

Finally, the fast-rising prices of even second- or third-hand military hardware in the worlds arms markets is less debilitating for the guerillas than it is for the state. As stated earlier guerillas supply themselves largely from the states arsenals by capture in action. They need little by way of imports and so, can concentrate their foreign exchange resources on small quantities of high quality equipment. The inexorable rise in prices reduces the quality and quantity of the states purchases much more markedly than is the case with the guerillas.

These are the principal reasons for nationalist secessionist guerillas being able to outlast the state in a long war of attrition. They explain the paradox of powerful states succumbing to the steady depredations of armed nationalist secessionist movements. Three of Europe's most powerful states have suffered this bitter experience - Britain in Ireland, France in Algeria and Italy in Abyssinia. The USA's debacle in Vietnam and the former Soviet Unions in Afghanistan still haunt the international psyche.

## Conclusion

**N**ationalism need not necessarily produce nationalist secessionist guerillas if a rational and humane accommodation

with it is made in good time. Fortunately there are more examples of such wisdom than of the folly of resisting nationalism. The peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia (by and large) are but recent examples. Earlier Cochinchina and The Federated Malay States separated peacefully in consonance with their respective national components.

How to cope peacefully with nationalism before it produces armed nationalist guerrillas seeking secession is one of the most urgent items on the international agenda in the 21st century. Where such prescience has not been forthcoming and as a result armed secessionist conflict has broken out, the distilled wisdom of the worlds experience is that there is no alternative to peace being secured by separation into independent states in satisfaction of the nationalist urges that lie at the root of the conflict. Such separation has usually proved to be the dawn of a new era of fresh and rational relationships between the separating states with the blessing and support of the international community. In such cases separation is not a calamity; failure to do so with the least delay is.

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*Mr. Asbjorn Eide of Norway made a presentation in August before the UN Sub-commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (PDPM). Mr. Eide is a member of the Sub-Commission. The following is the text of his statement's section relating to Sri Lanka.*

# LTTE: SHIFT IN INTERNATIONAL OPINION

Asbjorn Eide

"I shall now turn [to the case] of Sri Lanka. Some of my colleagues have been here long enough to remember that I, in 1983, was the first to criticize the government of Sri Lanka for its lack of effective measures to investigate the authors of the massacres against Tamils in the Summer of 1983, including the killing of political prisoners in the Welikada prison. I know also that many in Sri Lanka subsequently regretted that they did not listen to the suggestions we then made, which were to take prompt action to restore law and order, to punish those responsible, and to involve the International Committee of the Red Cross.

But very much has changed since 1983. Among the Tamils, an extremely militant group emerged calling itself the Tigers, abbreviated LTTE. Its leadership has developed an almost paranoid garrison mentality. That movement or particularly its leadership respects no human rights. It engages in the most heinous crimes, using female, male and possibly even child suicide bombers to create havoc and fear. Its killing is directed not only at Sinhala enemies, including civilians and their religious temples, but also against its Tamil opponents, including the courageous Tamil woman who was until recently the Mayor of Jaffna until assassinated by the Tigers. Many Tamils, including those who are struggling for a devolution of power and greater influence for the Tamils, live under constant threat of assassination by the LTTE.

What baffles me is that there are still international non-governmental organizations who lend their support to this movement. They are then not supporting the Tamil cause but an utterly undemocratic movement unable to contemplate peace in any form.

In 1994, a new President was elected in Sri Lanka, and the government has presented a package of devolution which goes as far as any government can possibly do. There is no doubt in my mind that the President is genuine, and that many or probably most Tamils would be happy if the package could be accepted. But the LTTE does not want it to happen.

At present, the LTTE is battling for the minds and the money of the expatriate Tamil community. In order to continue its fruitless and endless war, the Tigers depend on this external financial support to purchase weapons and other means. The international community, the international NGOs and governments should now seek to convince the Tamil communities in their respective countries that the way to achieve Tamil human rights is through an accommodation based on equality for all in the island of Sri Lanka, full respect for the cultures of the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and others and a devolution of power which makes it possible through peaceful democratic means to ensure the conditions for the survival and reproduction of the Tamil culture".