

## **Glorification of LTTE; a Threat to National Security of Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is a unitary state. The country is home to over 21 million people of various ethnicities. The unique geographical location, the existence of high-value natural resources and the importance of Sri Lanka in trade and shipping are evident in the history of the country during the Western rule. Sri Lanka, which was liberated from the control of the Western imperialists, came under the political leadership and was led by a unique political figure.

Thus, Sri Lanka, ruled by individual heads of state, came to the fore in the face of political conflict and crisis. All these victories and defeats were frozen and the political climate in Sri Lanka, which was gradually developing, suddenly began to change. During this crisis, another force was secretly emerging in Sri Lanka. That is, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) organization led by “Velupillai Prabhakaran”. The stated objective of the organization was to establish a separate state, Tamil Eelam state in our motherland. However, under the courageous leadership, our security forces fearlessly fought to destroy the LTTE. At the risk of their own lives, our security forces’ near 30-year-long humanitarian operation ended on May 18, 2009, defeating all the terrorists, including the terror leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. Sri Lanka is the only country in the modern world to completely dismantle a terrorist force previously regarded as the most brutal in the world, which bled the country for nearly three decades while waging a lengthy separatist war.

The national security of a country refers to the unity of all the ethnic groups living in that country, the independence and the sovereignty of that country as well as the territorial integrity, citizenship rights and human rights without any threats that may be posed internally or externally. Of course, in order to create a strong social environment in a country, special attention must be paid to the safety of the citizens living in that country. Although it is in the national interest to create a secure society through a strong set of policies, the rising tide of crime over the years has made a strong impact on this process. It is very appropriate for a country to have an independent judiciary with a system of moral justice for future development. The first stage in this process is prevention. It must be understood that it is not the responsibility of an individual but a collective effort.

Our resilient nation’s strength is in its ability to forgive the traumas of the past in the hope of a brighter future in a peaceful society. However, it must be emphasized that the LTTE international front is engaged in a struggle to destroy the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our nation and to undermine the past victory of the entire country against terrorism. At present, it is evident that Sri Lanka is still confronting an active threat emanating from pro-LTTE front organizations operating overseas. Protecting the state and the nation from these threats is a primary responsibility of the government and its security forces. It must be acknowledged that having a comprehensive national security strategy is the foundation of a developing country to achieve prosperity and lasting peace. Therefore, the time has come to formulate a new national security strategy to protect its national interests in the face of the strategic threat environment that is developing against Sri Lanka.

It has been 12 years since the end of the gruesome war in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government has been concerned with ensuring security since then. However, some acts show that many parties try to thwart the efforts of the government. On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021, Tamil National People’s Front Member of the Parliament Selvarasa Gajendran<sup>1</sup> and two others were

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ceylontoday.lk/news/tnpf-mp-arrested-for-commemorating-thileepan>

arrested by the police for organizing a memorial for Rasaiah Pradeepan alias Thileepan, a former LTTE terrorist who died while on a hunger strike in 1987. In the face of these actions, the counter-terrorism process of Sri Lanka is challenged. Although the terrorists conflict has ended, there are constant efforts by LTTE supporters to revive it. These commemorations support them in the process. Government must implement strict laws to put an end to such acts, which promote terrorists. In order to revive terrorism within Sri Lanka; LTTE international network use false propaganda to share baseless allegations of war crimes against the country while glorifying the LTTE. The International terrorism expert Professor Rohan Gunaratna has elaborated on the glorification of the LTTE in their study of the future. This situation is undoubtedly a serious threat to the national security in Sri Lanka.

Indeed, it should be emphasized that such glorification of LTTE terrorism must be addressed through the enactment of legal provisions and policies to further strengthen the stability and national security that is the basis of ethnic and religious harmony in Sri Lanka. Currently, there is no provision in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act No. 48 of 1979<sup>2</sup> on the grounds of glorifying or commemorating terrorists. Therefore, it is an urgent need for the authorities responsible to impose the relevant legal provisions expeditiously. The maximum punishment should be imposed to those who glorify the terrorists that threaten the communal harmony of the country by degrading the victory that has been won after making many sacrifices for nearly three decades.

The LTTE international fronts' propaganda created an environment conducive to LTTE plots, planning and revival. Immediate action must be taken to ban such activities altogether. Just as Germany banned Nazi symbols and activities after World War II, the necessary provisions must be imposed to ban LTTE propaganda and paraphernalia forever. Article 86 of the German Criminal Code<sup>3</sup> further clarifies this. The article emphasizes that *"the use of symbols by unconstitutional organizations outside the context of "Art or Science, Research or Teaching" is strictly prohibited. However, the law does not specify what those symbols are, and it is stated that Nazi, Communist and Islamic extremist symbols are prohibited"*.

Of course, Sri Lanka is a democratic country. However, further examination of this scope shows that the tolerance of excessive liberty has given a new life to violent terrorism. For example, although the United States have declared their victory over Afghanistan and Iraq, the infrastructure that necessitated the revival of the terrorists remain unchanged. Likewise, the same fact is encouraging the LTTE's revival. Until Sri Lanka exterminates the separatist ideologies, security forces and intelligence services in the North and East must implement tight security plans. However, this is not a trivial matter. The government and the relevant security authorities should recommend the necessary security strategies to counter these threats.

Strict laws are being enforced against these LTTE terrorists in the international community. In the wake of the brutal terrorist attacks of the past few years, many European countries have imposed stricter laws against terrorism. The British enacted new laws to eradicate terrorism. Once, Justice Secretary & Lord Chancellor, Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP stressed that terrorists and their hate ideology have no place in the streets of Britain. He further elaborated that the terrorists would have to spend more time in jail and face stricter rehabilitation on their release. Moreover, it is justiciable to say that the British government is

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<sup>2</sup> Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act No.48 of 1979

<sup>3</sup> Article 86 of German Criminal Code

pursuing every option to face the threat of terrorism and to keep communities safe, from imposing a minimum of 14 years for the most dangerous criminals to strict surveillance. In comparison to the laws of these countries, it is obvious that there are loopholes to address in the existing legal framework regarding terrorist activities in Sri Lanka.

At the end of the 30-year war, the ideology of separatism gradually disappeared. Nevertheless, a handful of attempts have been made to rejuvenate separatism with the aim of achieving their narrow goals. A look at contemporary world phenomena reveals that many Tamils in Sri Lanka as well as abroad has left the LTTE. However, it must be proved that the separatist agenda continues to be staged by several racist politicians and other minorities. The terrorist group has been banned by 30 countries, including the United States, Canada, India and the 27 member nations of the European Union. Some of the unlisted LTTE fronts are still active in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is imperative that the Government of Sri Lanka list the pro-LTTE organizations operating in the country and take steps to terminate them.

The next aspect of this emerging threat is the rise of the second generation of LTTE terrorists. None of the second-generation LTTE terrorists have experienced what really happened in the country and they are just expressing what they have told, and they are brainwashed. They are trying to achieve their narrow goals by making war crimes allegations against Sri Lanka from the international arena. The most serious allegation made by them is that a Tamil genocide took place in this country. LTTE claims that, former heads of state and war leaders of Sri Lanka massacred innocent Tamils by violating human rights.

**Why is the international community not paying attention to the human rights of the innocent Tamils who were killed by LTTE?**

**Why is it that the international community does not find out how many children were forcibly recruited by the LTTE at that time?**

The reality is, LTTE violated the rights of Sri Lankans. The hypocrisy is, it was LTTE who violated Human rights. To fight the war and defeat LTTE, the government and armed forces had the responsibility of ensuring and entrusting the lives of all civilians while safeguarding human rights. Accordingly, the civilians were able to escape from the LTTE and returned to the security forces in the face of the onslaught of the security forces. Then the government and security forces were ready to provide them with all the medical treatment and other essentials.

The United States has imposed sanctions on Sri Lanka Army commander and Chief of Defence Staff, General Shavendra Silva for unsubstantiated claims of war crimes committed at the final stages of the conflict against the Tamil Tigers in 2009, when up to 70,000 Tamil civilians were killed.<sup>4</sup> The US travel ban against General Silva and his family due to these baseless allegations. However, the LTTE has been rehabilitated and have been recruited into the Sri Lankan security forces, giving them opportunities to serve the country. In addition, more than 450,000 landmines placed by LTTE terrorists in the northern part of Sri Lanka have been cleared and the resettlement of Tamils in those areas has been very successful. **Where has the international community been when the Tamil people were resettled and rehabilitated after removing 450,000 mines by our armed forces?** General Silva has also constantly advised the health sector and other support services in the face of the corona

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<sup>4</sup> <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/sri-lanka-us-shavendra-silva-travel-ban-explained-6269683/>

pandemic, assisting in maintaining the most successful vaccination and quarantine programs and maintaining the public administration machinery. The LTTE fought with the intention of dividing this country. They want to do the same once again and currently making their best efforts to propagate baseless war crime allegations against our country.

Supports the erection of a memorial to unsubstantiated claims of massacred Tamils in Sri Lanka in the Canadian city of Brampton, a predominantly Tamil city. Approval for the construction of the Mullivaikkal memorial was unanimously approved by the Brampton City Council last year. The demolition of the memorial that supported LTTE terrorists at the University of Jaffna on January 9th last year (2021) provoked strong protests internationally. In this context, Ontario's political figure and Ontario Treasury President Pramit Singh Zakaria Brampton has expressed his support for the establishment of a memorial focusing on the first anniversary of these events.<sup>5</sup> The terrorist memorial at the University of Jaffna was a threat to the national security of Sri Lanka and its reconciliation process. That is because the constructions of those memorials glorify the LTTE terrorists. In general, universities equip the youth of the country with intelligence. But it is very clear that such activities lead to a resurgence of terrorism. The right to remember loved ones can be exercised in a private sphere. But such public events, which are fundamental to the re-emergence of terrorists, should not be allowed in any form. If such commemorations are made, **what justice can be done to the innocent civilians killed by the terrorists?**

Finally, in the face of this ideological threat, it is important to consider how to ensure the national security of Sri Lanka.

A country does not experience peace just because war is over. As soon as the war ended, no government was able to unite the Sinhalese and the Tamils to the fullest extent to harmonize their minds on the right basis and the right objectives. This has led to the occurrence of threats from time to time. In order to eradicate the ethnic crisis in the country, Sri Lanka needs to formulate a proper national education policy that educates Sinhalese, Tamils, and Muslims alike. Education is an important aspect of a state. Policies must be introduced to carry out a smooth school administration with up-to-date knowledge and current trends. Threats posing from extremism penetrate the education system and the monitoring and overseeing of the school curricula is a must. The government must provide a system of governance, regular monitoring to strengthen the education system. It must be identified that Sri Lanka can never achieve social unity, political stability, and economic prosperity without regulating the ethnic and religious space.

In light of recent societal events, Sri Lanka should build a retrograde system, which has been highlighted as necessary. Armed forces and intelligence services with adequate training should be able to expand knowledge, streamline investigations, streamline operations, and define the scope of activities without the use of internal or foreign forces.

When it comes to cyberspace, Sri Lanka needs a much stronger approach. Network intrusions are commonly considered to be one of the most serious threats to national security, public safety, and the economy. In this scenario, technology becomes a double-edged sword. The persistence and sophistication of cyber threats are becoming increasingly obvious, necessitating solutions that go beyond the typical. The rise of technology-driven new media,

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<sup>5</sup> <https://ibctamil.com/article/mullivaikal-memorial-in-canada-1641836582>

such as social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, as well as other websites on the Internet, has posed a threat to national security.

In addition, it is evident that there is an ongoing terrorist threat to Sri Lanka domestically as well as the internationally by LTTE. It is no secret that terrorist sympathizers are carrying out various acts locally and internationally to whitewash LTTE crimes, while falsely accusing Sri Lanka of war crimes. With the escalation of such threats, a comprehensive security strategy is recommended. Therefore, the government should adopt strict laws and abide by them. Terrorists have expanded their power through strategic perspectives using technology. In order to combat these threats, the responsible authorities must realize that our strategies must be more advanced compared to them. Furthermore, the government should take immediate actions to change our defence structure from where we are today to where we need to be in the future. Nevertheless, such acts of the LTTE network locally and internationally devalue the victory Sri Lankans achieved. Necessary steps must be taken to rebut such commemorative acts. Further, it is imperative that all intelligence services, including the security forces, must be better prepared to stop any potential future terrorist threat to our motherland.

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Reference:

- Article 86 of the German Criminal Code
- Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act No.48 of 1979
- <https://ceylontoday.lk/news/tnpf-mp-arrested-for-commemorating-thileepan>
- <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/sri-lanka-us-shavendra-silva-travel-ban-explained-6269683/>
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- *The opinion expressed is his own and not necessarily reflective of the institute.*