

An illusive leader's annual speech

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Introduction:

Despite spearheading a three decade long conflict with the Sri Lankan government force and for short period the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran has remained an illusive figure in the island nation's northern conflict. The Tiger leader has provided few media interviews in his lifetime, and virtually none since the late 80's, at times adding fuel to the south's politically motivated rumours announcing his death.

However, every year on November 27 Velupillai Prabhakaran has continued to address his 'nation', a much publicised statement which is viewed small window into the Tiger ideology. Despite its significance in providing and insight into the course of the ethnic conflict, little or no systematic research has been conducted to analyse the semiotic content of the annual speeches.

In this context this paper aims to provide a detailed analysis of the annual speeches, based on the texts available through numerous pro-Tiger sources, in a bid to determine the main narratives outlined in the Tiger leader's 'speech to the nations'.

The illusive head of a quasi state:

"...The National Leader's words...are as rare as the November (Karthikai) blossom. They are not words wandering away in the air or dissolving in the sea, but are seeds planted firmly on a hill. The Great Heroes Day speech is a unique experience in the region. It is awaited and listened to eagerly by devotees and enemies alike..."

The LTTE owned Eelantham daily
December 24, 2004¹

'...while Ranil Wickremesinghe is the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Prabhakaran is the Prime Minister and President of Tamil Eelam'²

Dr Anton Balasingham, (April 10, 2002)
Tiger theologian

The Tiger leader's annual Martyrs day address has undoubtedly become the quasi 'throne speech' of Tamil Eelam, analogous to the Sri Lankan President's address to the parliament at the commencement

¹ University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna). (January 10, 2005).

² A statement made during the Tiger leader's historic press conference in Killinochchi on April 10, 2002 (Subramanian, April 11, 2002).

of each session of a new parliament. A supposition validated through Tiger theologian Dr Balasingham's assertion of Prabhakaran as the "Prime Minister and President of Tamil Eelam", and the Tiger leader's *soi-disant* – *Thalavar* (national leader). Similarly in the absence of a parliament, a publicly visible revolutionary council or central committee, which make public policy statements, the Tiger Leader's annual speech offers the only reference to the LTTE's 'political' stance.

The tradition of an annual speech dates back to 1991,³ a year which marks the Tigers foray into battle field combat with operation "Tharai, Kadal, Aahayam" (Land, Sea and Air) – an event which elevates the status of Tiger controlled lands to that of a quasi Eelam state, equipped with its own military capable of mounting military offensives against the 'occupying' government forces. In this respect the decision to present an annual speech is not only a politically prudent move that gives direction to the Tiger cadre in a new politico-military arena, but also a vital outward projection of statehood from the embryonic Eelam state.

It should also be noted the address is incontrovertibly linked with the organisations core motivational force – the sacrifice of its martyrs, and it has become customary for the tiger leader to deliver his speech on November 27, the LTTE heroes day. Similarly with the reclusive nature of the Tiger leader coupled with his increasing reluctance to grant media interviews, the annual speech has become a rare portal into Tiger psyche.

The speech traditionally broadcasted on the LTTE's *pulikalinkural* – Voice of Tiger radio has, over the past fifteen years, increased its global reach through the advancements in satellite communication technology. In 2003, the LTTE broke new ground in this respect with a *live* telecast of the Tiger leader's heroes day speech to Europe. Sunday Times journalist Chris Kamalendran (November 30, 2003) reported the broadcast had been facilitated through a satellite uplink from Killinochchi⁴ provided by Rupavahini – the state television, as part of a political sweetener in the on going peace process of the time. The report said "Rupavahini Chairman Harim Peiris (had) confirmed that the live satellite broadcast, the first ever for the LTTE, was upon a request made by a foreign company – the pro-LTTE Tamil Television Network (TTN),⁵" Kamalendran reported. The TTN television network based at 5 - 7 Rue Emile Zola, 93120 La Courneuve, in the northeastern suburbs of Paris transmits its round-the-clock broadcasts on the French based Eutelsat Hotbird satellites reaching a wide audience in Europe, North Africa and Middle East.

However, by early 2005 the Tigers had successfully developed their own satellite communication capabilities enabling them to reach the international audience even without government consent. A supposition demonstrated through the launch of their own television network, the aptly named National Television of Tamil Eelam (NTT) from March 29, 2005. It was also reported the NTT broadcast was expected to be picked up by the TTN network and transmitted to a wider audience (Tamilnet, March 26, 2005)⁶. NTT programs initially unavailable to Asian audiences was upgraded to cover parts of Asia on August 1, 2005 (Tamilnet, July 30, 2005). The transmission is now available on PanAmSat's Pass-12 satellite and enjoys a wider coverage in Europe, Middle East, Southern Africa, India, South East Asia⁷.

Despite mounting opposition in the south the government officials said they were powerless to block the LTTE transmission. A media report quoting unnamed Telecom Regulatory Commission (TRC)

³ While the first publicly available transcript dates back to November 1992, LTTE expert and scholar on martyr ideology, Peter Schalk argues the tradition of an annual speech was first started in 1991 (personal communication Peter Schalk, 2005)

⁴ "As the live coverage of the ceremonies were being aired on Thursday in Killinochchi, footage of ceremonies held in Trincomalee and Batticaloa were interpolated. It projected pictures of cemeteries, mourning family members of those who were killed in battle with security forces, street decorations and the address by LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran." The broadcast came just three weeks after President Chandrika Kumaratunga took over the state media. (Kamalendran, November 30, 2003).

⁵ "The network is said to have bureaus in Britain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland and India" (Kamalendran, November 30, 2003).

⁶ "The satellite channel will start today at 17.30 GMT time. We will beam only fifteen minutes of news everyday for the next two weeks. Thereafter our telecast time would be increased to half an hour", he (a NTT official) said. The NTT official added that the Paris based Tamil Television Network (TTN) will relay the broadcast to their audiences in Europe at 18.00 GMT (Tamilnet, March 26, 2005).

⁷ (Source: PanAmSat - http://www.panamsat.com/global_network/pas_12.asp and LyngSat: PAS 12 at 45.0°E www.lyngsat.com/pas12.html)

officials said while the TRC remained the sole licensing authority for all broadcasts they were incapable of blocking the live feed (Ferdinando, August 10, 2005). With the government powerless to oppose the LTTE's new global satellite reach the November 2005 Martyrs day address was therefore directly broadcasted by the Tigers to viewers in Europe and Asia.

The political status of the Tiger leader as the 'President and Prime Minister' of Eelam, coupled with the wide reach of his annual 'policy statement', the heroes day speech could be considered a vital analytical tool in understanding the LTTE's key politico-communicational narratives.

However it should be noted that any meaningful analysis of the text must be based within the historical context the speeches were initially delivered in, and more importantly through a comprehensive understanding of the political environment in the northern theatre which led to the inaugural speech in 1991. In this context three contemporary developments in the conflict theatre should be taken into account.

- i. The deployment of an LTTE 'army' in the battle for Elephant Pass, and the subsequent change in power dynamics with the establishment of a quasi state.
- ii. Sudden increase in casualty numbers through the change in conflict dynamics, forcing the strengthening of the martyr concept.
- iii. The re-emergence of the Black Tiger suicide squads following the withdrawal of the IPKF⁸.

A second army: tigers enter the battle field.

The power dynamics in the Northern military front had dramatically changed by mid-1990 – the IPKF had failed to subdue the LTTE; the Tamil National Army a militia created by the Indian Intelligence's Research Analyst Wing (RAW) had been decimated by the Tigers; political power had changed hands from President Junius Richard Jayewardene, one of the architects of the 1987 Indo-Lanka accord to Ranasinghe Premadasa, Prime Minister and vocal opponent of Indian intervention; the post-IPKF peace talks between the LTTE and the Government had collapsed by June 11, 1990 and the Tigers had regained control of the East.

Eelam war II – the post-IPKF confrontation with the Sri Lankan forces, marked the LTTE's emergence as a conventional army. The LTTE's first major military offensive, the 53 day Tiger operation codenamed "Tharai, Kadal, Aahayam" (Land, Sea and Air) was successful in laying siege to the Sri Lankan military garrison at Elephant pass the gateway to the Jaffna peninsula. However the Tigers failed to capture the garrison manned by around 600 soldiers of the sixth battalion of the Sinha Regiment (Sri Lanka Army News Report, July 13, 2001). It is argued the failure was due to commanding capabilities of Maj Sanath Karunaratne, and operation Operation Balavegaya, led Generals Denzil Kobbekaduwe and Vijaya Wimalaratne, which established a beach-head at Vettalaikerny on the east coast enabling reinforcements to the besieged camp⁹. It should also be noted with respect to the purported tenacity of the Elephant pass troops that Corporal Gamini Kularatne was awarded the inaugural Parama Weera Vibhushanaya – the nations highest gallantry award¹⁰. "We were surrounded and there were very few options available to us, one of which was to drop a grenade straight into the armour plated bulldozers that were advancing despite our best efforts. Having said that it was not an order that could have been given to a soldier considering the suicidal nature of the mission," Maj Gen Karunaratne (personal communication, Col Karunaratne, 1996) said explaining Cpl Kularatne's actions.

⁸ Tamilnet reports Black Tiger units had also been deployed to destroy artillery positions during the battle for Elephant pass, the claim has not been validated by the LTTE's official literature.

⁹ Following the repulsed attack the Elephant pass military complex was extended to include a number of satellite camps including Vettalaikerny, Kattaikadu and Pullaveli.

¹⁰ Parama Weera Vibhushanay is similar to India's *Param Vir Chakra*, the British Victoria Cross, and the US Medal of Honor.

Journalist DBS Jeyaraj (May 13 - 26, 2000) reported that by its own admission the LTTE had lost 573¹¹ cadres more than 1,500 others were injured¹². It was the most significant military loss in the history of the war. However the Tiger leader was reluctant to accept a 'total loss' arguing "a massive force of eight thousand troops was deployed for the rescue operation. And in the battle that ensued the army has suffered heavy casualties, and it has taken nearly twenty four days for the army to advance some five kilometres. I don't think this can be characterised as a great military victory. In this war at Elephant Pass we have demonstrated that we can face a conventional army face to face, and this has shown a new phase in our development" the Tiger leader told a BBC reporter (Pirabaharan, September 1, 1991). Quoting a 'state owned English Daily' columnist Dharmeratnam Sivaram (July 31, 1991) wrote "Sri Lanka is a nation with two armies"¹³.

The LTTE initiated military operation on the Elephant pass garrison is not only significant as a recognition of the LTTE's assertion of quasi statehood, but it is also be identified as a significant landmark in the strengthening of the LTTE's martyr ideology – a vital ideological need in the faced of increased Tiger casualty numbers. In this context Peter Schalk (1997) notes prior to Anaiyiravu (Elephant pass) the dead cadre were handed over to their families for kinship-based and religion-specific rituals ending in cremation or burial.

Therefore it could be argued that the mass casualties of the Elephant Pass may have prompted the LTTE to expeditiously institutionalise its fledgling martyr consciousness, through the establishment of martyr cemeteries and reiteration of the need for 'great sacrifice' through an annual speech by the Tiger leader who is not only the 'President and Prime Ministry of Eelam but arguably its 'spiritual leader'¹⁴. However it should be noted that the move to institutionalise the martyr concept is not limited to these two events, and should be more accurately viewed as the culmination of a two year process which commenced with inception of an embryonic martyr day celebration in 1989.

Martyrs

While the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) deployed in Sri Lanka (July 1987 – March 1990) were far from victorious, the deployment of an estimated 132,000 Indian troops had taken a toll on the LTTE resulting in the loss of 711 cadre in two-and-a-half years, compared to 632 in more than four years of combat with the Sri Lankan forces. Thus the tiger cadre had taken a significant toll since the death of the first tiger casualty – Lt Shankar, on November 27, 1982¹⁵. However their losses had failed to grant independence and it had become glaringly obvious the Tiger casualties of Elephant Pass would be the first among many in a protracted conflict – the need for an institutionalised martyr culture that could give meaning to their loss.

Jeyaraj (November 27- December 2, 2005) claims, that seven years after Shankar's death around 600 cadre gathered in the jungles of Nithikaikulam in the Mullaitheevu district to commemorate the LTTE's first Maaveerar Naal (Great heroes day). The event is now marked by elaborate celebrations held across all parts of Tiger controlled Eelam during the last week of November every year.

¹¹ 123 women fighters were killed according to Adele Ann Balasingham

¹² According to Major General Sarath Munasinghe, the Army spokesman at the time, 202 soldiers were killed defending EPS (Munasinghe, 2000, pp 115-6).

¹³ Subsequent battle field engagements resulted in the inevitable rise in casualty numbers – from 1343 in mid-1989 to a staggering 16,591 by October 20, 2000; and 17,903 by October 31, 2005.

¹⁴ The word spiritual leader is not used in the widely accepted context denoting traditional religious affiliation.

¹⁵ Suresh Sathianathan alias Shankar of Kamparmalai in Vadamaratchi, was wounded by the Sri Lankan army, when government troops surrounded a tiger warehouse. Shankar was subsequently taken to Tamil Nadu, a gruelling week long journey by boat through the navy patrolled Palk Strait, but dies on Tiger Leader Pirabakaran's lap on November 27, 1982. the LTTE strength at the time was between 25-30 activists (Jeyaraj, November 27, 2005; Eelamweb.com, 1995-2005).

It should be noted that the celebration far exceeds the meagre limitations of a mere remembrance day, and fulfil a crucial ideological role in forging the LTTE's secular nationalist 'theology'. Swedish anthropologist and expert on LTTE martyr culture Peter Schalk argues "Tamil politicians have used religious-Zionistic-terms to describe the commitment to the creation of a Tamil nation. This use of religious terms is, of course, not uncommon in a global perspective. Politicians have often talked about "sacrifices" to be made for the nation. These religious terms should then not be squeezed too much; they are part of a political rhetoric. In the case of the LTTE, however, we find a whole set of technical religious terms, a kind of repertoire that has been created after systematic search by members of the Office of Great Heroes of the LTTE. There is actually a special office in a house in Yalppanam dedicated to the task of producing hero symbolism and concepts. These are part of building up an ideological resistance and mobilisation - alongside the building up of a military resistance..... The LTTE provides a vision of *cutantiram*, "independence", of a projected state known as Tamililam, and that *cutantiram* is a "holy" aim, the Zion of the LTTE. That vision is the very centre of the LTTE as a political movement with religious aspirations." (Schalk, 1997).

"*Tamillam* does not yet exist, but it already has a national flag, the tiger flag; it has not yet formalised a national anthem, but there is one tiger song that contains in its first line the most frequent slogan of the Tigers printed on posters and in almost all publications of the Tigers. It expresses "the holy aim". That is the "identity" of the LTTE, its ultimate concern for its ultimate aim: *Pulikalin takam, Tamililattayakam!*
The task (or thirst) of the Tigers (is to achieve) Motherland Tamililam," (Schalk, 1997).

With respect to the religious undertones of the martyr culture it should be noted that all Tiger cadre killed after Elephant pass, are buried not cremated as it is customary for most Hindus. The LTTE has therefore successfully broken the brahminical hold on Tamil society and has imposed secular doctrine in its place, there by removing the traditional socio-political elite and the landed gentry of Eelam¹⁶. Thus veneration of the martyr has replaced the pantheon of Hindu gods of traditional religion in all secular functions orchestrated by the LTTE. Parents of the martyred cadre are given prominence in all tiger functions, and many events commence with the lighting of oil lamps to honour the martyrs. Contrary to Hindu tradition where the cemetery was located on the town's edge, with its centre reserved for more important structures such as temples, the LTTE has revolutionised traditional thought by placing their martyr cemeteries in central locations (personal communications with Naresh Master, LTTE media spokesman in Killinochchi, 2006). Therefore as Prof Schalk points out "life in Yalppanam (Jaffna) in space and time is a celebration of martyrs. They are said to be the cornerstones of Tamillam," (1997).

Thus martyrs are to be revered, and martyrdom is to be aspired by every Tiger cadre. Every Tiger cadre is therefore a potential martyr, and is ready not only to sacrifice their lives for Eelam but also take their own life if captured by the enemy – the Sri Lankan forces. In this respect it should be noted that the elaborate investiture of new cadre include the presentation of cyanide capsules which they openly wear around their neck as an aid to suicide¹⁷. These cadre however should not be confused with suicide cadre – the elite Black tigers who are trained deliberately for suicide missions.

In this context it should be noted that Schalk's (March 1997) studies reveal have clearly revealed this vital 'quasi religious' aspect of the LTTE ideology. He argues the doctrinal nature of the ideology has successfully created a mindset that justifies killing and being killed for a greater cause, where the

¹⁶ The vellala-farmers form the pinnacle of the Tamil caste system, and Prabhakaran a karayar-fisherman has successfully broken this social order and criminalised caste discrimination.

¹⁷ Schalk argued that according to Yoki [sic, it could be argued the person referred to is Yogarathnam Yogi] a leading LTTE fighter and administrator, Tiger leader Prabhakaran had first suggested the use of cyanide. "The glass vials are made in Germany. The cyanide is bought separately, in India, poured into the vial and closed by the LTTE. After about three months the poison discolours due to moisture and light, and has to be replaced." "The 'vial with cyanide' (kuppi) is regarded as a friend especially by woman fighters facing rape before a cruel execution by the enemy. The agony of dying is expressed in the martyrologies, especially for those who witnessed others dying in a ditch by slowly bleeding to death or through convulsions. It is usually the surviving comrade that writes an epitaph," (Schalk, March 1997).

individual is able to see beyond the immediate personal loss. He also argues that while the tiger leader is credited with formulating a significant component of the LTTE martyr ideology tailored to the special and temporal needs of contemporary Eelam, its core doctrine has been borrowed from “six main ideological sources”.

- i. The revival of a sacrificial language as expressed in the term arppanippu, meaning ‘dedication (of man to god)’.
- ii. The Tamil bhakti tradition from the Gita providing concepts of dedication and ascetism and a cosmic perspective in which the battle for independence takes place.
- iii. A Christian element expressed in the concept of a catci, ‘witness’, ‘martyr’.
- iv. A Subhasism, expressed in the justification of armed struggle and in the concept of balidan, ‘gift (of life) as sacrifice’.
- v. A Dravidian nationalism providing martial concepts to the LTTE¹⁸ and the concept of a linguistic Tamil nation-state.
- vi. The martial feminism of the female Tamil fighters adapted to Tamil male concepts of female behaviour adopted by the female Tamil fighters (Schalk, 1992 and 1994)¹⁹.

However Schalk (March 1997) inaccurately assumes the LTTE to be devoid of Marxist ideology introduced principally by its theologian Anton Blalasingham in the 1980’s. The inaccuracy of the supposition is glaringly obvious in the language used in the Tiger leader’s annual speeches. He argues freedom struggles are a result of “human passion for freedom” suggesting the oppressed “were struggling to emancipate themselves from the structures of oppression.” Similarly Prabhakaran is also aware of oppression with in this own community, the Northern Tamils and argues against inequality through social suppression suggesting it leads to “contradictions ...in human relationships in the form of caste, class and race”.

The Black Tigers

The LTTE deaths in the two decade long confrontation included a small but significant number of ‘black tiger’ suicide cadre.²⁰ And by 1991 suicide attacks which had been suspended during the IPKF deployment had once again emerged as a tactical weapon against the government troops²¹.

¹⁸ “Pirapakaran refers explicitly to writers within the Dravidian movement, for example Prabhakaran’s ‘How I became a freedom fighter’, Tamil Times 15th July. 1994: 18. For more on the Dravidian influence see Schalk (1996). For a comparison between the Dravidian movement in India and Lanka see D. HellmannRajanayagam (1988: 38-66)” (Schalk, 1997).

¹⁹ The first LTTE female cadre second lieutenant Malati was killed in a confrontation with the IPKF on October 10, 1987 in Kopay (Balasingham - Adele, 1990). She was killed on the first day of Operation Pawan – the Indian offensive against the LTTE (Balasingham - Adele, 1993)

Adele Balasingham (1993) suggest female cadre had been trained in Tamil Nadu as early as 1984 with the view of deploying them in combat “In 1984 the potential women fighters were assembled in Tamil Nadu, India and on the 18-8-1985 in the newly established military camp set up in the jungles the young women of Tamil Eelam created history. Never before in the history of the Tamil nation have women become active military participants”. She also claims LTTE female cadre had first engaged government troops on October 12, 1986 when soldiers from the Thallady army camp came under tiger fire in the Adampan area in Mannar. The female cadre were at the time under the command of Mannar regional commander Lt.Col. Victor – he was killed in the attack. The second intake of female cadre were trained at camp setup in Jaffna on July 1, 1987. In February 1990 Adele Balasingham (1990) wrote 24 female cadre had died in combat. In contrast the Sri Lankan armed forces lost its first female combatant nine years later, H. M. Rupawathi on August 9, 1996. She was killed while guarding a bunker at Keerimalai, in KKS (Bandara, August 18, 1996). Still women are not actively deployed in combat duty.

²⁰ Tigers opt the term Black tiger to make the distinction as all tiger cadre carry a cyanide capsule and are prepared to commit suicide if captured.

²¹ It has been argued that the Tigers use suicide cadre as a response to the government’s aerial bombing, and that they has suspended suicide attacks during the IPKF deployment as the Indian had not employed an aerial assaults.

Tiger suicide attacks pioneered by Vallipuram Vasanthan alias Capt Millar, who drove an explosives laden vehicle in to the Sri Lanka army garrison at Nelliady Madhya Maha Vidyalayam in the Jaffna peninsula on July 5, 1987, would later become the most lethal weapon in the tiger arsenal. According to LTTE sources 273 Black Tigers have died between July 5, 1987-2005, which includes 194 Black Sea Tigers – 56 of them women. Of the 79 remaining black tiger cadre killed during the nineteen year period 18 have been female suicide cadre (Tamilnet.com, July 5, 2006). In 2003 the LTTE released a 96 page publication titled Sooriya Puthalvargal, a document which outlines profiles of 240 Black Tigers in chronological order (Sri Kantha, June 22, 2004). However a number of alleged Black Tigers are conspicuously absent in the Sooriya Puthalvargal.

While the document records the death of Pushpakala Thuraisingham alias Cpt Angayarkani of Velanai, Kayts on August 10, 1994 as the first female Black Tiger, there is no mention of Rajive Gandhi's assassin on May 21, 1991 Thenmuli Rajaratnam (Gunaratna, February, 2000)²² alias Dhanu. In this context it should be noted the LTTE connection in the Gandhi assassination has been well documented by the Indian Judiciary. These include the trial court declaration of Tiger leader Prabhakaran, LTTE intelligence leader Pottu Amman, alias Shanmuganathan Sivasankaran and women's intelligence deputy chief Akila as 'proclaimed offenders' on May 29, 1994 (Express India News Service, January 29 1998); Judge V. Navaneethan's verdict²³ on January 28, 1998 where he says "Rajiv Gandhi ... was assassinated in pursuance of a diabolic plot, carefully conceived by a foreign terrorist organisation, the LTTE" (Baweja and Thomas, May 24, 1999); and India's formal request from the Sri Lankan government to extradite Prabhakaran on June 3, 1994 (Press Trust of India, January 29, 1998). However the LTTE has denied its involvement in the Gandhi killing (David, April 14, 2002)²⁴.

Similarly the alleged LTTE suicide assassinations of President Ranasinghe Premadasa on May 1, 1993; former cabinet minister and UNP Presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake on October 24, 1994; moderate Tamil MP Neelan Thiruchelvan on July 29, 1999; cabinet minister CV Goonaratne on June 7, 2000; and Sri Lankan navy commander Clancy Fernando on November 16, 1992; and the abortive assassinations attempt on President Chandrika Kumaratunga on December 18, 1999 are also absent from the LTTE chronology. Similarly suicide bombings such as the attack on the Central Bank in Colombo which killed 91 on January 31, 1996; and the attack on the Temple of the Tooth on January 25, 1998 are also not recorded in Sooriya Puthalvargal.

The statistical discrepancy between the 240 Black tigers cited in the Sooriya Puthalvargal and the 273 Black Tiger deaths reported during the November 2005 martyr celebration could be construed as an admission of a further 33 suicide attacks between 2003-2005, despite Tiger denials of conducting suicide operations during the peace process. It could also be argued the 273 may in fact be the more accurate number, which includes attacks not cited in the Sooriya Puthalvargal. This theory could be

²² The Sri Lankan Ministry of defence alleges her name to was Gayatri alias Anbu, alias Kalaivani... "the daughter of A Rajaratnam, a former government clerical servant who, along with K Sivananandasundram, another clerk, had been members of the Ilankai Thamil Arasu Kadchi, organized as the Puli Padai (Tigers Army), some time in 1966, to oppose the Sinhalese government" (Ministry of Defence, Sri Lanka, July 11, 2006).

²³ All 26 accused are sentenced to death : Nalini, Sudhendrarajah, Murugan, Shankar, Vijayanandan, Sivaruban, Kanagasabapathy, Athirai, Robert Pyas, Jayakumar, Shanthi, Vijayan, Selvalakshmi, Bhaskaran, Shanmuga Vadivelu, Ravichandran, Suseendran, Perarivalan, Irumborai, Bhagyanathan, Padma, Subha Sundaram, Dhanasekaran, Rangan, Vicky and Ranganathan (Express India News Service, January 29 1998). However the "judge passed no sentence for three Sri Lankan rebels leaders tried in absentia. The rebels are at large in neighboring Sri Lankan...." (New York Times, January 28, 1998)

²⁴ Excerpts of the press conference held at the Political School of the LTTE in Kilinochchi on April 10, 2002, noted by .Sunday Times news editor Anthony David:

Q: You have been indicted in the Gandhi assassination ?

A: This case is going on. Four persons have been convicted. They are seeking amnesty at the moment. We do not want to make any comments at this moment.

Q: Are you denying involvement in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination?

A: (Mr. Balasingham). I know this is a sensitive issue, not only for you but for us as well. You are raising an issue that happened 10 years ago. We want to have friendly relations with India.

Q: What have you to say about the charges ?

A: This is a "tragic incident." that has taken place ten years back. We cannot comment on the issue.

Q: The Rajiv Gandhi assassination...

A: (Dr. Balasingham) You are trying to dominate the press conference. You have come here when the peace process is on. You are talking of an old incident. Do not dig into the past.

further supported by a Tamilnet report which introduces an even more secretive and elite suicide cadre referred to as 'champion Black Tigers' – presumably those involved in suicide attacks with greater difficulty²⁵ (Tamilnet.com, July 5, 2006).

The Martyr day address and the Tiger narratives: a semiotic analysis.

Methodology:

While it is widely believed the tradition of a martyr day speech was inaugurated in 1991, only speeches from 1992 are publicly available. Therefore the widely available speeches from 1992-2006 were subjected to two quantitative and qualitative analytical treatments:

- i. the identification of key narratives in three randomly selected speeches, using concept maps
- ii. textual analysis for key words, with the quantitative analysis software program VBPro.

Considering the complexity of the multi-layered narrative, selected speeches were broken into concept threads, and formed in to concept maps using the Cmaps software tool. In this context IHMC CmapTools version 4.07 designed to generate a Knowledge Model composed of concept maps, developed by the Florida University's Institute for Human & Machine Cognition was able to provide a revolutionary analytical platform that was unavailable through traditional semiotic analysis techniques. The research methodology is based on a study conducted by Mark Miller and Bonnie Riechert (1994) of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The research findings presented to the Theory and Methodology Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Annual Meeting, suggest concept maps could be successfully used in analysing large texts in mass communication research. they argue the applicability of "concept mapping, a set of computerized multidimensional scaling techniques for finding and describing themes or categories of content in large bodies of text". They suggest that since concept mapping has been designed to identify important issues and indicate their relationship to one another, the logic system would be a vital tool as a methodology in addressing complex and interrelated narratives in large bodies of text. The technique has also been successfully replicated in a number of other media research projects (Dyer, 1994; Miller and Andsager, 1997; Miller et.al., 1998; Miller and Denham, 1994; and Miller and Riechert, 2000). Miller and Riechert (1994).

Thimpu declaration: the Eelamist base argument

On the final day of the Thimpu talks, between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Eelamist groups including the EPRLF, EROS, PLOT, LTTE, TELO and TULF, the Tamil delegation presented four cardinal principles which they argued should form the basis for any meaningful negotiations. The principles widely known as the Thimpu declaration suggested the;

- i. recognition of the Tamils of Sri Lanka as a nation.
- ii. recognition of the existence of an identified homeland for the Tamils in Sri Lanka.
- iii. recognition of the right of self determination of the Tamil nation.

²⁵ Including attacks on civilian targets outside of Eelam, not officially acknowledged by the Tigers.

- iv. recognition of the right to citizenship and the fundamental rights of all Tamils who look upon the island as their country.

While four principles are outlined in the declaration, the first three have been repeatedly used by the Eelamist lobby as the basis for their 'separatist'²⁶ argument. The tiger leader's speeches in this respect are no different, and present an implicit argument that suggest the undeniable existence of Eelam. In this context it should be noted that the Tiger leaders' speeches make reference to Thimpu by name, on three separate occasions in 1997, 2002 and 2005:

[1997] it is because we sought a political settlement through peaceful means that we participated in several political talks from thimpu to Jaffna .

[1997] from the time of the thimpu talks we have been emphasising that the recognition of the Tamil homeland , Tamil nationhood and the Tamil right to self - determination should be the basis for any negotiated political settlement .

[1997] it is questionable whether the sinhala political parties will agree for a political settlement on the basis of thimpu principles when they are not even prepared to recognise the Tamils right to a homeland .

[2002] we have participated in peace negotiations at different places , at different times in different historical circumstances i.e in thimpu , in delhi , in colombo , in Jaffna and now in thailand .

[2002] we have been insisting on these fundamentals (*thimpu declaration*) from thimpu to thailand .

[2005] from the thimpu talks , we have participated in several peace negotiations , at different times , at different places .

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Tags, Search Terms and Frequency: *thimpu* : 6
Total found, capitals ignored.....: 6

Total Sentences.....: 1264
Number containing search terms : 6
Percent containing search terms: 0.47

Total Paragraphs.....: 39
Number containing search terms : 3
Percent containing search terms: 7.69

Total Cases.....: 1
Number containing search terms : 0
Percent containing search terms: 0.00

Prabhakaran's reference to the Thimpu principles clearly outline the basis of the LTTE's political campaign and the unequivocal position of the Eelamist lobby with respect to the fundamental recognitions outlined in the declaration. The reference to the Thimpu principles in the Tiger leader speech are also not limited to the nominal citing of the word Thimpu, and extend to a wider range of words that encompass the declaration. These include 'Tamil nation', 'homeland' and self-determination'. A textual analysis of these key words present the following data;

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:
Tamil nation : 26
homeland : 49
self determination : 1
self - determination : 29
citizenship : 0

²⁶ The word 'separatist' is not used in its frequent pejorative context, but to suggest a campaign for official separation from the Socialist Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka.

Total found, capitals ignored.....: 105

Total Sentences.....: 1263
 Number containing search terms : 99
 Percent containing search terms: 7.84

Total Paragraphs.....: 39
 Number containing search terms : 14
 Percent containing search terms: 35.90

Interestingly, the speeches contain no reference to citizenship, an issue central to the Sri Lankan plantation workers who were of Indian Tamil origin. Brought in to the island as indentured labour, and disenfranchised through citizenship acts of the 1940's supported by both the Sinhala and Tamil elite, citizenship had become the central issue of the estate Tamil population, thus its inclusion as the fourth point in the Thimpu agreement.

However the plantation Tamils counted by the LTTE and some of other Eelamist groups in the wider population statistics of Tamils in the island, but rarely represented by these Jaffna centric political and activist groups, continued to be led by Ceylon Workers Congress's Saumyamurthi Thondaman who had carved a niche in JR Jayawardena's cabinet as a 'coalition member'. Thondaman continued to hedge his bets when it came to supporting Eelam²⁷, and the LTTE was never successful in quashing the political leadership of the estate Tamils as it had done with the 'native Sri Lankan' Tamils, through the virtual annihilation of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF).

While the disenfranchisement bills of the 1940 continue to be cited by the Eelamist lobby with reference to government oppression of Tamils, it may also be argued that the continued inclusion of the estate Tamils in the Eelam debate could undermine the argument of a traditional homeland, due to the obvious immigrant status of the Indian Tamil estate workers.

Meanwhile the analysis also show the LTTE political ideology exemplified through the speeches promote the notion of two nations – Sinhala and Tamil, a crucial argument for the success of Eelam. Therefore a text analysis reveals the frequency of the two words are as follows;

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:
 Sinhala nation : 34
 Tamil nation : 64
 Total found, capitals ignored.....: 98

Total Sentences.....: 2526
 Number containing search terms : 94
 Percent containing search terms: 3.72

Total Paragraphs.....: 39
 Number containing search terms : 16
 Percent containing search terms: 41.03

The Tiger leader also makes a clear distinction between the words nation and state, here the former is based on a principle of collective identity and the latter the official recognition of government. Thus the speeches refer to the 'Sinhala state' which is used synonymously with 'Sri Lanka state', and despite its status of quasi nationhood, reserve the terms 'Tamil state' and 'state of Eelam' only as a status to be reached through the struggle – in the context of "achieving the objective of an independent Tamil state". Therefore a text analysis shows the following statistics;

²⁷ However it should be noted that having gained citizenship through political means, largely due to the Ministers relationship with the government, subsequent leader of the estate workers including Ceylon Workers Congress's Arumugan Thondaman and Upcountry Peoples Front's (formed in 1989) Periyasamy Chandrasekaran have continued its ambivalent political stance. Chandrasekaran popular among the younger generation of disgruntled voters, is believed to have shown indirect support to the LTTE (

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:

sinhala state : 13
Sri Lanka state : 4
state of Sri Lanka : 0
Tamil state : 4
eelam state : 0
state of eelam : 0
Tamil eelam state : 0
state of Tamil eelam : 2
Total found, capitals ignored.....: 23

Total Sentences.....: 5052
Number containing search terms : 23
Percent containing search terms: 0.46

Total Paragraphs.....: 39
Number containing search terms : 8
Percent containing search terms: 20.51

Through the synonymy of the word ‘Sri Lanka state’ and ‘Sinhala state,’ the Tiger leader’s political rhetoric creates the subtextual argument of the Tamils as a nation of stateless people – outcasts of Sri Lanka, ignored by the Colombo regime.

The dichotomic representation of Sinhalaness and Tamilness in the speeches and the absence of any significant reference to Sri Lankaness, could also be argued as an attempt to negate any suggestion of Sri Lanka being a multi-ethnic society where all people are primarily considered Sri Lankan.

Two nations: aggressors and victims.

Having established the base rhetoric of a Tamil nation and traditional homeland, the Tiger leader’s speeches argue the existence of what is referred to as a ‘Tamil national question’.

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:

Tamil national question : 20
Total found, capitals ignored.....: 20

Total Sentences.....: 1265
Number containing search terms : 20
Percent containing search terms: 1.58

Total Paragraphs.....: 40
Number containing search terms : 12
Percent containing search terms: 30.00

Based on the available text it could be argued the ‘Tamil national question’ in short is a “historical product of... racist oppression” (1998), which has now “assumed the character of a civil war, is (still) essentially a political issue” (2001). It is the denial of the core Thimpu principle by the Sinhala government (2002), and argues that “any political framework that fails to recognise the historically constituted homeland of the Tamils cannot be a basis for a solution to the Tamil national question, (1997). The basic outline of the Tamil national question therefore suggests the oppression of the island nation’s Tamil minority by the Sinhala majority, thus creating a dichotomic ‘us and them’ narrative between the Sinhala and Tamil people..

In this context it should be noted that the word *Sinhala* has been used 189, and *Sinhalese* 14, in the fifteen speeches available to date, often associated with pejorative words such as *racist*, *chauvinistic*

and hegemonic. The textual analysis of the two words *Sinhala* and *Sinhalese* and its common semiotic associations are as follows;

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:
sinhala : 189
Sinhala - Buddhist chauvinis* : 16
Sinhala - Buddhist hegemon* : 4
Sinhala Buddhist chauvinis* : 3
Sinhala chauvinist* : 16
Chauvinistic Sinhala : 1
Sinhala chauvinist state : 1
sinhala race : 1
Sinhala racis* : 9
sinhala buddhist racis* : 2
Sinhala - Buddhist racis* : 3
Sinhala nation : 32
Sinhalanation : 0
sinhala state : 13
Sinhala gov* : 6
Sinhala rul* : 4
sinhala regime : 1
sinhala leadership : 1
sinhala majority : 2
Sinhala arm* : 7
sinhala miliatry : 0
Sinhala people : 10
Sinhala masses : 1
sinhala youth : 1
Sinhala political : 26
Sinhala politicians : 5
Sinhalese : 14
Sinhala south : 2
sinhala society : 1
Sinhala settlements : 1
Sinhala colonisers : 1
Sinhala aggressive army : 1
sinhala aggressors : 1
Total found, capitals ignored.....: 375

Total Sentences.....: 15156
Number containing search terms : 189
Percent containing search terms: 1.25

Total Paragraphs.....: 39
Number containing search terms : 20
Percent containing search terms: 51.28

Both the sentence based semiotic analysis of the text through VBPro, and visual analysis of concept associations generated through CMaps, suggest a common negative representation of the '*Sinhala nation*'.

".....there has been no change in the hegemonic attitude of the Sinhala - Buddhist chauvinism to dominate and rule over the Tamil nation by armed might...; as long as the Sinhala nation is buried in the mud of racist politics , we cannot expect a fair and reasonable solution from the Sinhalese ruling class...; our cry for justice and fair play has not touched the conscience of the Sinhala nation," (1992). "... the Sinhala army does not appear to like finding a solution to the problem of the Tamils through peaceful means...; this racist war of Sinhala chauvinism has a long history...; *our enemy is heartless and committed to war and violence*," (1994). "...Sinhala military devils may hoist victory flags in depopulated Jaffna...reduced to rubble...; the Sinhala chauvinistic gangs in the south may light

crackers in jubilation assuming that they have captured the kingdom of Jaffna,” (1995). “our historical enemy , Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism,has been conducting a genocidal war against the Tamil nation...; having mobilised the full military might of the Sinhala nation , it has occupied the historical lands of the Tamils in the north...; we have grave doubts whether the forces of Sinhala - Buddhist chauvinism will allow such a peaceful life to the Tamil people...; chauvinistic Sinhala governments committed to repression and military solutions will not resolve the Tamil national problem by peaceful means...; for years the forces of Sinhala - Buddhist chauvinism believed in and practised a policy of military domination and oppression...; we cannot gain our rights by pleading with the Sinhala rulers,” (1996).

In negative association continues in more resent speeches which include comments such as “... the Sinhala nation continues to be entrapped in the mahavamsa mindset , in that mythical ideology...; the Sinhalese people are still caught up in the legendary fiction that the island of Sri Lanka is a divine gift to Theravada Buddhism , a holy land entitled to the Sinhala race...; the Sinhala nation has not redeemed itself from this mythological idea that is buried deep and has become fossilised in their collective unconscious...; it is because of this ideological blindness the Sinhalese people and their political and religious leaders are unable to grasp the authentic history of the island and the social realities prevailing here...; it is because of the refusal by the Sinhala nation to perceive the existential reality of the Tamils and their political aspirations the Tamil national question persists as an unresolved complex issue...,” (2005).

In contrast a textual analysis of the for the word ‘*Tamil*’ produce the following results;

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:
 Tamil : 330
 Tamil nation* : 64
 Tamil eelam : 16
 Tamil political parties : 1
 Tamil armed groups : 1
 Tamil people : 51
 Tamil state : 6
 Tamil ethnic problem : 1
 Tamil freedom : 4
 Tamil homeland : 20
 Tamil national identity : 1
 Tamil right to self-determination : 0
 Tamil conflict : 4
 Total found, capitals ignored.....: 499

Total Sentences.....: 5056
 Number containing search terms : 282
 Percent containing search terms: 5.58

Total Paragraphs.....: 39
 Number containing search terms : 23
 Percent containing search terms: 58.97

Further more, sentence based semiotic analysis of the text through VBPro, and visual analysis of concept associations generated through CMaps, suggest two key categories of words associated with the ‘*Tamil nation*’, those that generate a positive inference and those that suggest the victim status and subjugation of the Tamils. The argument is simple – the Tamils are *peaceful* people who wish to live in peace in their traditional homeland. However they are subjugated, colonised, and oppressed by the Sinhala nation, from which the Tamils want *freedom*, and their *right* to live in peace in their homeland. A key word search of the text of sentences containing the word Tamil, for positive word associations with the words and derivations of peace, free, right(s), emancipation and dignity reveal the following results.

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:

peace& : 0
free* : 80
right* : 74
dignity : 10
emancipat* : 6

Total found, capitals ignored.....: 170

Total Sentences.....: 5060

Number containing search terms : 139

Percent containing search terms: 2.75

Total Paragraphs.....: 40

Number containing search terms : 22

Percent containing search terms: 55.00

Similarly a word such for words such as oppression, tyranny and aggression – words that suggest violent imposition of state will on the Tamils resulting in victim-hood are also common in the text. In 1998 the Tiger leader said “the sinhala nation is engaged in war of aggression to occupy tamils land and to subjugate the tamil people.” A text analysis presents the following quantitative information;

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:

oppress* : 55
tyrann* : 7
aggress* : 22

Total found, capitals ignored.....: 84

Total Sentences.....: 3795

Number containing search terms : 80

Percent containing search terms: 2.11

Total Paragraphs.....: 40

Number containing search terms : 21

Percent containing search terms: 52.50

However the word associations with relation to the word *Tamil*, require a more complex qualitative analysis beyond the scope of quantitative tools provided in VBPro. it should also be noted that the association of positive words with the word *Tamil*, forms only part of semiotic analysis of this complex relationship between the words and meaning associated with the two words Tamil and Sinhala. As such a more complete study of the relationship should also involve a simultaneous analysis of the association of preparative words with the word *Sinhala*.

As such all sentences containing the word *Tamil*, isolated from the main body of text which contain all available text of the speeches from 1991-2005, and analysed for dicotomic textual references with respect to the opposing position of the ‘*Tamil*’ and ‘*Sinhala*’ nations. Once again the argument is clear - – the Tamils are peace fulpeople who wish to live with dignity and freedom in their own land, which the chauvinistic Sinhala hegemony continues to deny them.

“...freedom is a noble ideal...; it is freedom which gives meaning and wholeness to life...; our enemy , having firmly closed down the doors of peace , has embarked on a course of escalating the war...; our freedom struggle continues for more than forty years amidst tensions , turmoils and crises...; in actual fact , spiritually , we love peace...; we want a permanent , stable and honourable peace.” (1992).“... our people are eligible for the right to self determination...; they have the right to statehood...; underinternational law this right cannot be denied,” (1993).“ when the chandrika government extended its hand for peace we grasped it with friendship...; the sinhala army does not appear to like finding a solution to the problem of the Tamils through peaceful means...; we stand not as an obstacle on the path for peace...; we have not closed the doors of peace...; we are prepared for peace...; our goal is that we

should live with honour peace , safety and freedom in our home soil , our own soil which historically belongs to us,” (1994)

The theme continues in more resent speeches which argue political instability and hardline attitudes in the south have bared the doors of peace. “... the power struggle between the two leaders (Kumarathunge and Wickremasighe) has resulted in the de - stabilisation of the state and the peace process has come to a standstill...; because of this sudden development in the south , the conditions of peace are endangered...; we are deeply committed to the peace process...; our people have not yet experienced total peace and conditions of normal life...; yet there is total peace and normalcy in the sinhala nation...; having renounced violence , we have been making every effort through non - violent means to promote peace and reconciliation...; but if the sinhala chauvinistic ruling elites continue to deny the rights of our people and oppose reconciliation and if the conditions of oppression continue , we have no alternative other than to secede and form an independent state invoking the right to self - determination of our people,” (2003). “ since she (President Kumarathunge) has aligned herself with political parties drenched in anti - Tamil racism , militarism and sinhala - buddhist hegemonism , the president cannot advance the peace process based on a coherent , consistent strategy and policy...; we cannot continue to live in the darkness of political uncertainty , without freedom , without emancipation , without any prospects for the future ,” (2004).

“... they (the Sinhala nation) are unable to comprehend and accept the very existence of a historically constituted nation of Tamil people living in their traditional homeland in north - eastern Sri Lanka , entitled to fundamental political rights and freedoms,” (2005) .

Therefore the LTTE leaders speech attempts to brake down the notion of a sovereign state of Sri Lanka. The Tiger leader agues “Jaffna (the heart of the Tamil homeland) does not belong to the Sinhala nation. Jaffna belongs to the people of Jaffna. Sovereignty is not a divine right of a state. Sovereignty derives from the people; it is an inalienable right of a people. It is the people of Jaffna who has sovereign right over the Jaffna peninsula” (2000).

True representatives of the Tamil people:

Having established there the Thimpu fundamentals, and the existence of ‘Tamil national question’ in the form of Sinhala aggression, then the LTTE presents itself as the liberators of the Tamil people of ‘eelam’ from Sinhala subjugation. A text analysis shows the following results;

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:
freedom movement : 8
liberation movement : 13
Total found, capitals ignored.....: 21

Total Sentences.....: 2530
Number containing search terms : 21
Percent containing search terms: 0.83

Total Paragraphs.....: 40
Number containing search terms : 9

Through a series of strategic manoeuvres which included the military defeat of other Eelamist militant groups and the virtual destruction of the TULF – Sri Lanka’s main Tamil political party, the LTTE has arguably become the ‘sole representatives of the Eelam Tamils.

The LTTE has fought hard for its position, and is accused of committing a number of assassinations to gain its position. These include the Tamil politicians A. Thiagarajah MP for Vaddukoddai on May 25, 1981; Manipay MP V.Dharmalingham and Kopay MP K.Alalasundaram on September 03, 1985; TULF leader Appapillai Amirthalingham and Jaffna MP Vettivelu Yogeswaran on July 13, 1989, Batticaloa MP Sam Thambimuthu on May 7, 1990; Jaffna MP K.Yogasangari on June 19, 1990;

Pottuvil MP M. Kanagaratnam on July 15, 1990; Vavuniya MP Karavai Kandasamy on December 31, 1994; Trincomalee MP A. Thangathurai on July 5, 1997; Vavuniya MP S. Shanmuganathan on July 15, 1998; TULF MP and architect of the Kumarathunge peace proposal Dr. Neelan Thiruchelvan on July 29, 1999; Batticaloa MPs Aslie Nimalan Soundaranayagam on November 7, 2000; Kingsley Rasanayagam on October 20, 2004 Chandra Nehru on February 07 2005; and Joseph Pararajasingham December 25 2005, who were arguably supportive of the a traditional homeland concept²⁸.

However the LTTE has been quick to condemn the killing of pro-Eelamist politicians such as Kumar Ponnambalam on January 5, 2000, by southern gunmen. In his 2005 martyr day speech the Tiger leader noted that “ a large number of people consisting of our senior cadres , important members , supporters , Tamil politicians , journalists and educationists who were sympathetic to our cause , have been cowardly murdered.”

Despite its ambiguous position with respect the killings of political rivals the LTTE continues to argue all others except for the LTTE have abandoned the Eelam cause and therefore no longer represent the Tamil people. In his 1993 martyr day speech the tiger leader argued “the Tamil political parties which obtained the mandate from our people for the establishment of an independent state and the Tamil armed groups who pledged to fight an armed struggle for political independence have already given up their cause and betrayed the Tamil people.”

In this context it should also be noted that the Tiger leaders speeches make significant reference to the Tamil people as ‘our people’ denoting the LTTE’s position as representatives, leaders and even custodians of the Tamil people and their political and socio-cultural future. A text analysis suggests;

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:
our people : 116
Total found, capitals ignored.....: 116

Total Sentences.....: 8492
Number containing search terms : 113
Percent containing search terms: 1.33

Total Paragraphs.....: 40
Number containing search terms : 22
Percent containing search terms: 55.00

In this context the textual reference to ‘our people’ could be divided into four fundamental narratives;

- i. the undeniable rights of the people.
- ii. the need for the people to understand the political reality of the “Tamil national question”
- iii. the betrayal of the people by other Tamil militant and political groups.
- iv. the sacrifice and martyrdom of the LTTE for the people.

With respect to the suggestions of martyrdom signifying true representation the tiger leader argued in an interview with BBC’S Aananthi Sooriyapiragasam “those Tamil groups are having discussions with the government, individually and collectively. We have no objection to that. But who are the authentic representatives of the Tamil people? Who are those who are shedding blood in waging a struggle for the Tamil people's rights? (1994).

²⁸ Sri Lankan foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar who was killed on August 13, 2005, though a Tamil by birth can not be included in this category as he had never supported the Eelam concept and belong to the Peoples Alliance government and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. Alfred Duaraiappah, MP and mayor of Jaffna killed on July 27, 1975 was also an SLFP member and was killed for his government position.

It should also be noted that the argument of 'true representation' itself presents an interesting *Petitio Principii* – circular reasoning, which suggest the the tigers fight for Tamil freedom, only the ture representatives of theTAmils would fight for Tamil freedom, ergo the Tigers are ture representatives. Therefore the Tiger political position is argued as the political quest of the Tamil people. “the tamil people are demanding none other than their inalienable rights,” (1998)....; “Tamil Eelam war is the liberation struggle of the oppressed Tamil people” (2000)....; “in other words , the Tamil people (which is synonymous with the LTTE) were compelled to take arms...” (2001).

In 1995 the Tiger leader said “this war is not , as the government claims, against the LTTE. This war is against the Tamil people, against the Tamil nation. It has been going on before the birth of the LTTE,” thus arguing the emergence of the LTTE as the representatives of the oppressed masses was a natural progression in a conflict that has been forced on the Tamil nation.

The pro-LTTE website eelamweb.com presents a n interesting quote that sums-up the relationship between the LTTE and the Tamil people as seen by the Tiger leader, who states “The liberation Tigers are not different from the people. The Liberation Tigers is a people movement. The people are the Tigers,” (www.eelamweb.com, 1995-2005).

Guilt transfer and spurious justification:

As the true representatives of the 'oppressed' Tamil people the LTTE then justifies its militant conflict through a series of narratives which rests the burden of the conflict on the 'Sinhala' government. “Our enemy , having firmly closed down the doors of peace...has imposed an unjust war on us,” the Tiger leader states (1992), subsequently arguing with respect to the Kumaratunge government's calls to lay down arms before commencing peace talks that “no liberation movement with self - respect could accept such humiliating conditions,” (1996) suggesting the Tigers has little choice but to continue the armed conflict until such time a peaceful resolution to the conflict is agreed upon.

The LTTE's argument of the war being trust upon them follows a pattern outlined by Maurice Tugwell (1987) when he suggested the twin phenomenon of *guilt transfer* and *spurious justification*.

Tugwell argues in *Guilt Transfer* the propaganda attempts to transfer the blame of violence on the incumbent regime, where even the terrorist violence is 'palmed off' to the regime as a consequence of their resistance. In the case of *Spurious Justification* Tugwell agues the propaganda attempts to justify the violence as result of the incumbent regime's action.

The LTTE suggest, as cited earlier, that the war has been unfairly thrust upon the Tamil people and the Tigers as their true representative have no real alternative but to retaliate. “we have impressed upon the enemy that this land of ours will not tolerate the incursions of an aggressor,” (1992). And with respect to the need for Eelam the Tiger leader argues “racism and racist oppression are the causative factors for rebellions and secessionist politics,” (2002). And in more resent time the speech states, “frustrated by years of alienation , oppression and ill - treatment as an unwanted people , the tamils have finally decided to exclude and boycott the sri lankan polity and its power system,” (2005).

Therefore the *Spurious Justification* of the conflict suggests the incursion of the Sinhala government and its army on the traditional homeland of the Tamils, and their attempts to oppress and subjugate Tamil civilians have forced the LTTE to take up arms, with reluctance. In 1992 the Tiger leader said, “today , the enemy's armed forces have come to our doorstep and are beating war drums. They are bent on devouring our land and to destroy us. He is prepared to shed any amount of blood in this genocidal war. In this most difficult and critical situation what can we do?”

“Our enemy is heartless and committed to war and violence. His objective is to destroy our homeland. We cannot expect justice from the magnanimity of his heart. What can we do in these circumstances? We have no alternative other than to continue our struggle, to continue to intensify our struggle. We are not warmongers who love violence. In actual fact, spiritually, we love peace. We want a permanent , stable and honourable peace. It is because of this reason that in spite of this bloody war, we are keeping

the doors of peace open. We have not closed down the path of peace. Have we got any alternative other than to fight to protect our land and our people?" (1992). And with the escalation of the conflict once again after the failed peace talks between the Kumaratunge govt., and the LTTE, the Tiger leader said, "we cannot allow the Sinhala state to use the conditions of war , military aggression of our lands, and economic blockades as tactics of pressure against the Tamils," (1999).

Similarly the arguments justify the high price paid by the Tamil people as a necessary sacrifice to win freedom. "We have to struggle and win our freedom. Freedom is not a commercial commodity that can be bargained. It is a sacred right that can be won by shedding blood. Let us continue to struggle. Let us continue our journey towards freedom in spite of the obstacles and sufferings we may encounter. Let us continue to struggle so that the sacrifices made by our martyrs and the blood spilled by our people will not be in vain," (1992). "In other words , the Tamil people were compelled to take arms to defend themselves against genocidal destruction. It was under these objective historical conditions the liberation tigers took birth and advanced the armed struggle against state terror," (2001).

Therefore the twin concepts of *spurious justification* and *guilt transfer* also plays central role in yet another central argument in the Tiger narrative – one that attempts to dispel the notion that the LTTE is a terrorist organisation. In this context it can be noted that the derivatives of the word 'terror' used in the Tiger leader speech form three fundamental arguments;

- i. *The LTTE is not a terrorist organisation but freedom fighters* – "we are not terrorists," the Tiger leader said in 2001. "It is neither separatism nor terrorism. We are fighting for the emancipation of our people against racist tyranny , against military occupation, against state terror." The Tiger leader has also continued to accuse the Sri Lankan government of attempting to portray the Tigers as terrorist. "... having unleashed an intense propaganda campaign categorising our liberation movement as a terrorist organisation and our freedom struggle as terrorism this government is making every effort to ban our organisation locally and abroad," the Tiger leader said in 1999. "the Sri Lankan government has been deliberately distorting the nature of this war and its evolutionary historical background and debasing it as a phenomenon of terrorism," (2000). And once the Tigers were proscribed by a number of western nations that Tiger leader said "misguided by the false and malicious propaganda of the Sri Lanka state some of the world governments have included our liberation movement in their list of international terrorist organisations," (2001). "Chandrika's government, particularly its Foreign Minister Mr Kadirgamar, launched a sustained propaganda campaign in the international arena portraying the LTTE and the Tamil freedom struggle as a diabolical phenomenon of terrorism. As a consequence the United States, Britain and most recently Canada, have included our liberation movement in their lists of terrorist organisations. These countries are fully aware that we are not a terrorist organisation and that we are a freedom movement functioning with the overwhelming support of our people, representing their political aspirations," (2001).
- ii. *The government uses terror tactics on the Tamils* – In 1996 following the fall of Jaffna to the government forces the Tiger leader said "having dismembered the region into different security zones with defence bunds , barbed wire fences and innumerable check - points , this famous historical land of the Tamils has been brought under the rule of military terror." The LTTE later alleged the International community was aware of Sri Lankan state terrorism but had turned a blind eye on it – "it is well known internationally that more than sixty thousand innocent Tamil civilians have been brutally done to death over the years by the terror and violence unleashed by the racist state in the Tamil homeland, " (1998). And in more resent speeches he said "the sri lanka state has not given up the military option but rather transformed the war into a new mode of state terror under conditions of peace," (2005).
- iii. *Questioning the rationale behind the word terrorism and its popular definitions* – arguing the definitions failure to account true resistance against state terror. "The use of violence in all modes of struggles to attain specific political goals is defined as terrorism by international

governments. This narrow definition has erased the distinctions between genuine struggles for political independence and terrorist violence. This conception of terrorism has posed a challenge to the moral foundation of armed struggles waged by liberation movements for basic political rights and for the right to self-determination. This development is regrettable. As a consequence our liberation organisation is also being discredited in the international arena... It is only through a deep insight into the origins of political violence that one can discern the differences between authentic liberation struggles and blind acts of terror,” the Tiger leader lamented (2001). And in 2005 he said “There is no clear, coherent, globally acceptable definition of the concept of terrorism. As such, just and reasonable political struggles fought for righteous causes are also branded as terrorism. Even authentic liberation movements struggling against racist oppression are denounced as terrorist outfits. In the current global campaign against terror, state terrorism always finds its escape route and those who fight against state terror are condemned as terrorists. Our liberation organisation is also facing a similar plight.”

In this context it should be noted that the analysis of the text for the words driving form ‘terror’ are as follows

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:
terror* : 52
Total found, capitals ignored.....: 52

Total Sentences.....: 5060
Number containing search terms : 45
Percent containing search terms: 0.89

Total Paragraphs.....: 40
Number containing search terms : 6
Percent containing search terms: 15.00

However it should also be noted that while the Tiger leader’s speech attempts to deflect responsibility for the war, the annual address is careful not to engage in justification of specific actions which fall under the broad rubric of terrorism. Therefore in connection to the bombing of civilian targets the speeches maintain the LTTE’s usual silence. While the LTTE is commonly accused of most bombings in the south and their guilt is implied, the LTTE has refrained from taking explicit responsibility for ‘terrorist attacks’ – a strategically prudent move considering the Tigers are able to reap the psychological benefits of terrorism with out openly declaring their involvement, which may have dire political consequence.

This political, and ideological stance is summarised by Prabhakaran in an interview with Indian Journalist Anita Pratap. “The democratic parliamentary system, or what you refer to as the conventional political system in Sri Lanka, has always tried to impose the will of the majority on the minority. This system not only failed to solve the basic problems of our people but, in fact, aggravated our plight. For decades, the repression by the state has made the life of our people miserable. The non-violent democratic struggles of our people were met with military repression. Our just demands were totally ignored, and the oppression continued on such a scale as to threaten the very survival of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. It was these circumstances which led me to form our liberation movement. I felt that an armed struggle was the only alternative left to our people, not only to ensure our survival but ultimately to free’ our selves from the Sinhala oppression. I have always been aware that our movement would be outlawed. It is for this reason that we organised our movement as a clandestine under ground structure from its inception” (1984).

Peace and disarming themes: a central argument of terrorist rhetoric.

There is little doubt that that disarming and peace themes have played a crucial role in the Tiger leader martyr day speeches, with derivations of the word peace appearing no less than 258 times in the text. A textual analysis of word peace and its derivations are as follows

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:
peace : 212
peace* : 258
peace talks : 47
peace negotiations : 14
Total found, capitals ignored.....: 531

Total Sentences.....: 2528
Number containing search terms : 227
Percent containing search terms: 8.98

Total Paragraphs.....: 40
Number containing search terms : 20
Percent containing search terms: 50.00

Once again it should be noted that peace and peace themes are also presented within the frame work of the dicotomic Tiger meta-narrative.

The tiger narrative, as already discussed, presents the notion of a 'bloody' war forced by the Sinhala regime on the peace loving Tamil people. The Tigers, the true representative of the Tamil people who understand and respect the needs of the community live in the hope of peaceful settlement to the ethnic conflict. "...we have not closed down the path of peace. One day , when our enemy knocks at our doors of peace , we will extend the hand of friendship," (1992). And in 1994 the Tiger leader state that "when the Chandrika government extended its hand for peace we grasped it with friendship"; once again stressing "we have not closed the doors of peace". However the Tiger leaders stance wavered after the fall of Jaffna the heart of the Tamil homeland, claiming " as long as the Sinhala army is occupying Jaffna the doors for peace will be firmly closed." But once again the balm was place on the Government arguing the "Colombo government has closed all avenues for peace and plunged the entire island into grave conflictual situation," (1995). The sentiments were reiterated in the following year claiming that "since the government believed in military supremacy , in military approaches and in a military solution , it did not treat the peace talks seriously and deliberately created conditions for the failure of the negotiating process...this approach pre -dominated by militarism and chauvinism has complicated the ethnic conflict and firmly closed the doors for peace," (1996).

Later the Tiger leader lamented the delays in reaching a peaceful resolution saying "we do not believe that Chandrika , who has become the author of the most blood strained chapter in the history of oppression of the Tamils , will bring peace to the country by resolving the Tamil national issue by peaceful means," but once again stressed "we have not close the doors for peace," (1998). The LTTE argument retained this familiar pattern the following year claiming "while masterminding an authoritarian tyrannical rule against the Tamils internally , Chandrika Kumaratunga portrayed herself internationally as a goddess of democracy committed to peace. Having implemented a notorious military programme aimed at the total invasion of the Tamil homeland she interpreted her project as a war effort for peace.....yet , we did not close the doors for peace," (1999).

In 2001, on the threshold of yet another attempt at peace, the Tiger leader said "we still hold a firm belief that this issue can be resolved by peaceful means... we are constantly knocking on the doors of peace but the Kumaratunga government has refused to open the doors....," (2001). With Norwegian facilitated peace negotiations making tentative steps towards peace the tiger leaders said "we have ceased armed hostilities and are now engaged in a peaceful negotiating process to resolve the ethnic conflict. Our sincere and dedicated commitment to the peace process has falsified and demolished the propaganda campaign carried out by Sinhala chauvinists that we are enemies of peace. The new government , which assumed power with a mandate for peace, reciprocated positively to our declaration of cease – fire. There have been several provocative attempts by certain elements of the

armed forces and anti - peace racist forces to disrupt the peace process. Nevertheless , we maintained a rigid discipline and observed peace.

With the peace talks with the Wickremasinghe government again failing the Tiger leader said “over the last three decades of our national liberation struggle we have observed ceasefires and participated in peace talks at different periods of time in different historical circumstances. We knew that these peace talks would not produce any positive results. We knew that there would be peace traps. Yet we participated in the peace talks with sincere commitment and dedication,” (2005). This statement, when compared to those made after failed peace efforts with the Kumaratunge government, also show the LTTE’s response to being ‘trapped’ in its own strategic calls for peace. the argument of ‘entrapment’ is supported by another speech, one that was made by the Tiger theologian Anton Balasingham where he claims in his martyr day speech from London in 2005 “Ranil is a Fox. Rajapaksa is alright. But, Ranil is a dangerous Fox. I am saying this from experience, which I gained in the last peace process. I know them very well from the period of Premadasa” (Sunday Times, December 4, 2005).

It should also be noted that the Sinhala commentators have frequently alleged the LTTE has only engaged in peace talks merely as delaying tactic to bolster its depleted troops, a charge the Tigers have vehemently denied. Meanwhile the Tigers have on numerous occasions made the same allegation against the government claiming their agreement to engage in peace talks has been fuelled by their desire to regroup and strengthen its military. In an interview with Jasvinder Singh (1986) Prabhakaran said “....under the guise of the cease-fire agreement, the Jayewardene Government embarked on a massive militarisation programme. The Government is spending a huge amount of its national budget on building its military machinery. Lethal weapons of all sorts are being purchased on a large scale. The Government has introduced legislation for conscription. The whole Sinhala nation is being mobilised on a war footing. New Army camps have been constructed in the Tamil areas. Foreign mercenaries as well as Pakistan provide training to Sinhalese soldiers in counter-insurgency warfare. The massive military mobilisation clearly shows that Jayewardene is bent on a military solution rather than being committed to the peace process of a negotiated settlement.”

Thus the dicotomic Tiger meta-narrative of peace suggests no Sri Lankan government has ever show a genuine interest to find a peaceful resolution to the ethnic problem. “In the past the Tamil people have been betrayed several times by previous Sinhalese regimes. Agreements were made but not implemented. Pacts were signed and abrogated,” the Tiger Leader told a BBC interviewer in 1995 (BBC, April 1995).

Themes of invulnerability: the martyrs.

the Tigers leader speeches make significant reference to the LTTE heroes, not unusual in its self considering the speeches are made in lieu of the Tiger martyr’s day.

Tags, Search Terms and Frequency:

martyr* : 29

hero* : 24

Total found, capitals ignored.....: 53

Total Sentences.....: 3795

Number containing search terms : 44

Percent containing search terms: 1.16

Total Paragraphs.....: 40

Number containing search terms : 8

Percent containing search terms: 20.00

While reference to the martyrs is justified and expected within the speeches it should be noted that the martyr concept and its public celebration suggests a deeper strategic need that may be masked by the speeches' political rhetoric. "heroes day is not a day of mourning nor a day of weeping and lamentation. Our heroes have sacrificed their lives for a just cause," said in 1993 arguing martyrdom was not in its self an end but the seeds that would someday bear the fruits of freedom.

Embedded with in the text, and within the wider martyr ideology is a deeper strategic message to the Sinhalese, which declares the Tamil people – effectively the LTTE, are willing to pay for freedom with blood, and that they have already resigned to the fact the freedom can not be won without loss of life. To the Sinhalese the martyr celebration and the Tiger leader's political statement is a indication of what is in store for the coming year. this argument is supported by various newspaper reports and expert commentary that analyse the and interpret the Tiger leader's speech. Referring to the Tiger leaders "urgent and final appeal' in 2005, Sunday Times defence analyst and a CNN and Jane' defence correspondent Iqbal Athas said the statement was Prabhakaran's "way of saying the LTTE would go to war next year," ((December 4, 2005). The statement came after a few years of relative peace in the South, at the time when few people in the south looked forward to the prospect of returning to 'terrorist' attacks on civilian targets. Thus the continued reference to the martyrs, is also a subtle reminder of suicide terrorism to the southern policy makers.

The text suggest the Tiger leader is also aware of this more sinister sub-textual interpretation of the martyr celebration when he states "the Sinhala chauvinists find it intolerable the very fact that those whom they categorise as terrorists are venerated and glorified by the Tamils as war heroes," (1997). Thus the Tiger leader is acutely aware of the psychological impact the heroes day has on the Sinhala masses and their political leaders. Thus the speeches represent both a deadly message of impending attack and a form of political 'nigging'.

Through the declaration of peace and war the Tiger leader is also able to extend the impression of control over the direction of the conflict – and extension of the terrorist subtext of being able to attack at a time of the LTTE's choosing. Once again, the speeches refrain from making explicit reference to 'terrorist attacks' that could politically have detrimental impact on the LTTE.

In this context the LTTE message of invulnerability is simple: the Tigers are a far more effective fighting force – when compared to a conventional soldiers who fights for wage labour – due to its cadres willingness to die for a cause. The Tamil people and the LTTE have resigned to the fact that lives will be lost for freedom, and have resoundingly agreed to pay that price. This willingness to die for freedom is extended to bombs in the South and the loss of Sinhala life, a price the Sinhala nation is reluctant to pay. Thus as an army the LTTE is invulnerable.

This invulnerability in symbolised in the cyanide capsules worn by the tigers, and as the tiger leader suggests; "the 'Cyanide' is the symbol to show that we are dedicated to our ideal. As long as this cyanide hangs on our neck we will not fear any force in the world" (www. eelamweb.com, 1995-2005)

Terror: the strategic subtext.

It should be noted that themes of terror play a central and over arching role in the LTTE rhetoric, where with out the theme of terror the entire communication would cease to make an impact on the target population – the Sinhala nation. However it should also be noted, as already discussed, direct threats of terror rarely feature in the Tiger leader's speech and continued to be delivered through subtle subtext and innuendo.

In an interview with Jasvinder Singh (1986) the Tiger leader outlined the need for armed conflict claiming "Tamil people have been expressing their grievances in Parliament for more than three decades. Their voices went unheard like cries in the wilderness..... I felt that armed struggle is the only way to protect and liberate our people from a totalitarian Fascist State bent on destroying an entire

race of people.” This argument suggest that an armed struggle was need for the grievances of the Tamil people to be finally heard, thus suggesting the communicative aspect of the conflict.

The Tiger leaders view show an uncanny resemblance to a statement made by Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine leader Dr. George Habash (1970), when he said “ “When we hijack a plane it has more effect than if we killed a hundred Israelis in battle....for decades world public opinion has been neither for nor against the Palestinians. It simply ignored us. At least the world is talking about us now.”

Like Habash, Praphakaran represent a group of people that has allegedly been ignored for too long, and like Habash, Praphakaran is acutely aware of what makes news headlines. In this context the Tiger leader is familiar with the non-violent protests of the Chelvanayakam era and the brutal response they received from Sinhala mobs, the attack on Appapillai Amirthalingam and the Prime Ministers sarcastic response to the brutality²⁹. Therefore the LTTE’s use of terror theme and harnessing terror as media spectacle should be viewed with in this context.

Base don the popular definition of political terrorism as ‘ violence or threat of violence on non-combatants for political gain, there is little doubt that Tiger could be categorised as a Terrorist group³⁰. However it should also be noted that the LTTE presents three distinct facades within the frame work of the conflict: a political group that participated in peace negotiations represented through the Tiger political office, a conventional army epitomised by the LTTE’s post Elephant pass battle field tactics, and the terrorist tactical arm which engage in terrorist attacks at a strategic and tactical level.

END

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²⁹ On June 5, 1956 “we performed Sathyagraha on the Galle Face Green exposing ourselves to the mercies of the weather and were attacked by a crowd who had been assembled for that purpose, The crowds were infuriated at our daring to sit there on the green that they beat up the unarmed peaceful Sathyagrahis with sticks and stones, one of them even bit away the ear of one of the Sathyagrahis. The stones thrown by the crowd broke my head in two places, and when I walked into Parliament with a handkerchief tied round my head and my clothes soaked in blood, the then Prime Minister quipped “honorable wounds of war.” Appapillai Amirthalingam who has subsequently risen to the Rank of TULF General Secretary told the 1983-4 All Party Conference chaired by the then President JR Jayawardene (Amirthalingam, January 19, 1984).

³⁰ It should be noted many political groups including the government fall with in the category of terrorism under this definition, but are not discussed in detail as it is beyond the scope of this study.

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Extra

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"It took exactly 18 days for the several battalions of Sri Lankan army troops, who landed along the Vadamardchy eastern coast in a massive rescue operation, to reach the besieged Elephant Pass base. To advance for a short distance of 12 kilometers, the Sinhala regiments, backed by heavy armour and air cover, had to engage in fierce clashes with the LTTE and fight for every inch of the land. With the heavy losses in men and material, the troops finally reached the Elephant Pass base, on the evening of 3rd August 1991. The fighting continued that area until the 9th August, when finally the LTTE made a tactical withdrawal. Apart from the battle of the Fort, it was the longest single battle ever fought between the combatants, which lasted for nearly 31 days. Adel