and partially) 'within the unitary system' of Sri Lanka. Another important feature of the accord was that all the militant organisations should surrender their weapons within stipulated timeframe. Subsequently, all the

\textsuperscript{132} Statement of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, quoted in Bashin, n. 6, pp. 142–43.
political prisoners (militants) would be given general amnesty and all the cases would be withdrawn.\footnote{For further details refer, Shelton U. Kodikara, India-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987, Colombo, The International Relation Programme, University of Colombo, 1989.}

Rajiv Gandhi invited all the Tamil leaders, including the LTTE leader Prabakaran, prior to signing the accord in order to consult and convince them to accept and implement the accord. Except for the TULF all other leaders saw the devolution document (which was still to be improved a lot) for the first time. Also, except for the TULF leaders and Sri Kantha of TELO, no other leader had a legal background, thus it was virtually impossible for them to understand the nuances of the devolution and its practicability. The TULF was well-aware that the existing draft-amendment that was in the process of enrichment, suffered from fundamental questions of ‘devolution within the unitary framework’ and the ‘legislative power to the PCs on the devolved subjects’. The TULF could have explained the nuances to other leaders and taken up this matter with Rajiv Gandhi and incorporate the residual matters in the draft Constitutional amendment within a stipulated timeframe before the Provincial Council elections. But the TULF failed to do so. Probably, they presumed that it was exclusively their job. Instead, they raised doubts about the implementation, citing the character of Jayewardene and the nature of the Sinhala polity and raised some other issues emerging out of the conflict. Prime Minister accepted to address most of these demands\footnote{See for the list of reservations, Amirthalingam, n. 1, p. 27.} and assured that the referendum for merger would not be held, thus it would be permanent and assured to see that the accord is implemented.\footnote{Personal discussion with K. Pathmanaba, Delhi, July 1988.}

The LTTE claiming as sole representatives of the Tamils showed indications that if the people accept they also would accept any reasonable solution. While in 1986 after the attack on TELO, Prabakaran said, ‘I doubt whether the masses will ever settle for anything short of Eelam, but if people are satisfied with an alternative formula, we are prepared to consider the alternative. After all, we are fighting for the people. We don’t lose sight of what the people want.’\footnote{Time, 21 June 1986.}
While he was invited to Delhi prior to the accord, the LTTE was at the verge of decimation.\textsuperscript{137} Therefore LTTE probably thought a settlement would give them space to strengthen themselves by spreading their hold all over the north and the East. He was under the impression that only he alone was invited for the accord, but all other organisation leaders had reached Delhi even before him. The emissaries involved in bringing Prabakaran got the impression that the LTTE was ‘not averse’ and ‘open for honourable settlement.’\textsuperscript{138} Until Prabakaran reached Delhi, he was fully prepared in his mind to accept a negotiated settlement. However, he changed his attitude after reaching Delhi.\textsuperscript{139} It shows that he would not compromise in its self-claimed position of the sole representative and would not allow functioning of democratic pluralism.\textsuperscript{140} Like other parties, LTTE too expressed its serious reservations on the proposal. The Indian government was aware of the intransigence of the LTTE. In its meeting with the Indian Prime Minister, LTTE specifically requested for its organisational benefits in terms of power and money. He assured to the LTTE of Indian rupees 50,00,000 per month, and large share in the interim council.\textsuperscript{141}

The accord was signed hastily in a situation, when the Tamil leadership was weakened and largely disintegrated and the Sri Lankan army was at the brink of capturing the Jaffna peninsula, the hub of the Sri Lankan Tamils. India was pushed into an atmosphere to bring three contradictory political forces in one line. It had to address on the one hand the diametrically opposite the Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE, on the other hand the moderate the TULF and the pro-accord militants. While LTTE expected India to recognise them as sole representatives of the Tamils and strengthen them militarily, Sri Lanka expected India to desist from

\textsuperscript{137} In 1987, LTTE was not as powerful as it is today. They did not have even mortar. They used EPRLF/ PLA captives and their confiscated ss 85 to prevent the forwarding army. Discussion with many EPRLF/ PLA fighters, Jaffna, 1988–89.
\textsuperscript{138} Bashin, n. 6, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{139} Author’s interview with Bahirathan.
\textsuperscript{140} This attitude of LTTE raises another question that whether LTTE would have settled down with the Provincial Council, even if it would have been accepted as sole representative. This question needs another study to have comprehensive understanding of the LTTE.
\textsuperscript{141} Author’s interview with K. Premachandran, Colombo 10 July 2001.
the Tamil issue, and there was the third force consisting of Tamil moderates and the militant turned political organisations wanted India to ensure the meaningful devolution and its implementation.

The Sri Lankan government and the LTTE had opposite interests; both were avoided smooth implementation of the accord and both were known for going back on their words; and both of them had an authoritarian attitude. President Jayewardene, who was the root cause of the escalation of this problem and the key person to solve the same, said to India Today, 'One major gain is that terrorism is over. If the accord is sincerely implemented by these parties—the Indian government, the Sri Lankan authorities and the separatist groups—peace will return to the Island. The violence is over.' This reply shows his indifference in the implementation of the accord.

India needed a coordinated effort of more skillful diplomacy, efficient political manoeuvre and sensitive military to deal with these forces to make the accord successful. India all along took the moderate line, signed the accord on behalf of the Tamils and assumed as guarantor to see the implementation of the accord on the part of Sri Lanka. There were many questions and doubts about the power of the PC system and the sincerity of the main actors for the smooth implementation of the accord while it was signed on 29 July 1987. From the beginning, militants were kept away from the responsibility of the devolution matters both by the Indian government and the TULF. Hence, they were let carefree of the development in this aspect. Hence, it was the responsibility of India and the TULF to accomplish this task at the earliest before the forces that were against the accord, gained space.

For all these questions, the answer was India. Tamil people and the pro-accord forces had full trust on the India as it had the power and the necessary mechanism to succeed it by dealing with the different forces. On this basis, the accord gave a great hope that the Tamils would enjoy power, and the peace and normalcy would be restored soon.

142 India Today, 15 August 1987.
CONCLUSION

The 1983 riots led to the direct involvement of India in the conflict after which, the TULF leadership shifted its operational headquarters to India, and functioned in exile.

India’s involvement in Sri Lanka was based on the premise to find out a dignified solution based on power-sharing and to ensure its security interest on Sri Lankan soil. India played more of a negotiator’s role than that of a mediator. As a mediator, it brought five major militant groups along with the TULF as the representatives of the Sri Lankan Tamils. India treated the TULF as its political arm and the militants as military arm to deal with the Sri Lankan government.

The policy of India went well with the expectations of the TULF. But militant’s goal of Tamil Eelam and India’s aim of power-sharing within the united Sri Lanka was conflicting. Yet it joined hands against common enemy based on the belief that one could convince the other in its favour at suitable time. However, the TULF was aware that it would be difficult, or even impossible, to make militants to reverse their painstaking efforts for a separate State. It was not difficult for the TULF to foresee that this conflicting area would be an impediment to the peace process at crucial point of time. Since the negotiation process was moved on the groundwork of the militants who were prone to armed conflict between them, the Indian government and the TULF knew that they were working on a shaky platform. In the event of a conflict, India’s efforts then behind-the-screen work of the TULF would go in vain. Therefore, a consensus of a common minimum programme between India and the Tamil militants, and unity or healthy understanding among militants based on the goal was the precondition to the success of twin interests. The TULF should have borne this responsibility, if necessary with the support of the Indian government. However, if it failed, the struggle for forty years would go futile. The TULF had rested all the responsibilities such as, negotiation, drafting amendment, convincing militants and unifying them on India and confined them to submit the minimum proposal and assist them at their requests.
Hence, the TULF did not involve in any detailed negotiation; perhaps partly for this reason and partly due to its unawareness of the nuances in the Tamil issue; even their point of view was not given full consideration. The Indian government was peeved at Tamil’s inability to work out a consensus among themselves, to negotiate with Colombo. Thus, the Tamil leadership had to accept whatever India could offer them. The rare opportunity of full backing of India, and four-years free access, to walk on the power corridor of New Delhi, thoroughly exposed the TULF of its inefficiency in addressing the Tamil issue on every front. Instead, despite various weaknesses, some of the militant organisations proved their conviction and courage in facing the challenges and to represent the people.

The Tamil leadership functioned largely as militant and political arm of India in its quest to achieve the twin interests. India as the power behind, and the militants as the instrument; these two actors were the potential in shaping the events. Hence, the importance of the TULF was rather ceremonial as the policy of India was to find a negotiated settlement; both the governments needed a moderate leadership to deal with the matters comfortably. Even though three actors had mutual interests, they had serious differences in the goal and the approaches too. These differences either had to be addressed by the TULF, in the interests of the Tamils, or by India, in the interest of both India and the Tamil’s struggle.

Experience shows, when in the past, India had worked out some broad arrangement with Sri Lankan leaders and Tamils were asked to build on it, they failed to clinch the issue. Every time the Tamils had failed to agree among themselves or failed to negotiate with Colombo, they had looked towards India to bail them out. It was felt that it was better that New Delhi took the matter in its own hands and work out an arrangement on what has broadly been agreed upon in the past piecemeal between Tamil and Colombo and between New Delhi and Colombo. In New Delhi’s calculation, the situation had come to serious pass. Even the LTTE was at the brink of humiliating defeat. Any further attempt to leave the matter in the Tamils’ hands was fraught with dangerous consequences, particularly when the situation had the potential to drag India into an active and open conflict. Having repeatedly sworn to respect its territorial integrity, India was anxious to avoid an open military conflict with a small neighbour. Since the Tamils had put
all the eggs in New Delhi's basket, they did not have un-alternative but to accept what was given to them.

The goal of the TULF also was to establish Tamil Eelam. Militants were also fighting with the goal of Tamil Eelam and all their political and military activities were directed towards that end. Hence, it would be contradictory to its stipulated goal and the leadership quality to work for any other goal than Eelam. The TULF should have formed a united front at any cost and taken the limitations of India's policy and help they should have worked out the course of action before entering into negotiated settlement.