

# HATRED AND REVENGE KILLINGS CONSTRUCTIONS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA

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## Introduction

In deeply polarised and brutalised societies like Sri Lanka, landscapes of violence are experiential spaces, where struggles for political power take place. 'Victory' in the eyes of the strategists seems to be the capture of the high ground in popular imagination and culture, in combination with spectacular successes in combat. And all means, fair and foul, are used in order to achieve these ends.

'Hatred' and 'revenge' are almost synonymous with many of the political murders that have taken place in contemporary Sri Lanka. In this paper I will focus on what concepts 'mean' in situations of political violence and relations between 'hatred' and situated practices of 'revenge-counter revenge' killings (in the period from 1980 to 1995). All manners of revenge killings take place within politically charged and polarised contexts of deeply divided societies. Here, I will examine such actions in the light of *internecine* warfare in particular (e.g. intra-ethnic or group strife) - a common feature of many revolutionary and/or nationalistic struggles. Ironically enough, such warfare is carried out more fiercely in many cases, than the 'business' of the nationalist war or revolution.

In fact in the Sri Lanka case, more Tamil paramilitary fighters and their civilian sympathisers or suspected supporters have been killed, tortured and incarcerated by members of rival organisations-and here, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) remain unsurpassed. Conversely, more Sinhalese (civilians, paramilitaries and soldiers) have been killed in the violent power struggle between the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna* (JVP or People's Liberation Front) and armed units of the government of Sri Lanka. I identify agents of political violence in this text, as all members of anti-government paramilitary organisations, as well as of death squads and military units linked overtly or covertly to the state apparatus.

The conflicts in Sri Lanka are, ironically enough, portrayed on many an occasion in academic texts and the media, as simply being 'an ethnic conflict' between Sinhalese and Tamils. Such oversimplifications ignore much of the complexities and ground realities, highlighted by the fact that there have been two major theaters of conflict-i.e. in the predominantly Tamil speaking areas in the north and east, and in the Sinhala majority areas in the southern, central and western provinces-not to mention all the *internecine* and intra-ethnic blood letting.

However, before I delve into the nitty gritty of who killed whom and why, where, how, when, etc, I will clarify certain issues of significance, that may provide an overview of the 'troubles' in Sri Lanka.

## An Overview

Political violence has inexorably come to the forefront in Sri Lankan political, social and cultural life, particularly since the bloody failure of the *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna's* (JVPs) first insurrectionary attempt in April 1971. Almost as if taking off from the point where the JVP left off, the embryonic Tamil national liberation groups created a momentum in the early 1970s-which has ultimately led to the supremacy of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and its *de facto* control over the northern Jaffna peninsula and surrounding areas. The 'Tigers' as they are popularly known, have also built up a reputation and image of being one of the most successful guerilla groups in operation in the late 20th century. In the forefront of this image has been the LTTE's hitherto amazing success in 'suicide operations', particularly in the assassination of prominent political actors who oppose their hegemony and more generally, in taking out fortified military encampments belonging to the government of Sri Lanka. Recently, since the 19th of April 1995, the LTTE has upped the tempo somewhat by allegedly using American made Stinger shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles against Sri Lankan Air Force targets, as well as succeeding in a number of well planned skirmishes on land and sea against the Sri Lankan Army, Police and Navy respectively.

The JVP, for its part, unleashed a second round of blood-letting and political terror from 1987 to early 1990-where, the armed forces of the government of Sri Lanka ultimately got the better of it by massacring all and sundry. However in this text, I will limit myself to the analysis and discussion of relations between hatred, revenge killings and political violence vis-a-vis the major Tamil paramilitary groups.

In the context of the current interest and general concern over the breakdown of negotiations between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE---through a unilateral resumption of hostilities by the latter on the 19th of April 1995---it is timely to examine elements indicative of the make-up of an organisation such as the LTTE. Needless to say, much of the revenge killings and hatred generated in the Sinhala majority regions have similarities with events in the

north and east. However, the manner in which the LTTE in particular *cultivated* its organisational ethos and world view is qualitatively different in its level of sophistication and complexity. My argument here is that in order to understand the growth and endurance of Tamil Nationalism, researchers and analysts need to focus on its relations to political violence.

A concentration on *political violence*, in particular on *pre-emptive* and *revenge killings*, has provided the LTTE means to its hegemony over the other Tamil national liberation groups, and the Tamil people at large. The prominent use of pre-emptive and revenge killings surfaced during the time of bloody intra-Tamil power struggles (i.e. mid-1985 onwards), and has been a defining 'principle' in the LTTE's militarist doctrine. Reliance on such political violence also enabled the LTTE to pre-empt the possible 'revenge of Rajiv Gandhi', as well as blunt the concerted efforts and schemes of the Sri Lankan military establishment over time. Given the relative success of the LTTE on the long term (mid-1980s to 1995) - and that at present it 'typifies' the 'single most important' expression of Tamil Nationalism 'at the peak of its success' to most onlookers (within and without Sri Lanka) - I focus much attention in this paper on the organisation's actions and wider impact.

True enough, there are other 'brands' of Tamil Nationalism in operation today—for example the collaborationist 'nationalisms' of paramilitary organisations like the Peoples's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), and the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) - which maintain a presence in parliament and whose cadres fight alongside the Sri Lankan government's military forces against the LTTE. However, the nationalist agenda of these organisations is largely rhetorical and curtailed by their close association to the power-brokers in Colombo. The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) on the other hand, maintains a more distanced stance *vis-a-vis* the Sri Lankan (i.e. Sinahala dominated) government. However, the TULF too is hampered in its nationalist agenda, given the near total hegemony of the LTTE in its traditional stronghold, the Jaffna peninsula. All in all, the LTTE has very definitively captured the centre stage and there for all other actors in the arena of Tamil Nationalism have to contend with its agendas and gun toting 'democracy'. In fact, this has been the case especially from around the time when the LTTE attacked the TELO in May 1985—where all other Tamil nationalist organisations concentrated their efforts in 'doing one better' than the 'tigers' and hopefully capturing the 'imagination of the masses'—i.e. being *seen* to be the 'most successful'. And it is precisely this 'doing one better' competition which is important for my discussion here of political violence, hatred and revenge killings.

## Theoretical and Conceptual Reflections

**W**e may say that anger is an emotion, whereas hatred must be classified as a sentiment—an enduring organization of aggressive impulses toward a person or a class of persons. Since it is composed of habitual bitter feelings and accusatory thought, it constitutes a stubborn structure in the mental-emotional life of the

individual. By its very nature hatred is extropunitive, which means that the hater is sure that the fault lies in the object of his [*sic*] hate (Allport 1992: 31).

The concept of hatred and other related concepts like anger, fear, aggression, terror and of course violence, are inherently problematic owing to their vagueness and manifold meanings. However on the popular level, given their felt or emotive content they can be cultivated and channelled, especially through imagery of enemy stereotypes and revenge-counter revenge mentalities. The degrees or levels to which emotive sentiments are felt in the 'organization of aggressive impulses' vary in degree, intensity and meaning, and from individual to individual. Nevertheless, when it comes to the question of organised political violence, hatred and revenge complement each other and become useful tools in cultivating homogenous, mono-narratives.

From a theoretical standpoint—while expressing dissatisfaction over problems of inconsistent definitions raised by relativity, ambiguity and diversity of meanings—researchers should exercise caution when examining concepts like hatred or revenge. The very inconclusiveness surrounding feelings, thoughts and conduct related to hatred or revenge, should serve to discourage premature and simplistic verdicts. Nevertheless in this paper, for the sake of the discussion, I use the outline presented by Allport as a sounding board.

My focus here is confined to political violence and its heterogeneous phenomena, which involve the performance (including theatrical and spectacular elements) of *violence as an explicit political tool* (e.g. in order to communicate and carry out strategic and/or tactical manoeuvres). However even in this context, it is difficult to avoid inconsistent and misleading terms. Therefore, while expressing the need for a consistent and widely accepted analytic categorisation, the following tentative, working definition of political violence is presented. I define political violence as *a process where the deliberate use and/or the threat of force is carried out, with an intention to cause death, and/or injury, and/or destruction of person(s), property and interests, by organised groups or members of such entities, to their perceived political enemies*. The term 'injury' (used in the definition), refers both to physical 'damage' or 'hurt' as well as to psychological 'trauma' (e.g. PTSS or post-traumatic stress syndrome—which is brought about as a result of torture, and/or participation in/exposure to, 'violent' actions)<sup>2</sup>. Such collective actions of violence within polities involve electoral violence, riots, rebellions, civil wars, and the like (cf. Rule 1988: xi, 11).

My definition of political violence is designed to cover *politically motivated, violent acts carried out by members of judicially accountable (i.e. regular forces) and extra-judicial (i.e. death squads and irregulars state forces, private armies run by politicians) as well as those by anti-state paramilitary groups, in the manoeuvrings for power*. Here, the use of weapons adds an 'armed' component to such acts. Political violence, therefore, is always aimed towards the *detriment and coercion* of perceived enemies. Furthermore, the aims of political violence are *political* (insofar as they pertain to policies and intrigues of state and anti-state actors), and are continu-

ations of political affairs by means other than dialogue, debate, discussion, accommodation and compromise. This definition of political violence also covers phenomena of *ethnic riots* and *political rape* (as observed for example in Bosnia-Herzegovina<sup>3</sup> and Pakistan, where female members of families belonging to perceived political opponents have been systematically raped). In the case of Sri Lanka, statistics on political rape have not been compiled in any systematic manner (either on a regional or island wide basis), which does not mean that it does not happen.

In addition, I reiterate that hatred and revenge are but two considerations that need to be taken into account when analysing a problem as complex as political violence. The field of popular culture in particular remains a contentious battle ground. 'Cultural constructions' of political violence, for example, involve cognitive, mythical and popular aspects of physical practices.

'Cultural constructions' of political violence also include violence perpetrated against the body and its demonstration. Through demonstration and display of 'end results' (i.e. through images and/or narratives), constructions of political violence are given meaning. Mutilation and dismemberment of the living and the dead, torture, burning, beating, rape, and disappearance, are all situated practices of violence that involve the body in one way or another. Torture in particular is a system of persecution that deploys organised violence as a tactical measure to extract truth and submission<sup>4</sup> (de Silva 1993).

The body is a site of violence, where political power is exercised through hegemony and contested through resistance. The living body can therefore be perceived as 'animated text' where,

political power increasingly becomes a matter of regimenting the circulation of bodies in time and space in a manner analogous to the circulation of things. Power, as Foucault has amply documented, becomes spatialized. It is contingent on the command of space and the command of those entities that move within politically marked spaces. The body becomes a unit of spatial power, and the distribution of these units in space constructs sites of domination (Feldman 1991: 8).

To illustrate his point, Feldman describes the German Jew who is paraded by the Nazis with a placard around his neck which reads: 'I am a Jew but I have no complaints against the Nazis' (Feldman, 1991:7). In Sri Lanka, Tamil paramilitaries as well as the JVP and armed forces of the state, have used similar imagery to terrorise opponents and make political threats or illustrate punishment. 'Lamp posting' (i.e. the tying of executed victims to lamp posts with an accompanying placard) are a variant first practiced by Tamil paramilitaries. 'Eternal fires' were another gruesome practice adopted by government affiliated death squads, where corpses of indiscriminately slaughtered 'students, monks, young men, intellectuals, human rights monitors, and the families of JVP suspects and sympathizers' (McGowan 1993: 374) were found smouldering in JVP land mine craters or in prominent public spaces.

In other worlds too living and dead bodies continue to litter the landscape such as those of the massacre of 42 Sinhala civilians (men, women and children) and burning of their tiny fishing village of Lallawara in the east and the assassination of the chief priest of Dimbulagala, Kithalagama Siri Seelalankara (at the end of May 1995) - allegedly carried out by the LTTE.

It is very probable that the recent massacre of Sinhala civilians (the first such action against civilians since the October 1992 massacre of 146 Muslims in Palliyagodella), and killing of a very popular Buddhist priest (who lived among inhabitants along the border areas between Tamil and Sinhala domains in the east and has been, vocal critic of the LTTE) was aimed at provoking a Sinhala Buddhist majority backlash against the minority Tamils. In the past, such reactions from the majority Sinhala community--for example the anti-Tamil riots of July 1983--have helped Tamil paramilitary groups to recruit new cadres and keep war against the Sri Lankan state on the high burner. On this occasion, a number of Tamil owned shops in the southern port city of Galle (considered to be Sinhala heart land), were on fire on the day of the chief priest's funeral. Such actions on a much larger scale could very well be the desired response wanted by the LTTE, in order to drive a wedge of hatred between the Sinhala and Tamil communities and thereby forestall any attempts at peace-making. The LTTE seems particularly nervous about a negotiated peace settlement that could jeopardise its hegemonic one-party hold over 'the Tamil polity', which it maintains by having recourse to war and political violence.

In this particular 'discourse' of Sri Lankan politics, described above, macabre messages are exchanged/delivered repeatedly through terrifying imagery. Such 'communiques' are exchanged between agents of political violence and also 'delivered' by them to respective 'target audiences' among the general public, in their struggle for power and hegemony (de Silva 1993, 1995s). A brief commentary on power here will give an idea as to why hegemonic and counter-hegemonic manoeuvrings take place, between/among parties involved in political conflict and violence (including their civilian target populations). In a general outline of this concept, Anthony Giddens notes:

By power is meant the ability of individuals or groups to make their own interests count, even where others resist. Power sometimes involves the direct use of force, but it is almost always accompanied by the development of ideas (ideologies) which **justify** the actions of the powerful... Power is a pervasive aspect of all human relationships. Many **conflicts** in society are struggles over power, because how much power an individual or group is able to achieve governs how far they are able to put their wishes into practice at the expense of those of others (Giddens 1991: 52, 729).

What is at stake in the current conflict between the LTTE and the sovereign nation-state of Sri Lanka/rival Tamil paramilitary groups is hegemony over *geographical territory or space*, and monopoly over *power and resources* (including human). And in order to achieve their ends, all parties concerned have at one time or another used the option of political violence, in opposition to dialogue, compromise and negotiated political settlement.

## Political Violence, Hatred and Revenge Killings

**T**he manner in which hatred and revenge are understood and acted upon differs from culture to culture. In the Sri Lankan situation, not exceptionally, it also differs in various subcultures. In Tamil paramilitary sub-culture, the violent settling of scores *within* and *between* organisations is well defined - to the extent that recently (1995) a former bodyguard of the late PLOTE leader Uma Maheswaran was murdered along with his wife in Zurich, for allegedly participating in the 1988 assassination of Maheswaran. Whereas, when Sinhala civilian victims (members of another sub-culture) lost sons, daughters and loved ones to government sponsored massacres against suspected JVPers, the calls for justice and revenge have been more tame and uncertain, and generally confined to the bounds of the law. The attitude of victims are clearly different from that of paramilitaries.

The University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) published (1994) an insightful catalogue of horrors of political violence in north-east Sri Lanka, titled: *Someone Else's War*. According to the anonymous authors (for reasons of safety), the most recent violations against the civilian population have been perpetrated largely by the LTTE. In areas controlled by the LTTE, anyone suspected of disobedience or 'working against the interests of the LTTE' (however innocent) is liable to be arrested, incarcerated, interrogated, tortured and/ or executed. Most of the LTTE's prisoners are either members or sympathisers of rival Tamil organisations and their relatives, or LTTEers suspected of internal dissent. Captured serviceman from the Sri Lankan armed services form another category of prisoners. Here is an excerpt, concerning the fate of a Tamil prisoner held by the LTTE.

Members of the LTTE intelligence unit worked with the wardens in some camps to extract information... Kanthi, nicknamed 'The Butcher', a member of the intelligence unit... once went berserk when he discovered that a torture victim who fainted had been given medical attention and ripped off the bandages before killing the victim with a pick-axe handle (University Teachers for Human Rights-Jaffna 1994: 100).

How is it possible that Tamil paramilitaries torture and kill one another with such ferocity? As far as political rhetoric in the North-East goes, the LTTE categorically states that it is fighting a liberation struggle to establish a separate Tamil nation-state called 'Tamil Eelam'. According to this logic, are not all Tamils 'the sons and daughters of Tamil mothers' and is their no 'unity in struggle'? It is paradoxical that since 1984/85, such an openly chauvinistic Tamil paramilitary organisation as the LTTE has been systematically targeting the members of other Tamil paramilitary groups in a violent bid to become the sole representative of the Tamil people. The stratagem behind this recourse to internecine warfare must be attributed, in the first instance, to the 'brains' behind the LTTE.

The LTTE's supremo, Velupillai Prabhakaran, is an interesting and almost Macbethian figure with blood in his hands and ghosts

looking over his shoulders. He systematically murdered, exiled or 'got rid of', through convenient 'mission impossible(s)', the second tier of leadership within his own organisation, on a variety of trumped up charges. The latest casualty is Mahendraraja, better known as 'Mahaththaya'; he had been the LTTE's long standing number two man and former commander of the Wannu sector, with a loyal following of his own. Most of his followers were sent on the first wave of a recent assault on the Sri Lankan military base at Pooneryn, where many lost their lives. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that members of rival Tamil organisations have been and are ruthlessly crushed. Since the founding of the LTTE, political killings of Tamils, Sinhalese, Muslims and Indians (combatants and civilians alike), paved the way in one way or another, to power enhancement and consolidation, as well as de facto control over geographical and politico-cultural space. As far as Prabhakaran is concerned, there is absolutely no question of power sharing.

Given such a state of affairs, it becomes necessary for an organisation such as the LTTE to adopt various stratagems, in order for the will of Prabhakaran and his lieutenants to be carried out by the rank and file. My hypothesis is that 'hatred' of all forces (political and/ or military) other than of the LTTE is actively cultivated among rank and file. And furthermore, this process is facilitated through the inculcation of pre-emptive revenge killings as a political and military solution. In other words, there has been and continues to be 'an enduring organization of aggressive impulses' (Allport 1992: 31) to ward persons deemed to be, and therefore labelled as, 'enemies'.

The manipulation of this stratagem in combination with others (such as the use of suicide operations, cyanide capsules, and notions of sacrifice and martyrdom), have given the LTTE a tactical edge not only on the battle field but also in popular imagination (de Silva 1995a). Nevertheless, the LTTE's violent efforts at hijacking the Tamil national liberation struggle also resulted in fierce counter-hegemonic actions from rival Tamil paramilitary organisations. And in this bloody internecine warfare, hatred and revenge-counter revenge killings became the norm.

Driven by these events, 'doing one better' than the Tigers and exacting revenge became of paramount importance for rival Tamil paramilitaries thereby de-railing a united Tamil national liberation struggle once and for all. It is hardly surprising therefore, to find Tamil paramilitary organisations such as the PLOTE, EPDP and TELO fighting side by side with military units of the government of Sri Lanka against the LTTE proving right the adage that 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'. And in the 'extropunitive gaze' of many of those involved in internecine warfare, 'enemies from within' are definitely seen as 'the cause' for the failure or corruption of the Tamil national liberation struggle.

Nevertheless, the question of why internecine warfare between rival Tamil paramilitaries has been carried out more fiercely and effectively than between Tamil fighters and predominantly Sinhala soldiers on the government side is only partially answered through a discussion of hatred and revenge killings. The question of internecine warfare should also be addressed through an examination of other important issues pertaining to agents of political violence,

such as;

1. Logistical Capabilities;
2. Labeling/Disinformation;
3. Power/Hegemony.

**Logistical capabilities**-Such as familiarity/knowledge of enemy strength, weaknesses, movements, mobility, support, resources, the ability to discern fact from disinformation, combined with a thorough understanding of terrain/politico-cultural space---provide an enemy from within (i.e. rival Tamil paramilitaries in this case) far more opportunities to inflict more severe casualties than an enemy from without. Therefore, it becomes paramount (whenever possible), in military terms, to completely wipe out opposition or enemies from within---which in turn leads to ever spiralling, vicious and no holds barred combat. In Sri Lanka, such characteristics of internecine warfare could also be observed in the mainly intra-Sinhala conflict (from 1987 to 1990) between the forces of the government and the JVP (see Gunaratna 1990, Chandraprema 1991). It also explains to some extent as to why the predominantly Sinhala Sri Lankan military forces have fared badly in Tamil districts but were successful against the JVP in Sinhala districts.

**Labelling/Disinformation**-In situations of extreme ethno-nationalist conflicts there are increased chances for xenophobia to exist within a given community or group. Xenophobia and/or siege mentality enable easy labelling of 'traitors' and 'fifth columnists', who are given short shrift. Time and time again in Sri Lanka atrocities have been committed against such perceived 'traitors', who on many occasions have later turned out to be innocent civilians or persons targeted as a result of private quarrels. In all warfare, as in internecine conflict, labelling and disinformation go hand in hand. Therefore, when LTTE commanders identify members of other Tamil groups as being 'traitors', 'perpetrators of atrocities' or 'corrupt elements' (e.g. thieves, robbers, drug dealers) bringing discredit to the Tamil nation, it becomes easier for rank and file to justify their actions as well as to nurture hatred. The same is true for the LTTE's rivals (i.e. Tamil paramilitaries and members of the Sri Lankan armed forces), who use similar logic in their military and political campaigns.

**Power/hegemony**-Another aspect of internecine struggles for power and hegemony is to illustrate in no uncertain manner that 'we' are more powerful than (rival) others. Myths of superiority/inferiority fuel heightened competition between rival paramilitaries, who exert tremendous efforts to either 'prove' or 'disprove' the myth in concern since the capture of the high ground in popular imagination and culture is all important. All these complex factors then combine into a highly explosive cocktail, which fuels the passions, hatred and energies that revolve around revenge-counter revenge killings and constructions of political violence, as illustrated here by the case of Tamil paramilitaries.

## Concluding Remarks

*If we believe in absurdities we shall commit atrocities (Voltaire)*

In all the internecine warfare and revenge-counter killings between Tamil paramilitaries, 'hatred' has been an important galvanising and motivating factor. Hatred towards enemies makes it easy for commanders to order rank and file into fiercest of action and commit atrocities at will. This explains the LTTE's need to cultivate hatred at an organisational level and the adoption of pre-emptive and revenge killings as an effective stratagem of conquest.

The political culture of the LTTE prevails unchallenged, particularly in contemporary Jaffna society. Since the early 1980s the organisation has made more and more determined efforts to cultivate hatred directed at 'rival Tamil organisations' and 'the Sinhala dominated Sri Lankan state'. Thus far, the organisation has succeeded in achieving certain limited politico-military-cultural objectives, and appears to be reasonably well established for the time being--at least in the eyes of Prabhakaran and his field commanders.<sup>5</sup> The costs of such successes, both in human (e.g. in terms of distress, grief, suffering, morality, culture, etc.) and economic terms, have never been calculated. It is highly doubtful whether such considerations would be of major significance given the resumption of hostilities, to an organisation that is governed by military doctrine. In fact, at present, 'the costs of waging war' are portrayed through images (e.g. propaganda videos, operations) in order to generate more support in monetary terms for 'the war effort', both within and outside Sri Lanka (e.g. Europe, North America). Nevertheless, the most important question being asked in Sri Lanka today is whether the LTTE has the vision and fortitude to change course from its well honed routine of hatred, revenge killings and political violence.

From a global perspective, a handful of revolutionary, liberatory and nationalistic organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC), Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Irish Republican Army (IRA), have shown a willingness and long-sightedness to cope with the exigencies of peacetime politics, in opposition to the prolongation of war. True enough, there are many obstacles and frustrations along the way, in opting for long term solutions, ending bloodshed and coming to negotiated political settlements. On the other hand, there is the chaos, carnage and lawlessness of contemporary Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chechnia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, to name but a few random hot spots in this post-Cold War globe.

What the final outcome will be for the long suffering peoples of the North-East and West of Sri Lanka remains open to speculation. Peace remains in the rest of Sri Lanka, only if there is political will and conviction *simultaneously*, on part of both the LTTE and the present government. And as far as the North-East per se is concerned, long lasting peace will be an option only once the LTTE and its Tamil rivals are able to 'bury their hatchets' and accommodate each other's point of view, as well as those of the Muslim and Sinhala polities in the East.

## Notes

1. The author is attached to the Centre for Asian Studies, Amsterdam (CASA) and the Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam as a PhD researcher.

2. Buss has noted that there are problems in defining harm, which includes both physical and psychological harm (Buss 1971:7-18). These problems apply in turn to the element of 'injury', which in this paper refers to physical damage or hurt as well as psychological trauma. One of the methods of assuaging the problems that arise from such a definition, as the one used in this paper, is to apply a legally accepted definition of the terms physical damage or hurt and psychological trauma. What we really need is an international covenant that clearly defines such terms, especially in the context of civil wars.

3. In this respect, the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina is unprecedented, where more than 20,000 Muslim women are reported to have been systematically subjected to political rape by Serbian soldiers and irregulars up to 1993 (Conclusion of a series of BBC World Service Radio Reports, on the findings of a Special Human Rights Commission, assigned to investigate the issue of political rape Bosnia-Herzegovina). Also see the article by Silva Meznaric (1994) 'Gender as an Ethno-Marker: Rape, War, and Identity Politics in Former Yugoslavia' in a volume edited by Valentine Moghadam.

4. As far as the government of Sri Lanka is concerned, torture is prohibited by Article 11 of the 1978 Constitution, the Penal Code and the Police Ordinance. In spite of these considerable legal safeguards, torture has been used and continues to be used by the country's armed forces and police with impunity. And as far as anti-state paramilitaries are concerned, there is absolutely no convention (local or international) that prohibits the use of torture. This illustrates glaring deficiencies in the implementation of existing constitutional and legal safeguards, and the dire need for an international covenant that binds anti-state forces to acceptable standards of behaviour, in the eyes of the world community.

5. For a different perspective on this issue, see my article (1995a) titled-'The Efficacy of "Combat Mode": Organisation, Political Violence, Affect and Cognition in the Case of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam' in a volume edited by Pradeep Jeganathan and Qadri Ismail.

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