

JAYASIKURUI

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1. "JAYASIKURUI" (victory is certain), the name given to the current military offensive, vividly illustrates the crux of the problem facing the Sinhala nation, the Sri Lankan government and its armed forces. All of them want a military victory not just in a battle or two but in the war as a whole. They are absolutely convinced it is possible to achieve, the only differences of opinion being over how long it will take. They believe the war in which they are engaged, like any war, can be won or (perish the very thought) lost. This is a profound and serious misunderstanding which is responsible for much of the tragedy now unfolding and the infinitely worse disasters still to come.

2. The war now in progress in the north-east province is quite different to a war between two conventional armies which confront each other on the field of battle like the US and Iraqi armies in the Gulf War. Here there is no such confrontation. Instead, it is an intermittent series of guerilla attacks on the army's outposts, mostly under cover of darkness, and of attempts by the army to secure and hold territory. Even if (and when) every inch of territory of the north-east province is occupied and held by the army at some future date (in about 20 years at the present rate of progress) guerilla warfare will continue. Indeed, the more territory the army occupies, the greater its exposure to guerilla harassment. In Northern Ireland the British army occupies every inch of its territory; yet the IRA keeps up its guerilla attacks even after 29 years (over twice the length of the conflict in Sri Lanka). **These are not wars which can be won or lost.** They are wars which go on interminably until they are ended by a political act of the state under attack (as in the U.K. in 1992, The Philippines in 1996 or the Russian Federation in 1996), or by foreign intervention on behalf of the guerilla (like the Indian intervention which created Bangladesh in 1971 or the Turkish intervention which set up the Turkish Cypriot Republic in 1974) or by the collapse of the state (as in Ethiopia in 1992). **These wars were not ended by the military victory of the state under attack. Nor were they ended by the military victory of the guerilla. They were ended by the emergence of new states which satisfied the aspirations of the guerilla. That is how of this type end.** Their duration varies but their end has always been the same. There have been no exceptions.

3. These international events, most of very recent date, are well known in Sri Lanka but they are considered irrelevant to the Sri Lankan situation. What is considered relevant is the successful military extermination of the ideological guerillas of the JVP in 1971 and again in 1987/89. There is a facile assumption that the same success can be repeated against the LTTE. However, with the passage of time, the Sinhala nation is beginning to perceive two vital differences between the two situations. First, the conflict with the LTTE is much more protracted than that with the JVP (already more

than 4 times longer than the duration of both JVP uprisings combined) and, secondly, with the passage of time, the LTTE has become stronger than at the beginning whereas the JVP was progressively weakened. Clearly something very different is happening but the hankering after military victory lingers undiminished.

4. The assumption of certain military victory, reflected in the term **JAYASIKURUI**, shows clearly a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the conflict. No one seems to understand that wars of this kind last a very long time - their duration is to be measured in decades rather than in years - nor is it known that the longer such wars last, the stronger the guerilla becomes despite the military setbacks suffered continuously at the hands of the state's army. This is a bizarre paradox to people who never have had to take arms to fight an established state for an independent state of their own. No Sinhala person, not even the dedicated cadres of the JVP, has such an experience and so none of them is able to understand how guerilla forces survive successive defeats and re-bound stronger than ever before. That is why they find it incredible that the LTTE is stronger in 1977 than in 1983 when the war started. The empirical evidence of this is compelling; how and why the LTTE became stronger, rather than weaker, over the years (even before they received some support from President Premadasa in pursuance of important ends of the latter within the Sinhala nation) is an inexplicable mystery. It will remain so for Sinhala people who have never experienced an intense nationalism for which life and limb and property are sacrificed without hope of personal recompense.

5. It is perfectly natural that an army in the field should seek victory. The Sri Lanka army has done just that and still perseveres in that hope. It has been led (or misled) to believe that victory is possible by the political masters of the state who deeply desire this end. Politicians of both government and opposition have not the remotest suspicion that there can be any outcome other than ultimate military victory. This conviction has been asserted repeatedly to the public at large. It has survived the failure of numberless promises of full and final victory by specific dates. Of course, it is absurd to promise victory in any war on or before a given date. Such promises are manifestations of the inexperience and ignorance of those who make them. While such promises are bad enough, immeasurably worse is the unquestioned assumption that this war can be concluded by a military victory of the conventional type i.e. by the unconditional surrender of the enemy. It is an assumption that signifies a complete lack of comprehension of what this war is and of the nature of this type of war.

6. The war being waged by the LTTE is a **war of attrition**. Wars of attrition have very specific characteristics which will be described below. Before doing so it is important to consider a striking

difference between the military commands on either side. While the Sri Lankan general staff has changed at frequent intervals (by retirement, death on duty and so on) the LTTE has been commanded by one man, V. Pirabakaran, throughout the entire period from the beginning right up to now. There is thus a strong presumption that he must know if not more than, at least as, his Sinhala counterparts about this war. Despite this, there has never come from him an assertion of confidence in military victory (least of all by any particular date or time). He has not spoken in terms of victory and defeat. The conclusion is inescapable that he understands the nature of the war i.e. that it is a war of attrition and, even more significantly, that he understands what a war of attrition means.

7. There is a huge conceptual chasm between the two sides.

8. There are important, and universally manifested, features of wars of attrition which seem to be almost wholly unknown on the Sinhala side. Whenever Sinhala politicians, in government or opposition, make pronouncements on the war they betray the high degree of ignorance of the fundamental underlying realities of this type of war that is so widespread on the Sinhala side.

9. First and foremost is the failure to understand that the adversary represents a nation's case - that it is the Tamil nation's struggle for independence and sovereign self-rule in the large area of its domicile. The most simplistic delusion is that the war is the result of Mr. Pirabakaran's wickedness or bloody-mindedness or both. If, somehow, he is removed, the war will be victoriously concluded.

Another demon-based variation is that Mr. Pirabakaran is a dictator hated by the Tamil people. Though hated dictators from Hitler through Stalin and Castro right up to Saddam Hussein could not be overthrown by their disaffected subjects (even when aided by a super-power), the Tamil people will achieve a unique and noble place in the world's history by becoming the first to overthrow its hated dictator. The wish is clearly the father to the thought, the world's current history notwithstanding.

A more clear-eyed view perceives the nationalist nature of the conflict - vide S.L. Gunasekera in his *Tigers, Moderates and Pandora's Package* of 1996, the Sinhala Ekiya Sanvidanaya of which he is the leader, the Sinhala Arakshaka Sanvidanaya, the Jathika Chinthanaya et al - but believes that Tamil nationalism can be militarily extinguished whereafter a Sri Lankan nation could be constructed under the leadership and influence of the Sinhala nation. The belief that nationalism, any nationalism, including Tamil nationalism, can be militarily extinguished is so egregious an error as to be barely credible. It shows a truly formidable ignorance of the current world's realities. The 20th century is replete with examples of great empires disintegrating into nation states and of individual states sub-dividing into their separate nations and forming new states of their own. These fissiparous tendencies are today vigorously manifest to right and left of us but are unseen and unheard. In an age of information technology so egregious an error is worthy only of the denizens of another planet.

A nation cannot be militarily extinguished. A war against a nation lasts as long as that nation lasts - a true war of attrition.

10. A classic hallmark of a war of attrition is the total inability of the state under attack to comprehend that the war will last a very, very long time - decades or, perhaps even centuries. In Myanmar the half-century mark will be reached next year. The Sinhala "time-frame" for a victorious conclusion of the war is, at its extreme prolongation, another 3 years. The President speaks (with ever diminishing conviction) of a victorious conclusion by the end of her first term - indeed, the longed-for second term depends on it. No one in the whole of Sinhala society understands, or can understand, that the conflict is now only in its earliest stages and is set to last for many more decades into the next century. The frequent, now numberless and increasingly tiresome pronouncements of imminent victory are classic symptoms of the malaise - an established state's failure to comprehend what a war of attrition means.

11. In a war of attrition waged by a nationalist challenger to an established state, the challenger is able to absorb casualties - both dead and wounded - on a scale far beyond the expectations or comprehension of the conventional military authorities of the state. The latter know from their own experience how difficult it is to recruit personnel even to make up for operational losses, let alone for an overall increase of cadre. They are convinced their opponent must experience the same difficulty. After every battle they believe the LTTE is permanently diminished to the extent of the losses inflicted on it. They cannot comprehend how the LTTE can replenish its losses, still less how it augments its total cadre. The inner dynamics of a nationalist movement are both unknown and unknowable to the conventional military strategists of the state. It is this lack that leads to the belief that the LTTE is close to collapse when the very opposite is the case.

12. Another characteristic of a war of attrition is that the longer it lasts the stronger the nationalist challenger to the state becomes. The state invariably believes the opposite, that is, that its challenger will become weaker with time. The wrongness of this belief has been demonstrated time and again in every such conflict. In Northern Ireland, after 29 years of conflict with both the British army and Protestant paramilitary groups, the IRA is stronger today than ever before. So it was in The Philippines with the Bangsamoro nationalist uprising in Mindanao. So it is after 14 years of war in The Sudan and so it is with the LTTE after the same period. The empirical evidence is compelling and is the product of systemic reasons going to the heart of the nationalist fervor that inspires self-sacrifice beyond the comprehension of those to whom that urge is unknown.

13. Wars of attrition have never ended with the collapse or extermination of the challenger to the state. They have **always** ended with the challenger intact, in possession of his arms and territory and as an partner with the state in the peacemaking process. This was the case in all 6 cases mentioned in paragraph 2 above. It was also the case where a powerful mediator (the USA) has intervened, witness the Camp David/Washington and Dayton accords on the Israeli-PLO and the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflicts respectively.

14. When wars of attrition end, the settlement necessarily produces a new state. The Irish Republic in the UK; the Bangsamoro Authority in Mindanao in The Philippines; Chechnya in the Russian Federation; Bangladesh and the Turkish Cypriot Republic; Eritrea in Ethiopia; the Palestine Authority in the West Bank and Gaza; the Republika Srpska in Bosnia Herzegovina. The international community's dedication to world peace has been unable to produce any other way forward. The dream of a return to the **status quo ante bellum** (bolstered by constitutional changes to the state which one party hopes will satisfy the other) is just that - a dream, an unattainable, utopian dream, totally irrelevant to the world of **realpolitik**.

15. A long war of attrition poses a grave danger to the state engaged in it, a danger emanating not from its challenger but from its own

armed forces. In both Myanmar and The Sudan, civil government was overthrown by the military in the interests of concentrating **all** the nation's resources on the war effort. So was it also in Ethiopia. This has been the experience of very poor countries which have had to starve the military of funds in order to keep a semblance of civil services going. In such countries, as the military effort escalates, the demand for more and more of the state's limited financial resources for war purposes grows exponentially. When the crunch comes and the state has to choose between starving the military and feeding its people, the decision could well be taken out of its hands by a military overthrow of civil government. Jayasikurui may portend a graver danger to the feeble and already crumbling government of Sri Lanka than to the LTTE.

STATE-MARKET RELATIONS IN LATE DEVELOPMENT: THE EAST ASIAN EXPERIENCE

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The role of the state in development occupies an important, though highly controversial, position in the scholarship as well as debates in the field of political economy. The 'Keynesian revolution' provided a respectable recipe for state intervention to resuscitate an ailing market economy, stabilize it and accelerate its growth. Keynes was convinced that state intervention was essential for a capitalist economy to weather its inherent cyclical tendency towards crisis. He regarded *laissez-faire* a legend, a bit of metaphysical thinking' (cited in Mattick 1969). In western countries, state intervention acquired even greater importance and legitimacy in the post-war period in order to meet the challenges of reconstruction, regulate the economy and provide the institutional arrangements for administered wages and social security. However, the origins of state intervention to restrict or stimulate market forces and to direct or influence the development process in western countries predate the Keynesian revolution (Polanyi 1957, Gerschenkron 1962). Dirigisme has a longer history than generally acknowledged by the restorationists of the minimal state.¹

With the birth of a growing number of newly independent countries after World War II, active state intervention in development became an established practice as governments sought to introduce economic planning, nationalization and regulatory policies to 'reconstruct' their national economies. The power of the Soviet bloc and the rise of the 'Chinese model' tipped the balance in favor of a major role for the state in decolonization and development in what came to be known as the Third World. This trend, however, was challenged in the 1970s with the resurgence of the neoclassical theory and ideology of development which 'downgraded' the role of the state (Wade 1990). Today, it would seem that the old Smithian idea

of the 'minimal state' has staged a comeback in an updated form. This is also signified by the unprecedented ideological hegemony enjoyed by the Bretton Woods institutions (IMF and World Bank) in the post-cold war era.

The poor economic performance of several newly independent countries in the 1950s and 1960s was attributed by the proponents of the new economic liberalism to undue state intervention in the form of nationalization, subsidies and import substitution. Strictures have also been passed about the abuse of power by political elites as evidenced by corruption, and about the lack of government accountability. State regulation of the economy has also been attacked for encouraging rent seeking which leads to waste of resources. The solution offered is: 'get relative prices right' by withdrawing the state from the economic domain and adopting policies that enable the functioning of freer markets. In theoretical terms, this prescription signified a return to the fundamentals of economic liberalism. This was also reflected in the remarkable 'paradigm shift' in development economies from Keynesian and post-Keynesian macro theories and political economy toward neoclassical economics.

The World Bank and other neo-liberal advocates of the open economy model have cited the economic successes of the East Asian Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) and Japan as proof of their theory. These claims have been challenged by a growing body of scholarship on the 'East Asian Miracles'. Empirical research and theorization based on it have led to a revival of the classical position of capital accumulation as the engine of growth. This seems to be the political economists' answer to the axiom of efficient resource