CHAPTER 7

IDEOLOGIES AND STRATEGIES OF VARIOUS MILITANT GROUPS IN SRI LANKA

7.1 Evolution of Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka

It is practically impossible to set a date for the genesis of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka. Tamils began weaving dreams of an independent homeland much before the formal inception of militancy, though in an embryonic form, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the initial stage of the formation of militancy they were inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and his thought. Once they practiced satyagraha with the federal party deciding to launch direct action in front of government offices in the northern and eastern provinces. The objective was to disrupt and disorganise the government’s administrative stricture in Tamil area and thereby exerting pressure on the government to accept the Tamil demand for federal autonomy. The aim of this was not fulfilled. But the campaign unfolded into a huge insurgence of the popular Tamil masses to register a national protest against the oppressive policies of the Sinhala ruling elites. They argued ideologies of Gandhi succeeded in India because it was majority against minority. But in the case of Sri Lanka, it is minority-seeking rights from the majority in which the majority was not willing to give concessions. Historical evidences show that the Tamils had ruled east and north Sri Lanka till 1619. Even after British conquest till 1833 the two kingdoms (Jaffna
and Kotte) were ruled separately. British colonists merged the two kingdoms for their administrative convenience. According to Eelaventhan, a Tamil Eelam Liberation front leader who remarked in 1983 that:

what is that Tamilians are now demanding is a restoration of their original kingdom not separation. Historically legally and philosophically it has been proved that the two races are different and have been separate.²

A large number of politicians came from the majority Sinhalese community. So they acquired a proportionately large share of positions in the parliament compared to Tamils. From that time onwards the leaders started inspiring the Sinhalese with their communal speeches and poisoned their minds. The Sinhalese Buddhist clergy also played a crucial role along with these politicians. They also helped for the enactment of laws to systematically prevent or obstruct the upcoming of Tamils and revitalized the Sinhalese supremacist policies after the independence.³

The oppression of Tamils and the underdevelopment of the Tamil areas in Sri Lanka was a continuous process. In early 1970s the economic policies of the state worsened the balance payments situation in the country. The terms of trade declined and serious stagflation emerged. High rates unemployment and underemployment and rise in cost of living also took place. These trends coupled with the government policies resulted in the emergence of various militant groups and
restoring to guerrilla warfare to establish a separate state. The ethnic difference was the best weapon for the majority Sinhalese politicians to manipulate the vote of Sinhalese community. It is known that they even used their power to create ethnic violence in the country and tried to suppress the minorities.

The post independence scenario shows that the Tamil electors had given support to a single party, i.e., All Ceylon Tamil congress, in the face of common danger. G.G Ponnambalam led it from 1944-1952. In the elections immediately after the independence the UNP came to power with a remarkable majority. After sitting in opposition for about sixteen months the Tamil Congress leader and a majority of congress parliamentarians realized that the conflicting rival opposition parties never unit to form an alternative government. So Ponnambalam decided to join the UNP Government without demanding any preconditions for the betterment of the Tamils position. This caused a split in the party and S.J.V. Chelvanayakam formed Federal Freedom Party of the Tamils, demanding federal constitution in which the rights of the Tamils would be regained and preserved. The precondition for the above were the establishment of two official languages (Sinhala and Tamil), an end to state aided colonization of the Tamil homelands, the re-enfranchisement of the disfranchised Indian Tamils etc. In the successive elections from 1956 onwards the federal party got very good support from the Tamils.

Chelvanayakam provided leadership during the mounting language crisis of 1956 up to 1977. He had entered into several
agreements with three prime ministers for keeping the rights of the Tamils. But all were reneged due to the revolt in parliament and the obstruction from Buddhist clergy. In protest, FP was successful in mobilizing the people on the plank of with a Tamil national consciousness.7

During 1977-1983 Appapillai Amruthalingam took on the flag. He was a civilian political leader, a public speaker an debater in parliament. Although he receive a very good support from the majority of Tamils to fight for a separate sovereign Tamil state Amruthalingam did not throw the Tamil people into armed struggle. He was successful in keeping a very good relationship with the civilian and militant wings of the Tamil movement at the same time he failed to act as a protector of the Tamil community. Anton S. Balasingham, the theoretician and the political spokesman of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) wrote about the FP:

FP was dominated by bourgeois and petty bourgeois class elements and was a nationalist party founded on a conservative ideology.8

The Tamils were on the brink of calling themselves a nation and evolving their own nationalism. A nationalist party may not opt for statehood. When it realizes that there is no other hope of doing so, then national awareness transformed itself into claim for right to self-determination and statehood.

The underdevelopment and the inability of the Tamil moderate politicians to find an amicable solution for the problem paved the way to the formation of liberation movements that decided to win over
their right for self-determination through armed struggle. They have lost hope in the majority government that has always believed that the minorities are only there to accept the majorities decide for them. The majority democratic parliamentarians tried to win over the support of parliamentarians of their nature. The name given to these minorities who stand for their rights was terrorists. However, their voice doesn't have adequate weight and the government launched an offensive into Tamil areas. Hundreds of innocent civilians were killed and prosecuted. This led even moderate Tamils to become militants. The struggle for political independence became an inevitable alternative, when the Tamil political parties converged at the height of national oppression. They formed into a single national movement with the formation of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in 1976. The Federal Party (FP) and the Tamil Congress (TC) were joined to TULF. It confronted with steadily mounting national oppression, frustrated with failures of political agitations demanding basic human rights, the Tamil nationalist movement resolved to fight for political independence on the basis of the nation's right to self-determination. It was primarily a decision to secede and form an independent sovereign state over which the 1977 election were fought and endorsed overwhelmingly by the Tamil speaking masses. Thus, it was the intolerable national oppression and the emergence of national conflict as the major contradiction that led to this inevitable political demand, to secede which opened a new era in Tamil politics, a new historical epoch to launch a revolutionary struggle for national independence.
7.2 The Birth of the Tamil Militancy

The Tamil militants are the historical product of the Sinhala chauvinistic oppression and the unawareness of the Sinhalese politicized class about the gradual growth of the inevitability of the statehood in the minds of the Tamil people. Anton S. Balasingham, the theoretician wrote:

Tamil nationalism arose as a historical consequence of sinhala chauvinistic oppression. As the collective sentiment of the oppressed people, Tamil nationalism constituted ... revolutionary elements... Tamil national sentiment found organizational expression in the Federal Party ... in 1956 to spearhead the Tamil national movement.11

It is the product of a revolutionary situation generated by the contradiction of national conflict. It caught up at the peak of national oppression and was intensified by police brutality against political activity. The revolutionary enthusiasm of the militant Tamil youth sought concrete political action to register their protest. Thus the seeds of Tamil terrorism began in 1970 with the formation of a militant student body called the Tamil Students Movement to protest government plans to limit access of Tamil students to universities. Very soon this movement went underground and turned to overt terrorist activities.12

In 1972, introduction of new constitution of Sri Lanka paved the birth of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). The same year saw the formation of three Tamil terrorist groups—the Tamil New Tigers (TNT), Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) and the
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The other groups are the People's Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOT), the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF) and Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS). All these are splinters groups of the original Tamil Students Movement. And Tamil youth federation of early 1970s. Of these several groups the LTTE is the most powerful and well-disciplined and well organized with popular support in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. These groups emerged following the disappointment with the political strategy of nonviolence, practiced by the traditional political parties.

7.2.1 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

The seeds of the Tiger movement began in 1972. Structured as an urban guerilla force, disciplined with an iron will to fight for the cause of national freedom, the Tigers launched a series of attacks against Sri Lankan armed forces during the next decade and after.

7.2.1.1 Leadership

Veluppillai Prabhakaran, the unchallengeable leader of LTTE, was born in Jaffna on 26 November 1954. He was the youngest of the four children of Vallipuram Parvathy and Tiruvenkatam Vellupillai. After his schooling, he joined in the Tamil Students League (TSL) and the Tamil Youth League (TYL). In 1974, when the International Tamil Congress was convened in Jaffna, Prabhakaran intensified his activities for developing an organization of his own. Subsequently there formed an organization called Tamil New Tigers (TNT). On
May 1976 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was formed as a successor to TNT and Prabhakaran took over the leadership. He had already prepared a logo for the LTTE with the help of an Indian artist. It showed the head of a roaring Tiger. He was actively engaged in forming a good guerilla force by the time. He went on to form a five member Central Committee of the LTTE putting himself as member of the Leadership Counsel. According to M.R. Narayan Swamy:

... the Tiger supremo was not only a good shooter; he was also a meticulous planer. If a bank was to be raised, he would keep the place under watch for weeks,... the planning for the operation would be done in a systematic way. He would take the lead role in the discussions, but share operational secretes only on a need-to-know basis.15

From childhood he was inspired by the heroes like Napolean Bonaparte, Alexander the Great and the Indian freedom fighters. Followers of Prabhakaran consider him as a charismatic nationalist hero, while others consider him a common criminal and murderer.16 An interview with Prabhakaran in 1984, Prabhakaran said,

Tamil Eelam will be a socialist state. By socialism I mean an egalitarian society where human freedom and individual liberties will be guaranteed, where all forms of oppression and exploitation will be abolished. It will be a free
society where our people will have maximum opportunity to develop their economy and promote their culture. Tamil Eelam will be a neutral state, committed to non-alignment and friendly to India.\textsuperscript{17}

In 1970s a former Journalist Mr. Anton Stanislaus Balasingham became the political spokesman of LTTE. He shook hands politely with Prabhakaran and started giving ideological classes for LTTE members in Madras. It was he who had prepared the written manifesto for LTTE. He has actively participated in all the negotiations of LTTE with Government and as well as with External agencies and foreign governments. Even in the ongoing talks under the mediation of the Norwegian Government, he played a key role.

\textbf{7.2.1.2 LTTE'S International Relations}

There are two aspects for the international relations of LTTE as part of Tamil nationalism. One is the Tamil Nadu factor. The nationalist fervour embodied by the LTTE has aroused some pockets of Tamil Nadu. It is said that in certain interior villages and some sections of the coastal belt Prabhakaran is regarded as a folk hero.\textsuperscript{18} Overtly and covertly Tamil Nadu has been continuing to play a major role in shaping the destiny of Eelam Tamil nationalism.
Another unavoidable international aspect of LTTE's relations springs from the large scale migration began after 1983 riots to Europe, Canada Etc. These migrated Tamils occasionally conducted seminars, conferences and cultural celebrations to give the members an idea of the atrocities against Tamils in Sri Lanka. Occasionally they organize protest, marches, demonstrations and video and photographic exhibitions to publicize the atrocities committed against their people by the Sri Lanka government. The collective realization of their identify as stateless people and the refugees, the uncertainty of their residential status in the host country, economic hardship, cultural shock and the yearning due to prolonged separation from their homeland extended families and friends are factors that keep their love for the land alive and firm.19

The LTTE also uses its international contacts to procure weapons, communication systems and bomb making equipments and technology, to obtain funds and supply it to its fighters in Sri Lanka. Information obtained indicated that LTTE has been working as a pivotal point for the movement of the drugs from Southeast Asia to Europe and other western countries.20

7.2.1.3 Ideology

According to publications of LTTE it has adopted the revolutionary theory and practice of Marxism and Leninism. It believed in armed struggle, sustained and supported by the masses. Adopting Lenin's teachings that armed struggle must be enabled by the enlightening and organizing influence of socialism is adopted. The movement was characterized by its political programme integrating
the national struggle with class struggle and defined their ultimate objective as national liberation and socialist revolution. They conceived armed struggle as the highest expression of political practice and must be channeled into a process of socialist revolution. Based on this Tiger movement from its early stages engaged in developing and building political and military bases among the popular masses.

In the course of Tamil freedom struggle the application of Marxist-Leninist theory flourished a lot. The government of Sri Lanka was alarmed at the growth and strength of the movement. They became angered at the success of its military operations on the government property and personnel, and above all, were horrified by its growing support among wider sections of the Tamil masses. In April 1978, the liberation Tigers launched a tactical attack of self defence and destroyed a party of police personal which was in hot pursuit to track them down. The ruling group utilised this situation to intensify its policy of national suppression. A repressive legislation was rushed through the parliament, which proscribed the Tiger movement. At the same time, the government dispatched large contingents of military personnel to Tamil areas to keep them under constant military surveillance and domination. Even with the intensification of the military and the tight screen of surveillance the Freedom Fighters continued with their armed struggle, launched occasional strikes at chosen targets and evade all possible tactics to hunt them down. Though confronted with all odds, and obstacles, the Tiger Movement grew in strength as the armed vanguard of the mass struggle, growing as the authentic national liberation movement to advance the cause of national freedom through armed struggle.
7.2.1.4 Objectives of LTTE

Main objectives with the formation of the LTTE are the following

- Total independence of Tamil Eelam. The establishment of a sovereign, socialist democratic people’s government.

- Abolition of all forms of exploitation of man by man and the establishment of a socialist mode of production ensuring that the means of production and exchange of the country were owned by the people.

- To achieve these revolutionary tasks, armed revolutionary struggle is the only viable and effective path, to liberate our homeland.

The guerilla warfare, will be gradually and systematically transformed in to a genuine people’s war of liberation. To this end, our liberation movement is working persistently to mobilize and organize the broad masses to actively participate in the national struggle.24

7.2.2 The People Liberation Organization of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE)

PLOTE was a faction of LTTE which broke away due to an ideological and personal difference with the then leadership of the LTTE. Uma Maheswaran (Mukunthan) who had served as the chairman of the LTTE’s executive council broke away from the LTTE with some members in 1979 and formed the PLOTE in 1980. According to them the reasons for the formation of the PLOTE was the non-democratic leadership style of LTTE. It was a high-caste
Vellalar oriented organization. It had obtained adequate finance and was second in strength to LTTE among Tamil militant groups at one point in time.\textsuperscript{25}

7.2.2.1 Ideology

The leader of POLTE Uma Maheswaran once said “Marxist philosophy is the best guide for revolutionaries”. He had cherished a people’s revolution in Sri Lanka and the establishment of unitary Marxist state in the country. Because PLOTE showed a wider interest in the liberation of the oppressed people, including the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, they adopted Marxism –Leninism as their ideology. It advocated that although each social group or class would be playing its role in the liberation struggle it should be led by the revolutionary working class in Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{26}

The PLOTE laid great emphasis on the mass mobilization programme as it “sees the liberation struggle as a protected struggle in which the revolutionary armed struggle is an essential component. It also stressed the importance of forging unity with progressive force among the Sinhalese and it attempted to show the relevance of the Tamil liberation struggle.\textsuperscript{27}

7.2.2.2 Objectives

- Total emancipation of the Tamil Eelam
- Creation of a sovereign state
• The emancipation of the Tamils to be achieved not only by liberating them from the repressive Sri Lanka state, but also from the clutches of the Tamil bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{28}

7.2.2.3 Main Activities and Achievements

The PLOTE followed the strategy of mass struggle to attain their goal. They rejected the long -term guerilla tactics to liberate the Tamil. It argued that their past experience had shown there had been always retaliation from the armed force and many innocent lives were lost consequently. So they concentrated on a people's war i.e. a mass struggle.\textsuperscript{29}

7.2.3 Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO)

The TELO was the oldest of the Tamil militant groups in Sri Lanka. It was originally formed in the early 1970s by a group of youths who broke away from Tamil Youth Federation(TYF). In 1974 Thangathurai and Kuttimani alias Yogachandran formed TELO. But both were killed in the 1983 riots at the Welikada prison. In 1983 Sri Sabaratnam took over the leadership of the TELO and reorganized it.

7.2.3.1 Ideology

The TELO was based wholly on a revolutionary ideology and programmes. It appealed to the Muslims in Sri Lanka to join hands with them for an armed struggle to defeat the reactionary forces collaborating with Zionism.
7.2.3.2 Objectives

- Establishment of an Independent Socialist Tamil Eelam.

- Liberation of the Tamils from the Sinhalese communal machinery

- Like other Tamil militant groups, TELO believed in the revolutionary armed struggle of the people to liberate the Tamils.

7.2.3.3 Achievements

TELO became popular after the chavakachcheri police station attack in 1984 in which nearly thirty four police commandos were killed, and the blasting of a passenger train at Kurugam in which nearly thirty one soldiers died. On 9th may 1985 TELO freedom fighters attacked Kokkavil Army camp. That was the largest attack made by them. 48 Sri Lankan soldiers lost their lives compared to nine Teloists. At one time TELO was considered a militarily powerfull Tamil militant group second only to the LTTE.

7.2.4 Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS)

It was founded on November 23rd 1975 in London by an economist called Ratnasabapathy. It derived its strength originally from the General Union Eelam Students(GUES) a student group in Madras. It was organized for establishing a separate state, Eelam, which was the aspiration of the Tamil speaking masses. Its strongholds were mainly in Batticaloa and Amparai districts. They said "We are Eelavar, Our language is Tamil, Our nation is
Eelam”. Its main end was the interest of the working class and equality and social justice would be guaranteed to each and everyone.31

7.2.4.1 Main Ideology

It followed the principles of collective leadership. It had a clear cut Marxist-Leninist ideology towards solving the Tamil problems and their activities were based on that ideology. It put forward the principle of *Unity and Struggle* as its motto. They believe that the plantation Tamils issue was the central point of *Eelam* and focusing on their plight is the foremost duty. But gradually they attained a clear politico-military strategy.32

V Balakumar and R. Shankar top leaders of the EROS told to *Frontline* in 1986 that

so far we are the only organization that has exhibited its expertise in handling explosives and until now we have not exhibited our real military might.33

In their manifesto it clearly stated that they want to unite three provinces. They educate and mobilize the people of that provinces. According to them, their homeland was from Point Pedro to Badula (up country) and from Mannar to Batticaloa including Pottuvil. The people who lived in that region would be categorized as Eelavar. They call these region as Eelam and they believe that the plantation Tamils and Tamils in the North and East constitute a distinct nationality.34 But their struggle began from their
plantations. The plantation labour form the backbone of the Tamil working class. So they strongly believe that Eelam can be formed only through a joint struggle plan that can incorporate the plantation Tamils. It was the only group which gave importance to the Tamil-speaking masses living in the hill country and considered them as the classical proletariat to be included as its front line of the struggle against Sri Lanka government. EROS organized co-operative model farms in the north and the east to rehabilitate the people who were driven from the hill country during the communal riots of 1977.35

7.2.4.2 Objectives

- To spread to other parts of Sri Lanka.
- To demoralize the forces by this activity
- To stop temporarily and the continuous harassment of the Tamil speaking people
- To make the Sinhalese people understand their armed struggle and distract the government36

7.2.4.3 Main Activities and Achievements

The tactics and strategies of Eros are different. They followed the policy of not provoked the army but to attack the troops when they return to the barracks.

7.2.5 Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF)

The year 1970 saw the students and the youth taking over the leadership in Tamil freedom struggle. Their movement was
progressive, because it threw a challenge to the bourgeoisie political parties, who were afraid of the progress made by the movement of the student and youth.\textsuperscript{37}

The youth movement during 1974 had no class content and failed to organize the peasants and workers. They entered into violence spontaneously. Yet the progressive thinking widespread among the younger generation enriched by never ending conversations and debates put them into right path.\textsuperscript{38}

The peasantry and proletariat of the country were organized, and mutual contacts improved. Thus taking lessons from the 1970 struggles, they organized a evolutionary liberation front called Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF). The selfish revisionists and spontaneous individuals were dedicated from the movement. EPRLF support base was in Batticaloa in contrast to the LTTE's stronghold in Jaffna.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{7.2.5.1 Ideology}

EPRLF sought to bring about that true liberation of Eelam, from national oppression by the neo-fascist state of Sri Lanka. The EPRLF is, therefore, committed to the revolutionary transformation of the Eelam national liberation struggle through the build up of a mass base and preparing the masses for an armed struggle. It had its own ideological position based on Marxist-Leninist principle.
7.2.5.2 Objectives

The EPRLF at its first Congress held between the 4th and 10th of October, 1981 presented its political programme and declared its ends and means. They are:

1. To establish complete liberation of Eelam, the motherland of the Tamil speaking People.

2. To found a socialist society to complete the political liberation by continuing to struggle for social, economical and cultural liberation.

3. To fight against imperialism, Zionism and Racism, since the Eelam liberation struggle cannot be separated from the international progressive struggles.

4. To accept Historical and Dialectical Materialism as our philosophy and guiding light.40

7.2.5.3 Main Achievements

For carrying out these objectives they organized radical intelligentsia, progressive sections of the petit-bourgeoisie and students under one umbrella. They mobilized all working people of Eelam, in particular, agricultural workers, poor peasants, fishermen and the plantation proletariat, for the struggle against national oppression and class exploitation and towards the raising of political consciousness. They developed social consciousness against caste oppression and to smash the atrocities perpetrated in the name of casteism through all means and to indicate clearly that only the economic
liberation will guarantee a permanent solution to the problem. They raised social and cultural consciousness against male Chauvinism and the economic, political and cultural oppression against women and the eradication of the dowry system which is degrading to, both men and women.\textsuperscript{41}

7.3 The Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF)

The Historical development of these militant groups shows that in April 1984, the EROS, EPRLF, and TELO formed a united Front. It was called the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF).\textsuperscript{42}

They formed a five point programme:

1. To liberate our motherland from Sri Lanka domination
2. Nothing less than Eelam will be acceptable.
3. Armed struggle on a mass level to be our path.
4. To establish a socialist society in the independent Eelam.
5. To Free our nation from the yoke of neo-colonialism headed by U.S imperialists

7.3.1 Minimum Working Programme of ENLF

1. To implement co-ordinated armed activities against Sri Lankan armed forces.
2. To carry on overseas propaganda work jointly.
3. To collect funds from individuals and organizations in support of the struggle and manage it by a joint committee.\textsuperscript{43} In April 1985 the LTTE too joined the front, while PLOTE opted to stay
At Thimpu talks the ENF, PLOTE and TULF emphasized four points that were

i) Recognition of the Tamils as a separate nationality;

ii) Recognition of the areas occupied by Tamils as homeland of Tamils;

iii) Recognition of the right of self-determination of the Tamils;

iv) Granting citizenship to all those who wish to make Sri Lanka their home.

7.4 Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)

Apart from the Tamil Militants there was another group of Sinhalese militants under the name of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). In 1965 the party came into being. It was started action in 1970's under the leadership of Rohana Wijeweera. He gave birth to a militant organization with the aim of over-throwing the capitalist regime in Sri Lanka through armed forces. The ideology of JVP is based on committed to Pro-China(CP) communist thinking. They translated a number of communist works including that of Mao Tse-tung and Kim IL Sung into Sinhala language. Camps were organized to practice Karate for self defence and use of arms and other equipment for violent overthrow of government.

Through youth movement he gathered a number of followers and established a revolutionary party of youth. The JVP was supported by various students organizations in the University campuses. The main objective of JVP was to overthrow the government whether it
was UNP or any other party. After the election of 1970 JVP launched an attack on police stations and government property in many parts of the island leaving a trail of bloodshed and destruction in trail. But the movement was crushed by the government forces with some external assistance. A number of young men and women partook in these activities.48

The revolution by JVP was a failure. The people of Sri Lanka showed a high degree of political consciousness and they believed in the replacement of government by ballot. So JVP got little mass support. Again the Sri Lankan people were loyal to caste and family rather than class feelings. Moreover, the teachings of leftist ideology were not digested by an average Sri Lankan citizen. Thus the role of JVP in the course of the development of Tamil militant movement were very little. Indeed the organization assumed an anti-Tamil character representing Sinhalese chauvinism.

7.5 Conclusion

From the study of these militant groups we know that initially there was only one group fighting for an independent Eelam. But, later on, it was split up in to factions due to leadership struggle. So, there were different militant groups to fight for the same cause. But they all were committed to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. Among these groups the LTTE could claim to have a distinct history and politico-strategic objectives. All others are now either defunct or are considerably weakened.

All Tamil militant movements had offices in Tamil Nadu, mainly the city of Madras. Leaders from Tamil Nadu protected various
groups. The leader of Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam (DMK) M. Karunanidhi had contact with TELO. Former chief minister of Tamil Nadu M.G Ramachandran had supported LTTE and also PLOTE. More over people pf Tamil Nadu had been generally sympathetic towards the Tamil militant after the 1983 riots.

The Tamils of Sri Lanka had wished to stay within the island in harmony with the majority Sinhalese as one nation. But the different subjugating programs of successive governments after the independence and the inability of the Tamil moderate leadership to find an amicable solution, challenged the social, economic and political existence of the Tamils. Confronted with steadily mounting national oppression, frustrated with failures of political agitations demanding basic human rights, the Tamil’s movement resolved to fight for political independence on the basis of right to self determination. It was primarily a decision to secede and to form an independent sovereign state. Caught up in the revolutionary situation generated by national oppression and police brutality, the youths were forced to abandon the non-violent form of struggle and various militant groups emerged. Though all these militant groups are under various leaders they came under common name “Tamil Tigers”. Most survived is LTTE’S leader Prabhakaran. These tigers are now trying to negotiate with the government. They have considerable support among Tamils in the northern and eastern parts of the country. Now the organization is looking forward to improving its acceptance by the international community. Convert itself into the key and only legitimate actor of the Tamils.
NOTES


*Stagflation means rising inflation with stagnant growth.*


7 Ibid.


9 Nithin Belle, n.2.


11 A.S., Balasingham, n.8.


13 Ibid., pp.12-14.


15 Ibid., pp.59-60.


18 A. Jayaratnam, Wilson, n.6, p.169.

19 Tamil Link (Madras), 29 April 1984, pp.33-36.


22 A.S Balasingham, n.8, p.29.


24 Ambalavanar, n.23, pp.133-134., Selected Political Documents, n.21, pp.64-65.

25 A. Jayaratnam Wilson, n.6, p.127.


28 Ambalavanar, n.23. pp.133-134.


PLOTE may have started with Marxist Leninist ideology. But it later resorted to kidnappings and robberies, especially of banks, to supplement merge financial resources. Apparently Maheswaran was a leader who could not get on with his party. He and his followers were divided over the group’s political programme, strategy and terrorism. He had committed thirty eight murders and was criticized for his headless and useless strategy. At a PLOTE congress in July 1985 an influential group of dissidents withdrew from the party and
Maheswaran was finally murdered in 1989 by unidentified assassins.


32 Pamphlet, EROS is the Ethos of Eelav (Madras: Documentation Unit, 1985), pp.5-6.

33 T.S. Subramaniam, n.31, p.2.


35 Ibid.

36 Ambalvanar, n.23, p.136.


38 Pamphlet, The Political Program of the Eelam Peoples Revolutionary Liberation Front, Published by EPRLF Department for Propaganda and Information, 1981), pp.8-10.

39 Ibid.


41 EPRLF Pamphlet, pp.3-4.

42 *TELO Times*, March 1985.

43 Tamil Link, 1984.

44 Eelam News (Madras: Eelam People’s Information Centre Publication), June 1985, issue 8, pp.4-5.

A press release issued by four liberation organization on 10th April stated that the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENF) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had entered into an alliance so as to “chart a joint politico-military strategy to advance the process of national liberation. The press release laid down the political objectives of the newly formed alliance as follows:

1) To win the independence and sovereignty of our home and from the Sri Lankan state repression and domination.
2) Not to compromise on any alternative political settlement other than the establishment of our statehood based on the right to national self determination of our people.

3) To pursue the strategy of a popular war of national liberation

4) To construct a socialist social formation in liberated eelam

5) To free our nation from all clutches of world imperialism and neo-colonialism and pursue a path of non-alignment.

Deccan Herald (New Delhi), 18 April 1984.


Chapter 8

Tamil National Freedom Struggle in Sri Lanka

8.1 Emergence of nationalism
8.2 Nationalism before independence
8.3 Nationalism after independence
8.4 Economic Underdevelopment
8.5 Economic Degradation of Northern states
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