

# Letters from Batticaloa: TMVP's Emergence and the Transmission of Conflict in Eastern Sri Lanka

Berichten uit Batticaloa:  
De opkomst van TMVP en de Overdracht van Conflict in Oost Sri Lanka  
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

## Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Utrecht  
Op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof.dr.G.J. van der Zwaan,  
Ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties  
In het openbaar te verdedigen op  
Vrijdag 11 Oktober 2013 des middags te 12.45 uur.

Door

Ariel Sánchez Meertens  
Geboren op 20 Januari 1979 te Bogotá, Colombia

Promotoren: Prof. dr. D.A.N.M. Kruijt  
Prof. Dr. C.G. Koonings

Dit proefschrift werd mede mogelijk gemaakt met financiële steun van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (IS Academie) en de Marie Curie Actions beurs toegekend door de Europese Commissie (Sustainable peacebuilding Programme, Seventh Framework).

# Table of Contents

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| Acknowledgements  | 6          |
| List of Acronyms  | 10         |
| Map of Sri Lanka  | 12         |
| <b>INTRODUCTION: CONFLICT TRANSMISSION &amp; TRANSFORMATION</b>               | <b>14</b>  |
| CURRENT DEBATES, GAPS AND NEW QUESTIONS                                       | 16         |
| THE IMPOSSIBLE NUTSHELLS: CONTEXTUAL REFERENCES                               | 19         |
| <i>NOTES ON THE SRI LANKAN CONFLICT</i>                                       | 20         |
| <i>THE EASTERN PROVINCE</i>   | 23         |
| <i>ARMED CONFLICT IN THE EAST</i>   | 26         |
| <i>FRAGILE FUTURE, PIVOTAL LEGACY</i>   | 29         |
| ANALYTICAL STRATEGY   | 30         |
| <i>SEMANTIC ALLIANCES</i>   | 37         |
| METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES   | 39         |
| OUTLINE   | 43         |
| <b>1. THE DAWN OF THE SPLIT</b>   | <b>47</b>  |
| 1.1. A TRIGGERING MESSAGE   | 47         |
| 1.2. D- NIGHT   | 51         |
| 1.2.1. <i>THE FIRST LETTER FROM BATTICALOA</i>                                | 53         |
| 1.3. MARCH 2004: DISCURSIVE BATTLES AND MILITARY STANDOFF                     | 62         |
| 1.3.1. <i>THE FIRST DAYS</i>  | 62         |
| 1.3.2. <i>OPERATION KARUNA: LTTE'S RESPONSE</i>                               | 65         |
| 1.4. GOOD FRIDAY'S CRUCIFIXION  | 68         |
| 1.5. ANALYTICAL RECAPITULATION  | 72         |
| <b>2. ACRONYMS OF AN IDENTITY IN TRANSITION</b>                               | <b>75</b>  |
| 2.1. ORGANISING THE REVOLT  | 76         |
| 2.1.1. WHIRLWIND MEMORIES: PILLAYAN'S JOURNEY                                 | 78         |
| 2.1.2. THE MUSLIM WITH THE VOICE OF A TIGER                                   | 81         |
| 2.2. BAPTISING THE REVOLT: THE SECOND LETTER                                  | 84         |
| 2.2.1. THE BIRTH OF THE POLITICAL WING  | 87         |
| 2.2.2. THE COMEBACK OF THE BOY WITH THE SEVEN NAMES                           | 88         |
| 2.3. NAMING AND THE LETTERS FROM BATTICALOA                                   | 90         |
| 2.3.1. <i>T FOR TAMILNESS: IDENTITY AND THE JAFFNA- BATTICALOA OPPOSITION</i> | 94         |
| 2.3.2. EELAM DELETED: PLACE, TIME, DESIRE AND THE STATE                       | 97         |
| 2.3.3. M FOR PEOPLE: SUBJECTIVITY, COMMUNITY AND EMOTION IN TMVP              | 99         |
| 2.3.4. V FOR LIBERATION: RESISTANCE AND THE QUEST FOR FREEDOM                 | 103        |
| 2.3.5. P FOR TIGERS: KEEPING THE TOTEM ALIVE                                  | 105        |
| 2.4. RECAPITULATION   | 106        |
| <b>3. GEOGRAPHY, ECONOMY &amp; ICONOGRAPHY OF TMVP</b>                        | <b>108</b> |
| 3.1. THE NUMERICAL STRUGGLE: ON TMVP'S SIZE                                   | 111        |
| 3.2. GENDERED TRANSITION: WOMEN'S ENIGMATIC ABSENCE                           | 118        |
| 3.3. FINANCING TMVP   | 123        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 3.3.1. MONEY KILLS  | 125        |
| 3.3.2. MONEY SPLITS   | 127        |
| <b>3.4. ENMITIES, GENERATIONAL SHIFT AND DISCURSIVE AUTOPSY</b>   | <b>128</b> |
| 3.4.1. GENERATIONAL SHIFT   | 130        |
| 3.4.2. BRIEF AUTOPSY OF TMVP'S 'HEROES'                           | 131        |
| <b>3.5. LOCAL PLACES; DIASPORIC SPACES: A GEOGRAPHY OF TMVP</b>   | <b>132</b> |
| 3.5.1. SPACES I AND II  | 133        |
| 3.5.2. SPACE III  | 133        |
| 3.5.3. SPACE IV   | 135        |
| <b>3.6. DIASPORA, GHOST MEMBERS AND ALLIANCES</b>                 | <b>139</b> |
| <b>3.7. WORDING AND IMAGING THE REVOLT</b>                        | <b>142</b> |
| 3.7.1. 'UNMORTAL TRUTHS'  | 143        |
| 3.7.2. MILK AS POISON   | 145        |
| 3.7.3. FROM RIFLES AND BULLETS TO RICE, HANDS AND SUNRAYS         | 147        |
| 3.7.4. WAVES OF MEANING   | 149        |
| 3.7.5. A BOAT IN A POLITICAL SEA                                  | 150        |
| <b>3.8. ANALYTICAL RECAPITULATION</b>                             | <b>153</b> |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>4. TMVP'S IMPLOSION AND PARAMILITARY DEMOCRACY</b>             | <b>158</b> |
| 4.1. KARUNA'S RETURN AND THE LIBERATION OF THE EAST               | 159        |
| 4.2. THE MAGNA CARTA AND THE NINE COMMANDMENTS                    | 162        |
| 4.2.1. THE UNICEF LETTER  | 163        |
| 4.3. THE MINNERIYA SUMMIT AND TMVP'S IMPLOSION                    | 166        |
| 4.4. FLUID LOYALTIES: A CONCEPTUAL VIGNETTE                       | 171        |
| 4.5. THE APRC PROPOSALS   | 174        |
| 4.6. INTERLUDE OF DEFIANCE, SUFFERING AND RESILIENCE              | 175        |
| 4.7. THE REBEL'S REBEL BEHIND BARS                                | 178        |
| 4.8. ELECTIONS AND THE EASTERN PROVINCE PARAMILITARY DEMOCRACY    | 180        |
| 4.9. KARUNA'S RETURN, TMVP'S DDR AND THEIR ELECTORAL FIASCO       | 183        |
| 4.9.1. KARUNA'S COMEBACK AND TMVP'S DISARMAMENT                   | 183        |
| 4.9.2. VOTED MISCALCULATION                                       | 185        |
| 4.9.3. ETHNOGRAPHIC EXCURSION: A DAY IN TMVP'S CAMPAIGN           | 186        |
| 4.10. CLOSURE: TMVP HEROES' DAY                                   | 189        |
| 4.11. RECAPITULATION  | 196        |
| <br>  |            |
| <b>5. THE SOCIAL REPRODUCTION OF WAR</b>                          | <b>198</b> |
| 5.1 FRAMING THE METHODOLOGICAL SHIFT                              | 199        |
| 5.2. GENERATIONS, YOUTH AND VIOLENCE                              | 204        |
| 5.3. EDUCATION AS LOCUS OF CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA     | 206        |
| 5.4. CONFLICT IN TEXTBOOKS  | 209        |
| 5.4.1. HISTORY TEXTBOOKS  | 210        |
| 5.4.2. CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TEXTBOOKS                            | 212        |
| 5.4.3. LTTE'S TEXTBOOK DEFIANCE                                   | 213        |
| 5.4.4. POST-EXAMS OPTIONS   | 214        |
| 5.5. SCHOOLS AS CONDENSED SPACES OF CONFLICT TRANSMISSION         | 215        |
| 5.6. EDUCATORS' VOICES IN AND ABOUT CONFLICT                      | 218        |
| 5.7. THE YOUTH'S CONSUMPTION OF CONFLICT KNOWLEDGE                | 225        |
| 5.7.1. SPACES AND SOURCES OF CONFLICT KNOWLEDGE: MEDIA AND FAMILY | 226        |
| 5.7.2. SPACES AND SOURCES OF CONFLICT KNOWLEDGE: TEACHERS         | 228        |
| 5.7.3. ARMED ACTORS, POLITICIANS AND VICTIMS                      | 228        |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 5.7.4. PERSPECTIVES ON THE GENESIS AND ARGUMENTS OF WAR                           | 230        |
| 5.7.5. PERSONAL AND SOCIALISED MEMORIES OF VIOLENCE                               | 235        |
| 5.7.6. EPISODIC MEMORY REGISTERS  | 235        |
| 5.7.7. SEMANTIC MEMORY  | 237        |
| 5.7.7 UNNAMED TRANSMISSION SITES  | 239        |
| 5.7.8. FORMER COMBATANTS' SOURCES AND KNOWLEDGE ON CONFLICT                       | 241        |
| 5.8. RETRACING TRANSMISSION: A RECAPITULATION                                     | 247        |
| <b>ANALYTICAL CONCLUSIONS:TMVP &amp; THE TRANSMISSION OF CONFLICT</b>             | <b>251</b> |
| <b>Semantic Alliances In the Conflict Sustainability &amp; Transformation</b>     | <b>251</b> |
| CONFLICT SUSTAINED  | 257        |
| CONFLICT TRANSFORMED  | 264        |
| FINAL REMARKS   | 264        |
| Annex 1 Interviewed main protagonists of TMVP's emergence                         | 265        |
| Annex 2 Additional TMVP members and protagonists in the Sri Lankan armed conflict | 269        |
| Annex 3 Questionnaire in Tamil  | 270        |
| Annex 4 Questionnaire in English  | 276        |
| Annex 5 Questionnaire in Sinhala  | 280        |
| <b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>   | <b>287</b> |
| Samenvatting in het Nederlands  | 309        |
| Curriculum Vitae  | 315        |

## List of Figures and Tables

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Figure Intro 1 Ethnic Composition of the Eastern Province              | 23  |
| Figure Intro 2 Basic Chronology of TMVP                                | 45  |
| Figure 3.1 Number of Karuna/TMVP combatants                            | 114 |
| Figure 4.1 LTTE's Logo   | 146 |
| Figure 4.2 TMVP Logo   | 147 |
| Figure 4.3 TMVP Flag   | 147 |
| Figure 4.4 TMVP Campaign Poster  | 150 |
| Figure 4.5 TMVP 2010 Election Logo                                     | 152 |
| Figure 5.1 The appearances of Tamils in the grade 7 history textbook   | 210 |
| Figure 5.2 When did the conflict start according to you? (students)    | 231 |
| Figure 5.3 Why did the conflict start?                                 | 232 |
| Figure 5.4 Who do you consider were (are) the main actors of Conflict? | 234 |
| Table 3.1 TMVP Monthly expenses October 2006.....                      | 123 |
| Table 4.1 TMVP Military Wing Regulations.....                          | 162 |

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea of an author has recurrently come under attack, and with good reason. There are people speaking in this dissertation whose names I ignore; ideas that inspired lines in this text without my conscious permission; phrases whispered to me by pop culture or elusive encounters. Yet, there is also an extraordinary crowd of contributors that I am aware of and without whom this effort (and perhaps I in general) would be completely lost.

Words found their place due to fundamental institutional arrangements facilitating this investigation. First, this research was made possible thanks to the collaboration between the University of Utrecht and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (known as the IS-Academy). This partnership gave me the chance to work closely with the staff of the Netherlands Embassy in Colombo (Sri Lanka), the support of which was indispensable at all levels, from visa procedures to Dutch grammar correction. There, assistance came most notably from H.E. Leoni Cuelenaere, Ferdinand Lahnstein, Aru Gunawardena, Chinta McKenzie, Bas van Noordenne and Jaco Beerends.

For this venture, the fellowship I was awarded in 2011 by the European Commission (Marie Curie Actions of the Sustainable Peacebuilding Programme) was equally important. In fact, the latter allowed me to benefit from the facilities and expertise of the University of Ulster's International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE), where the last bit of this thesis was written. There, my work became possible due to the support and care of people like Ann-Marie Dorrity, Shonagh Higgenbotham, Gillian Robinson, Brandon Hamber, Stephen Ryan and Kenneth Bush. Ken even provided me with means of academic and physical transportation, crucial life advice and more importantly, a transcending friendship. Meanwhile, in Utrecht I received throughout my PhD trajectory the constant backing by the entire academic and administrative staff and perhaps of Kootje Willemse in particular, who with her infinite patience always ensured I did what was required, when it was fitting and in the way it was expected.

Moreover, the arguments made in this academic effort would remain powerless and unintelligible were it not for the sagacious and critical assessments made by my peers (particularly during the 'Aio overleg' sessions) and naturally by my supervisors

prof.dr. Dirk Kruijt and prof.dr. Kees Koonings. Their commitment to finding the right balance between this author's stubborn ambitions and the readers' expectations demanded extensive readings and re-readings on their behalf. I thank you for your dedication, persistence, and sharpness.

My colleague Floortje Toll and I started our doctoral journey together. I must confess I envy the speed with which she learned about the Colombian conflict, not to mention her absurd proficiency in Spanish with its unique mix of 'platense' and 'pastuso' accents. Although she makes my own knowledge of Colombia, as well as my language skills look rather bleak, I'm willing to forgive her because of her always honest friendship, cooperation and extended conversations -academic or otherwise- that made many grey afternoons in Utrecht so much more bearable.

I also witnessed Katrien Klep getting her dissertation finalised, which inspired me to pursue my own project with similar passion and perseverance. Besides, I could always count on her for advice about anything that came to mind. In fact, I believe our friendship owes much to our mutual eavesdropping and follow-up conversations about the Spanish-spoken phone calls with our partners, generally dealing with Dutch immigration policy.

And then there is Tessa Diphorn. She became my first guide to undertaking research in Sri Lanka, a country she introduced to me with the help of a few Belgian beers, when I was still a master student in Utrecht. Since then, I have enjoyed her company during the ever so transcending cigarette breaks in life, often following one of her awe-inspiring presentations about 'Bravo Mike' incidents in Durban. But above all, I suppose I should be grateful for once making sure I left Bilbao alive, after a slightly over-enthusiastic celebration of a successful workshop...

I also benefitted greatly from several Sri Lanka roundtables held mostly in Switzerland and the Netherlands. During these exercises I met people that helped me find my way in the land of *the singing fish* and the *lord's sacred hill*. Among them were persons like Rebecca Walker, Benedikt Korf, Timmo Gaasbeek, Jonathan Goodhand and Bart Klem. Likewise, my interest and understandings of the island's social dynamics grew exponentially due to my exchanges with Georg Frerks, Jonathan Spencer, Dennis McGilvray, Sharika Thiranagama, Ram Manikkalingam, Ramani de Silva, Manouri Muttetuwegama, Malathi de Alwis and Pradeep Jeganathan. I hope conversations with all of them may recur with some curry in our

fingers, be it surrounded by the waves of the Indian Ocean or in some other serendipitous corner of the world.

Of course I'm deeply thankful to the interviewees -students, teachers, former combatants, and other victims of violence, NGO-workers, advisors, government officials-, all willing to sacrifice their time and share their knowledge as well as their life experience with me. What I can offer in return is rather humble, but I hope I do at least justice to the narratives and issues they aspired to have both acknowledged and recorded. A documentation that, I cannot stress this enough, would otherwise been impossible were it not for the crucial assistance of people like Kathyana Samarasinghe, Sanoon, Nirooparaj Balachandran and indeed Nilam Hamead. Nilam has been research assistant to so many -and through so many years- that I sincerely believe his memoirs could become a highly valuable – albeit dangerously revealing- publication, if he ever decided to pursue its writing. I am in any case truly grateful for his work, integrity and hospitality.

One afternoon in 2007 I waited for the person in charge of photocopies to return from his tea break at the National Library in Colombo. A curious man standing in line eventually ventured to ask what I was looking for. I gave him a vague, uncompromising and rehearsed reply, but I failed to fool him. Instead, he told me with a smile he was a journalist and knew plenty of people I could interview. After pondering for a day or two I decided to contact him. He delivered on all his promises and was ultimately responsible for sparking my interest in what a year later became my main PhD research topic. What's more, *Vira* became my overall problem-solver; indeed, if I ever faced an impasse his answer was always the same: 'I can manage'. And yes, he always did manage. I'm immensely grateful for what he has done for me as a research assistant, but much more for his friendship and genuine concern for my wife's and my own wellbeing.

My Colombian friends may have had little direct influence on the thesis itself, but they've had an enormous impact on the development of my critical thinking. True, they regularly degraded philosophy to banality; but somehow they achieved this with such finesse, musicality and camaraderie, that they rendered daily routines with an invigorating and lasting sacredness. On a similar vein, although I am not a dweller of the metaphysical world, it is hard to deny the power of the countless prayers the Quintero and Carrillo families pledged for the happy completion of this endeavour. I am deeply indebted to them; after all, there is no denying that achieving this has been somewhat of a miracle.

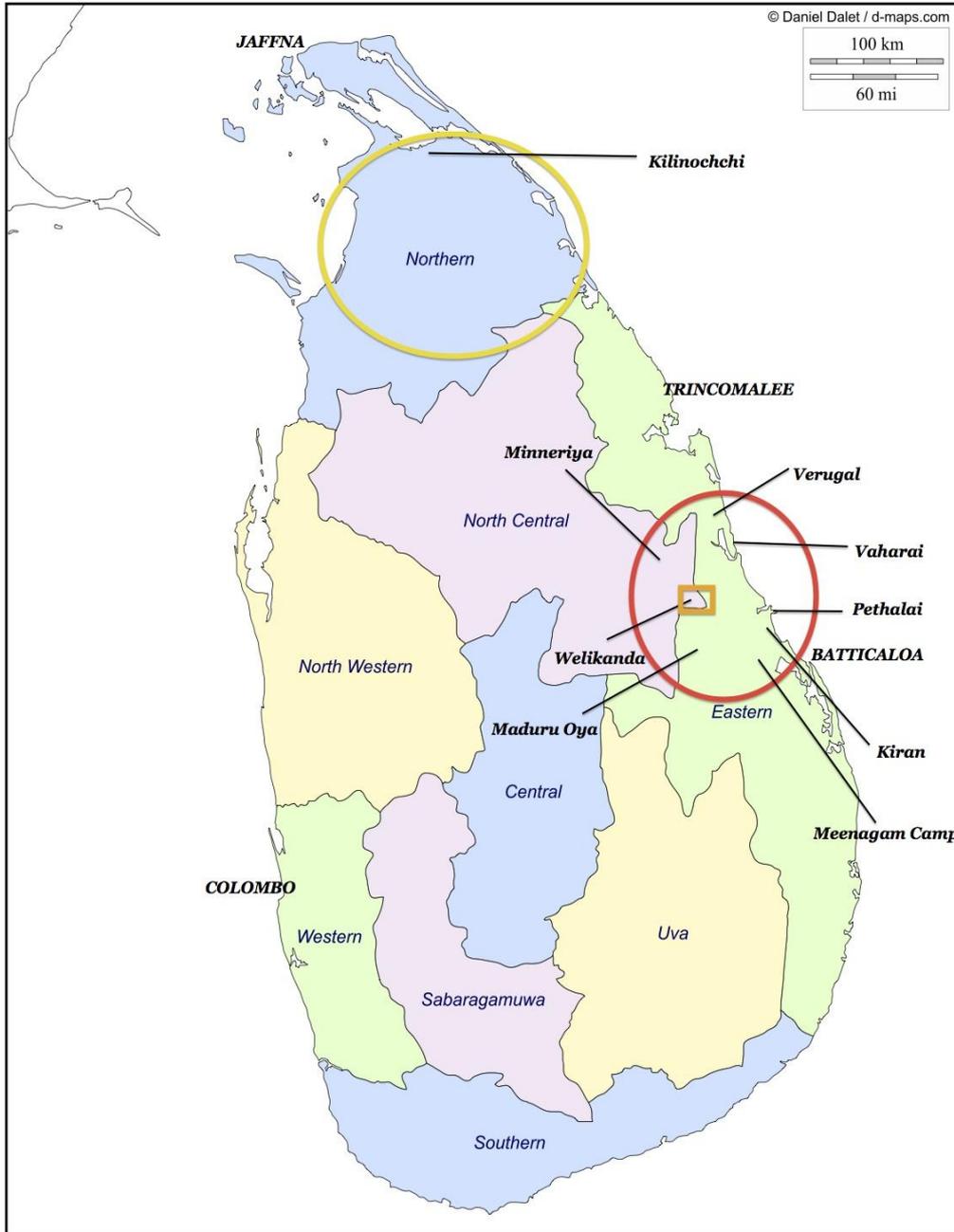
Finally, both my parents and my younger brother are social scientists working on topics related to conflict; and so too is my wife. They provided a luxurious pool of knowledge and expertise I was constantly able to draw from. They were the most tenacious critics, but also the most loyal readers, the best role-models, as well as wonderful sources of inspiration and unconditional support. My parents and my brother had the luck of having to affront this from a distance. My wife, on the other hand, had to endure five years of monothematic dinner conversations, seemingly endless periods of writer's block and equally recurrent 'all-nighters'. This is likely to have put her on the verge of insanity, proof of which is the fact that she actually married me in the midst of my PhD delirium. The advantage is, however, that I have my entire life to repay her for the advice, corrections (textual and behavioural), inspiration and infinite love she has provided me with throughout this journey.

## List of Acronyms

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| <b>APRC</b>  | All Party Representatives Committee                 | Appointed in 2006 to formulate proposals for Constitutional reform as resolution of the national question |
| <b>CDA</b>   | Critical Discourse Analysis                         |   |
| <b>CFA</b>   | Cease Fire Agreement                                | 2002-2008   |
| <b>CID</b>   | Criminal Investigations department                  |   |
| <b>ENDLF</b> | Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front          | Tamil militant group exiled in India  |
| <b>EPDP</b>  | Eelam People Democratic Party                       | Tamil party and militant group allied with government under UPFA  |
| <b>EPRLF</b> | Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front       | Tamil political party and militant group partially with TNA   |
| <b>EROS</b>  | Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students        | Precursor to many Tamil militant movements  |
| <b>HRW</b>   | Human Rights Watch                                  |   |
| <b>ICG</b>   | International Crisis Group                          | INGO  |
| <b>IPKF</b>  | Indian Peace Keeping Forces                         | In Sri Lanka after Indo Lanka Accord of 1987  |
| <b>ITAK</b>  | Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi                          | Constituent part of TNA (see below)   |
| <b>JHU</b>   | Jathika Hela Urumaya (National Heritage Party)      | Sinhala Nationalist party formed in 2004 by Buddhist monks  |
| <b>JVP</b>   | Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna People's Liberation Front | Communist party (Sinhala Nationalist) which orchestrated two failed insurrections in the South            |
| <b>LTTE</b>  | Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam                    | 1976-2009 leader: Vellupillai Prabhakaran   |
| <b>PLOTE</b> | People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam     | Former insurgency, partially under TNA  |
| <b>RAW</b>   | Research and Analysis Wing                          | Intelligence branch of Indian security  |
| <b>SAAG</b>  | South Asia Analysis Group                           |   |
| <b>SATP</b>  | South Asia Terrorism Portal                         |   |

|                |  |   |
|----------------|--|---|
| <b>SLA</b>     | Sri Lankan Army  |   |
| <b>SLFP</b>    | Sri Lankan Freedom Party   | Currently in power with Mahinda Rajapakse as President  |
| <b>SLMC</b>    | Sri Lankan Muslim Congress   | Main Muslim party   |
| <b>SLMM</b>    | Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission  | During peace process: 2002-2008   |
| <b>TELO</b>    | Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation  | Former Tamil militants now mainly in TNA  |
| <b>TIVM</b>    | Tamileela Iykkiya Viduthalai Munnani [Tamil Eelam United Liberation Front] | Brief alliance between TMVP and ENDLF   |
| <b>TMVK</b>    | Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Kootani [Tamil People Liberation Alliance]         | Brief spin off TMVP led by Karuna   |
| <b>TMVP</b>    | Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal [Tamil People Liberation Tigers]           | 2004 – Initial leader Karuna; currently Pillayan  |
| <b>TNA</b>     | Tamil National Alliance  | Currently a coalition of Tamil parties and former militant groups. Main Tamil political force |
| <b>TULF</b>    | Tamil United Liberation Front  | Militant political party partially under TNA  |
| <b>UNP</b>     | United National Party  | Main opposition party led by R. Wickeramasinghe   |
| <b>UPFA</b>    | United People's Freedom Alliance   | Alliance of 17 parties among which SLFP, TMVP, JHU, EPDP, SLMC                                |
| <b>UTHR(J)</b> | University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna)                              | Sri Lankan organisation   |

# Map of Sri Lanka



- **TMVP's main area of operations**
  - **Location of TMVP's main training camps**
  - **Vanni Centre of LITE's control**
- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Minneriya</b>     | Location of crucial TMVP meeting                         |
| <b>Maduru Oya</b>    | Initial TMVP training area                               |
| <b>Meenagam Camp</b> | Allegedly where Karuna wrote the first letter of dissent |
| <b>Kiran</b>         | Karuna's hometown  |
| <b>Pethalai</b>      | Pillayan's hometown                                      |
| <b>Verugal</b>       | Site of the Good Friday Battle                           |

# INTRODUCTION

---

## *CONFLICT TRANSMISSION & TRANSFORMATION*

In March 2004, a man known as Karuna Amman announced his defection from the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), an armed group seeking the formation of an independent Tamil state in the North and East of Sri Lanka<sup>1</sup>. Six months after his defection, along with that of thousands of fighters under his command, Karuna launched a new political movement – the *Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal* (TMVP)<sup>2</sup> – entering mainstream politics while still engaged in counterinsurgency operations against his former rebel partners. Five years later, in May 2009, the Sri Lankan civil war came to an end, by when Karuna – just a lustrum back, the military commander of one of the world’s most sophisticated insurgencies – was part of the Sri Lankan Government, initially serving as Minister for National Integration and Reconciliation.

In this book, I will argue that Karuna’s defection and TMVP’s formation were crucial factors in bringing the Sri Lankan civil war to an end. At the same time, I will also maintain that TMVP is a collective embodiment of the intergenerational transmission of violent practices and legitimising narratives through which the war was perpetuated *and* altered. Thus, TMVP condenses both a socio-political transformation and a cross-generational knowledge transfer, reflecting two key processes that I claim sustain and change any war over prolonged periods of time. Therefore, the documentation and critical analysis of TMVP’s formation provides a unique opportunity to expand and challenge current debates, particularly in conflict studies and anthropology, and arguably represents the reason why this investigation is of considerable value to scholars interested in any case of collective armed contestation or identity politics around the world.

Evidently, TMVP’s formation did not occur in a social vacuum. Hence, engaging with TMVP’s emergence ultimately demands an exploration of how this phenomenon is a product and potential producer of certain epistemologies of conflict. After all, the lived

---

<sup>1</sup> The LTTE was formed in 1976 and was led by Velupillai Prabhakaran until his death in May 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Tamil Peoples Liberation Tigers.

experiences of violence and the ways of knowing and reflecting about it are indeed inseparable processes (Robben & Nordstrom, 1995).

Despite being acknowledged by many as significant events, Karuna's defection and the subsequent formation of TMVP appear merely as a footnote in the narratives of the Sri Lankan Civil War. However, aside from being historically relevant, this twin phenomenon speaks directly to crucial issues pertaining to the anthropology of war, the sociology of armed groups and the politics of identity. In fact, the present study echoes Waterston's (2009) tripartite "accounting" constitutive of an anthropology of war in that it is an ethnographically informed representation, a rendition aspiring to explain war as a phenomenon (account as explanatory frame), and finally, in that it seeks to contribute to a minimum of accountability in the aftermath of decades of violence in Sri Lanka (account as ethical imperative).

Moreover, investigations informing violent conflicts and the sociology of armed actors must focus on the set of opportunities exploitable for entrepreneurs of violence to mobilise, the organisational structures needed to sustain violent efforts and the framing process by which the goals are presented to adherents, opponents and third parties (King 2007:117). This book addresses all three dimensions of inquiry surrounding the formation of TMVP, traversed by the under-researched themes (despite their centrality in explaining civil war outcomes) of defection and dissidence (Staniland 2012:17).

Emphasising that social identities are constructed, fluid and manipulable is no longer sufficient in dealing with such processes. However, in the context of a civil war, where issues of ethnicity dictate the debates, it remains a necessity to explore how such construction takes place, how belongings are modified and how differences are instrumentalised to mobilise and legitimise (violent) collective enterprises. Therefore, the politics of identity is a crucial point of reference in this endeavour, albeit one that needs to be transcended. Accordingly, a departing strategy is to treat a term like ethnicity as "perspectives on the world rather than entities in the world" (Brubaker, 2004:4-12). Among other things, this shift enables approaching the process of group-making as efforts that can fail or only be partially achieved. Many analysts could in effect claim TMVP represented an attempt at creating a new solidarity and undergoing a transition from war to politics that ultimately failed. Maybe. Nonetheless, failures also shape history.

In order to avoid presenting TMVP's formation as being detached from larger social processes, considerable effort within this investigation is devoted to the exploration of how the nexus education, knowledge and conflict operate in the sustainability and mutations of war. Indeed, besides the military means, geopolitical circumstances and the financial resources, the perpetuation of armed conflict requires a repertoire of practices and symbolic mechanisms to transfer legitimising discourses to the new generations engaged in, supportive of, or affected by violence. This process occurs within armed organisations, but also outside of them. In one way or another, the state has to explain the presence of conflict to its citizens, while the armed actors need to legitimise their existence to the civilians that they claim to represent and protect. Depending on the interaction between these fields, particular ways of sustaining conflict are achieved, sometimes rigidly transmitting, and occasionally radically transforming certain practices and narratives. How this occurs is recurrently addressed throughout the coming chapters.

### *Current Debates, Gaps and New Questions*

Much has already been written about the Sri Lankan armed conflict(s), with some of the existing literature exploring the trajectories in the relationships between the different ethnic communities and their nationalisms (de Silva 1986; Abeysekera and Gunasinghe 1987; Cheran 2001; Jeganathan and Ismael 1995; Roberts 1998). Other scholars focus on the economies of war, constitutional arrangements or power devolution (Kelegama 2002; Senaratne 2003; Welikala 2008), while a significant body of anthropological research has emerged, initially concerned with the possibility of violence and its causes, and subsequently with the (daily-life) experiences of violence and suffering (Kapferer 1998; Spencer 1990; Tambiah 1992; Lawrence 1998; Winslow and Woost 2004). In many such cases, there are implicit discussions concerning the socialisation of conflict, with some revealing unexpected sites of knowledge transfer or forms of remembering violence. In discovering those subtle mechanisms, the paradox emerges that people's more overt forms of (re)producing and transforming knowledge on conflict have been neglected. Therefore, the linkages made between experiential realities registered by anthropologists and the larger transmissional processes rendering explanations of war's sustainability and alterations remain incomplete<sup>3</sup>. Tackling such conceptual deficiency - in conjunction

---

<sup>3</sup> Recently, a closer look into transmission has appeared in Sharika Thiranagama's (2011) work, dealing with war's production of social spaces and subjectivities in northern Sri Lanka. We interrogate similar processes, although our regional focus and analytical frame is different.

with the fact that TMVP's emergence has not yet been systematically accounted for (beyond situational reports) - should render this effort a worthy contribution to Sri Lankan scholarship.

This endeavour also brings considerations on knowledge transfer hitherto anchored in post-conflict debates back to the centre of the explanations of war. In fact, it extends such inquiry - dominated by discussions on memory politics - to the larger process of cognition. In doing so, this book will take the debate beyond (yet does not ignore) experiential realities and fixed framing structures, addressing both subjectivities and collectivities, while transcending the artificial analytical limits between processes occurring within armed actors and those happening among unarmed civilians. The aspiration is to achieve this by presenting and investigating the *letters from Batticaloa* – both epistolary and acronymic - that gave birth to the central phenomenon of this investigation: the TMVP<sup>4</sup>.

This book intertwines the life histories and direct accounts of key protagonists in TMVP's formation based on ethnographic work and extended interviews held with many actors within the organisation, including the main leaders Karuna and Pillayan. Concurrently, multiple forms and sites of knowledge transfer are knit together to capture the discursive intergenerational knowledge transmissions that preceded TMVP's formation: processes that are crucial for the conflict's three decade-long protraction. In fact, dealing with these socio-cultural fabrications implies the ambition of contributing to an integrated theory on the dynamics of civil war grounded in discussions about *transmission* and *transformation*. After all, as the pages ahead will underscore, studying change and studying continuity are one and the same endeavour.

In order to reach such integration, a series of conceptual dialogues will be developed, which in turn will lead towards the formulation of the new notion of *semantic alliances*, the mechanism through which I claim transmission and transformation are articulated to explain the sustainability and variations of civil wars. The questions guiding this contribution are thus:

---

<sup>4</sup> The importance of epistolary letters in TMVP's formation will be made explicit throughout the chapters.

RQ1: How was the Sri Lankan war transformed by TMVP's emergence as a paramilitary force and political movement?

Whereas this first question emerges from a gap in the documentation of a socio-historical phenomenon with crucial political and military consequences, the second question below arises from a gap in theoretical explanations on the social reproduction of war. In fact, it points to the larger processes of knowledge production and consumption within which TMVP is embedded; thus, begging the question:

RQ2: How did the ways of knowing and transmitting armed conflict (a process ultimately transformed by TMVP's formation) enable its sustainability for over three decades of systematic violence, affecting and involving multiple generations?

Evidently, there is a whole string of subsidiary questions, such as how the split that led to TMVP's formation came about in the first place. Furthermore, it also requires a documentation and understanding of how the schism – originally one man's revolt - transformed into a new organised movement with a distinct identity construct. Attention must be paid to the mechanisms set in motion to stabilise the emergent solidarity, thus rendering this new enterprise sustainable. It is necessary to consider how the movement became a political party, and thus how it entered the world of democratic contest. Moreover, it is imperative to expand the analysis to examine how the possibility of armed action is manufactured, transferred and refashioned throughout different bodies of knowledge – textual or physical, - as well as how those comprehensions (and hence the possibility of TMVP) are intergenerationally and trans-locally sustained.

Such an exercise unavoidably demands the revision of concepts such as identity, ethnicity and nationalism, as well as processes like naming (framing), participation in violent action, defection, fragmentation and loyalty. Similarly, asking about transmission takes us to the practices of remembrance and forgetting, teaching and acquiring knowledge as well as producing and consuming meaning. This constellation of debates finally sparks yet another crosscutting inquiry of the present research: echoing Schmidt and Schroeder (2001:9), how is past violence (and perceptions of social problems and identities) discursively linked to present day violence? Here, the concept of semantic alliances will prove its full value by exposing the often-neglected intertwined processes occurring *within* an armed movement, across armed and non-armed actors, and *among* the domains of civil society.

The framework selected to answer these questions predominantly builds on a combination of experiential and discursive approaches to conflict research. However, this is not to say that a political economy of conflict is neglected or that instrumental approaches to violence are ignored; rather, it implies that arguments are aligned in such a way to emphasise the cultural mechanisms at play in the reproduction of armed conflict.

## The Impossible Nutshells: Contextual References

Establishing how far you need to go to make sense of an unravelling conflict is not only complicated, but also reflects a fundamental aspect of the discursive battles of the conflict itself. My way of dealing with this is twofold. The first set of limits I consider are those rendered by the central subjects in this research's analysis. What are the historical boundaries that they seek? The second limit is marked by what I, as an author, consider that the readers need to know: not to understand the conflict, but to understand the actor's narratives and my analysis of them. For I am not seeking to explain the causes of conflict but rather to show how history is deployed and employed. Therefore, instead of fixing the ultimate hermeneutical frontier, the crucial question is how specific actors link that historical limit to the need, desire or will of a present violent action.

In accordance with the above, what follows is a frame of reference intended only as the starting point of a conversation enabling a critical assessment of the narratives to come. It is not a description of the roots of conflict, but rather the presentation of the environment in which the discourses on conflict emerged, and of which they are also constitutive. The hope is that such contextualisation will fully engage both the reader familiar with Sri Lanka's history, as well as those new to it. Additional in-depth explorations of events considered as crucial will occur as they are referred in the narrative body of this dissertation<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> For a reader unfamiliar with the conflict in Sri Lanka wishing to explore different takes on its history in more detail, I suggest: Spencer, J (ed).1990; Tambiah, S. 1992; de Silva, K.M. 1998.

## *Notes on the Sri Lankan conflict*

Sri Lanka (known as Ceylon until 1972) obtained its independence in 1948 after centuries of colonial presence and rule, first by the Portuguese, the Dutch and finally the British. However, prior to the arrival of the Europeans, not one but several kingdoms - Sinhala and Tamil - covered the Island or parts of it; a factor occasionally used to argue that Sri Lanka's political and territorial unity is a colonial invention and hence one of the causes of the protracted conflict.

Regardless of this argument's validity, this does indicate the importance imprinted upon demographic distributions and its connections with identity categories in mapping the social unrest in the Island. For now, suffice it to say that the majoritarian population categorised as Sinhalese (74%), concentrated in the south and West of Sri Lanka, is predominantly Buddhist; the Tamil community (18%), mainly located in the North and East as well as in the central hill country, is mostly Hindu, (albeit with a significant group of Christians); while the Sri Lankan Moors (7%), most of whom live in the East and North-West, are Muslim; with the latter term generally implemented as an ethnic designation. The legitimising discourses of violence float within this intricate web of multiple diversities (ethnic, religious, linguistic, regional, caste), connecting them in different ways to governance (political power) and socioeconomic activity, most notably land tenure, employment and education (all of which can be broadly understood as resources).

The general elections of 1956 brought to power a coalition of Sinhalese-dominated parties catapulted by an upsurge in Buddhist nationalism, which claimed, among other things, their share in state employment hitherto perceived to be disproportionately in the hand of the northern Tamil (Hindu and Christian) population (Spencer 1990:2). Intermittent yet steadily increasing outbursts of violence occurred, framed in terms of ethnic rivalry between Tamils and Sinhalese, and more severely so following the establishment of Sinhala as the sole official language through the proclamation of the *Sinhala Only Act*<sup>6</sup>. In 1972, a new Constitution was promulgated in which Buddhism was given a foremost place in Sri Lanka and a standardisation policy in education was introduced. The latter was argued as an affirmative action

---

<sup>6</sup> The Sinhala Only Act made Sinhala the only official language of Ceylon.

meant to tackle disparities in tertiary education, and chiefly the disadvantage of the southern rural population. However, in practice, it resulted in a significant restriction to Tamil enrolment.

This was experienced as particularly discriminatory given the role attributed by the Tamil community to education for social mobility, especially in the context of land scarcity in their areas, and in stark contrast with the highly fertile grounds of the Sinhalese-dominated South. According to most actors at some point engaged in violence, it was the developments around 1972 that constituted the decisive spark pushing several Tamil movements to turn to arms and fight for an independent Tamil State. Indeed, even the more traditional and non-violent Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) supported the emerging ideology of separatism.

The TULF - back then the main Tamil political party - gradually lost control<sup>7</sup> and was overrun by the different armed factions proliferating in the mid-1970s, including the Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). However, it was only after the events of July 1983 (Black July) - when riots broke out all over the Island after 13 soldiers were killed in Jaffna - that the conflict transformed into a full-scale civil war<sup>8</sup>.

Between 1983 and 2009, more than 80,000 people were killed by violence connected to the armed conflict, with 2008 marking the bloodiest year in Sri Lankan history. The great majority of Tamil militant movements emerged in the northern Peninsula of Jaffna, considered the cultural centre of Tamils in Sri Lanka. However, during the years of armed struggle, a significant proportion of fighters came from the East (some even argue the majority), specifically from Batticaloa, a district often considered by the northerners as inferior in caste and culture. The latter would indeed become the epicentre of the revolt leading to TMVP's formation in 2004.

---

<sup>7</sup> Amongst other reasons, due to the loss of three crucial leaders (S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, G.G. Ponnambalam and M. Tiruchelvam), the disturbances of 1977 and 1981 violent incidents in Jaffna. For more see De Silva, K.M.1998.

<sup>8</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1983, 13 soldiers were ambushed by the LTTE in Jaffna. It was the biggest casualty suffered until then by the official forces. Allegedly as a reaction, mobs manipulated by political and religious leaders started riots in Colombo, then spreading all over Sri Lanka and killing thousands of Tamils; burning businesses and displacing entire communities. Although many armed groups already existed, the events of 1983 are considered the starting point of the Sri Lankan civil war by most literature.

Between its inception in 1976 and the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) in 1989<sup>9</sup>, the LTTE expanded to become the dominant Tamil armed movement, forcing others to join, flee or be killed. Their goal was the creation of an independent Tamil state based on their claimed homeland known as Eelam (North-East Sri Lanka). After the army retook the Jaffna peninsula in 1995, the little populated in-between area known as The Vanni (sometimes spelled as Wann) became the nucleus of LTTE controlled territory, with the town of Kilinochchi as its administrative capital. Losing the Jaffna Peninsula barely slowed the growth of the LTTE's military power and grip on the Tamil population, of whom they considered themselves to be the sole representatives within Sri Lanka's political arena.

After three major attempts to politically settle the armed conflict (the Thimpu talks of 1985, Premadasa talks of 1989 and Kumaratunge talks of 1994), hope for peace re-emerged in December 2001, when Ranil Wickremasinghe (then Prime Minister) officially requested Norway to assume the role of facilitator soon after the LTTE announced a unilateral ceasefire. In February 2002, a ceasefire agreement (CFA) was signed, with the first round of talks held later that year. Further rounds subsequently took place, exploring the possibilities of a federal model for a solution to the armed conflict within a united Sri Lanka; however, after several sessions in which very little progress was made, the LTTE unilaterally suspended the peace talks on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2003. Nonetheless, the claimed to remain committed to the ceasefire and peace process.

Subsequently, three critical events occurred in 2004. First, Karuna announced his defection in March (extensively treated in Chapter One). Less than a month later, the UNP (United National Party) lost the general elections to the SLFP (Sri Lankan Freedom Party), shifting the balance of power in the country's political field<sup>10</sup>. Finally, in December, a Tsunami killed more than 35,000 people in Sri Lanka alone, most of whom perished in the Eastern Province. Meanwhile, and perhaps precisely due to the above, TMVP formed and consolidated its presence and power.

---

<sup>9</sup> This was an Indian military contingent performing a peacekeeping operation in Sri Lanka between 1987 and 1990. It was formed under the mandate of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord signed between India (Rajiv Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India) and Sri Lanka in 1987. The main task of the IPKF was to disarm the different militant groups.

<sup>10</sup> Sri Lankan freedom Party is a centre-left political party currently head of the government coalition and home to President Mahinda Rajapakse. SLFP and UNP are the largest political parties in Sri Lanka.

After a series of violent incidents on both sides, grip on the ceasefire was lost in July 2006. In response to alleged provocations, the Sri Lankan Army decided to launch what they called a “humanitarian operation” to regain control over an irrigation channel in the Island’s east, and thus fully overt armed confrontations resumed<sup>11</sup>. The political and military attacks only escalated afterwards, and with the undeniable help of TMVP, the government forces managed to retake control over the entire eastern province in mid-2007, for the first time in over fifteen years. Holding the upper hand in the military struggle, the government announced the official end of the ceasefire agreement in January 2008. Finally, following heavy confrontations in the North, the LTTE was militarily defeated in May 2009, bringing the civil war to an end.

### *The Eastern Province*

The Tamil-speaking population of the East (Tamils and Muslims) have felt marginalised, not only by the shared island-wide perception of discrimination, but also (and especially) by the post-independence resettlement of Sinhalese farmers, altering the demographics and thereby increasing the competition to access resources. Unlike the North, the East is still ethnically diverse and therefore a site of “multicultural contestation” (McGilvray 2008). This is the case in relation to the relatively recent Sinhalese settlers, and is also a recurrent feature among the historically linked yet heavily divided Tamil-speaking Muslims and Tamils<sup>12</sup>.

While the civil war continued, Dennis McGilvray argued that “because of its geographically juxtaposed and demographically unstable combination of Tamil, Moorish, and Sinhala populations, it [was] in the eastern coastal region, not in Jaffna, that the separatist’s hopes for a greater Tamil Eelam – or even the moderates’ vision of a unified federal Tamil province in the North-East - [would] ultimately be decided” (2008:10). Although the last battles did not occur there, in the aftermath of war, I still agree with his statement. The separatists’ hopes were indeed decided in the East, and most likely also the moderates’ wish for a unified federal province, thus necessitating a more detailed look into some of the province’s socio-historical and geopolitical features.

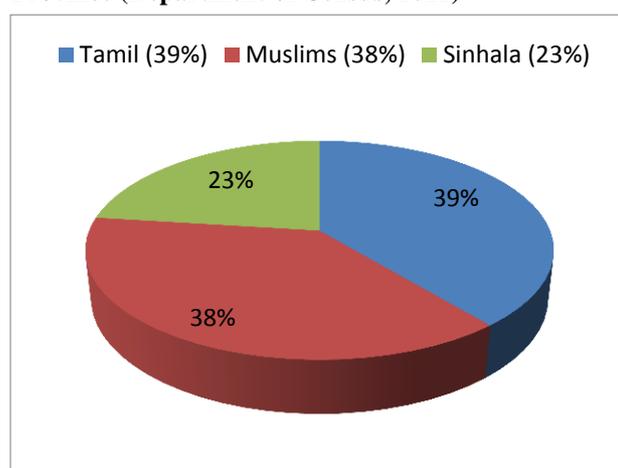
---

<sup>11</sup> See International Crisis Group, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> This multicultural contestation plays out differently according to the demographic balances of each district of the Eastern Province: Trincomalee is almost equally distributed among Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims; Batticaloa has a clear Tamil majority and Ampara has a considerable Muslim majority.

As previously suggested, the province is considered the most ethnically and religiously diverse of Sri Lanka, with a total population of around 1.5 million people. As a political unit, the province was born out of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the 1978 Constitution in 1987, through which the Provincial Councils were created. However, as a result of the peace talks and subsequent Indo-Lanka Accords, the Eastern and Northern provinces were merged in 1988. Elections were held and *Varatharaja Perumal* of The EPRLF (Eelam People’s Revolutionary Liberation Front) became the Chief Minister, backed by the Indian Peace Keeping Forces. Nonetheless, when the Indian forces retreated in 1990, the territory soon came under de facto LTTE control, with some urban enclaves still ruled by the Colombo government. The merger of the Northern and eastern provinces came to an end in 2006, when the Supreme Court ruled it invalid after a series of petitions presented by Sinhala nationalist parties. In

**Figure Intro.1 Ethnic Composition of the Eastern Province (Department of Census, 2011)**



January 2007, the North and East were formally de-merged, just as the Government managed to drive the LTTE out of the Eastern Province.

After the capture of the LTTE’s last eastern military camp in July 2007, the president announced the development program for the east, known as *Nagenahira Navodaya*, or “Eastern Reawakening”. The plan

focuses on new roads and bridges throughout the province, the construction of an industrial park and a coal power plant near Trincomalee harbour, fisheries ports in Valachchenai and Oluvil, expanded mineral extraction along the North coast of Trincomalee district and considerable tourist development sites.

However, as the international Crisis Group (ICG 2008) have already insisted, the remaining question is not so much whether or not development is taking place in the aftermath of war, but rather what kind and for whom. The persisting fear amongst local inhabitants, particularly among Tamils, is that jobs and resources will be almost

exclusively destined for new Sinhala settlers<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, regardless of the validity of such fears, the mere perception is problematic for long-term peacebuilding.

In March and May 2008, local and provincial elections were held in the East, in which the UPFA (United people's Freedom Alliance) were victorious. Besides the SLFP, TMVP also took part in that alliance. Its former military commander (a.k.a. Pillayan) was appointed Chief Minister for the Eastern Province and the former General Secretary (a.k.a. Padmini) became the new Batticaloa town Mayor, two of the most prominent posts of the province (together with the Governorship)<sup>14</sup>.

The East of Sri Lanka is also the only area in which Muslims are geographically concentrated and consequently control a significant block of parliamentary constituencies and local government councils (McGilvray 2008:10). Foreseeing the dominance of the Sinhala electorate in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century once independence was achieved, Muslim leaders deposited their support to Sinhalese majority parties, explicitly denying any necessary link between Moorish ethnicity and Tamil language. As a result, a separate corps of teachers for Muslims as well as a distinct system of government schools were established in the 1970s, even a distinguishable school uniform today (McGilvray 2008:317). When the UNP government proposed submerging the Ampara district within an enlarged Sinhalese dominated province of Uva, the Moors finally broke from the ruling parties and organised Muslim political parties, among which the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) eventually became the strongest (McGilvray 2008:318).

In general terms, the Sinhalese in the East have the unusual position of being a minority, yet with some strong cultural references that they can hold on to in order to assert it as their ancestral home. However, considering the official overall numbers of the Eastern Province, Tamils are still the majority with 39%, while Muslims follow with 37% and Sinhalese are ranked third with around 23% (Department of Census &

---

<sup>13</sup> One of the most controversial issues currently taking place in the region is the illegal selling of coastal lands, particularly along the Trincomalee–Nilaveli beach line and around Kalkudah in Batticaloa district (incidentally the area where the current Chief Minister of the Eastern Province and leader of the TMVP is from).

<sup>14</sup> The elections and surrounding socio-political dynamics will be thoroughly addressed in Chapter Four.

Statistics 2011<sup>15</sup>), although many claim that the Muslim population has actually surpassed Tamils at present.

As pointed out earlier, a recent watershed in the Eastern Province's history is the 2004 Tsunami, during which around 14,000 people died in the Eastern Province alone. Most of the fatalities were in Ampara, accounting for 43% of Sri Lanka's death toll (McGilvray 2008:25). The natural phenomenon transformed the province's physical and social landscape, as did the post-disaster humanitarian intervention. This is worth mentioning here given these events' presence in people's narratives in the east, and also because the chaos resulting from the disaster and the subsequent interventions actually helped to obscure the concurrent consolidation of TMVP's counterinsurgency operations. I consider that such deflection from public debate has been crucial in the nascent armed movement's survival.

### *Armed Conflict in the East*

Eastern Sri Lanka was the most contested and hence most volatile area throughout the war. Moreover, it was also the site of the ceasefire's breakdown, not only in 2004 but also in 1990 (Philipson & Thangarajah 2005:14). It was also the province that experienced the most vicious battles between the various Tamil armed groups in the 1980s; furthermore, it is in the East where Trincomalee and its harbour are located, which both Tamils and Sinhalese want to control, if not for geostrategic reasons then at least for ethnic pride (Philipson & Thangarajah 2005:39).

One could roughly divide the dynamics of conflict in the East into five micro-periods: Pre-war dynamics, Eelam War I, Eelam War II, the LTTE de facto Government in the East (Eelam War III) and finally the split and its aftermath (Eelam War IV).

The first period corresponds to the dynamics up to 1983, in which land issues arising out of the Sinhalese resettlement projects were slowly overshadowing longstanding Tamil and Muslim tensions. Violence became acute with post-independence politics, the colonisation projects and the emergence of Tamil militant groups (McGilvray, 2001:5.). The latter tried to establish their hegemony in the Eastern Province during the late 1970s, considering the East of great strategic value towards achieving the goal of Tamil Eelam, precisely because it was not dominated exclusively by any

---

<sup>15</sup> Taken from the census of population and housing 2011, computing the data from the three districts of the eastern Province (<http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011>).

ethnic group (Peiris 2009:152). Prior to their presence, violence took the form of post-election reprisals, fights arising from individual provocation perceived as a general insult to their respective communities, or out of growing competition for land (McGilvray 2008:326).

The second period is book-ended by the 1983 riots and the subsequent massive mobilisation, recruitment and consolidation of the militant groups, as well as the 1987 Indo Lanka Accord. This period is commonly known in Sri Lanka as Eelam War I. As the conflict worsened, settlements were progressively militarised to protect the villages in “border areas” (ICG 2008:5). Tamil villages were forcibly vacated, with the LTTE reacting with its first massacre of Sinhala civilians in 1984. Subsequently, an estimated 2,000 Tamil families were evicted in 1985 after the LTTE’s massacre of more than 100 Sinhalese Buddhist pilgrims in Anuradhapura. Some 3,000 houses were destroyed and an unknown number of Tamils were killed. Then, thousands of Sinhalese fled the Trincomalee area in 1986 following a string of retaliatory massacres by the LTTE (ICG 2008:6). A year later, the Indo Lanka Accord came into place, through which the Colombo government agreed to devolve powers and accept the merger of the northern and eastern provinces. In exchange, most Tamil armed groups agreed to disarm, with the notable exemption of the LTTE.

The third period, between the 1987 North-East merger and the 1991 *Mosque Massacres*, is marked by the LTTE obtaining its dominant position, far above the other groups, in the midst of a recurrent bloodshed. The EPRLF-led government of the North-eastern provincial council (established after the 1988 elections) had only been able to survive with the support of the IPKF forces that left Sri Lanka in 1990. Once they left, the LTTE was able to grasp the East, especially now that other movements had partially demobilised. The provincial government soon collapsed, while a great deal of the LTTE’s actions subsequently focused on the Muslim community, which they considered to be collaborating with the government. The mosque massacres in Kattankudy and Eravur occurred in 1990, killing more than 200 Muslims (ICG 2008:7). Massacres of non-combatants were also committed by the Sri Lankan security forces, including the 184 executed at Saturukondan on 9<sup>th</sup> September 1990. This period of extrajudicial executions is commonly known as the ‘troubled times’ (*pirachinai naadtka*) or Eelam War II, during which the LTTE alienated the Muslims from their struggle through the aforementioned massacres and by executing hundreds of Muslim policemen who they had taken prisoner (Lawrence 1998; McGilvray 1997).

The fourth period covers from the LTTE's contestation of the State's sovereignty in the East from 1991 until Karuna's 2004 defection. By 1991, around 350,000 Muslims had been displaced from their hometowns in the East (Peiris 2009:153). Whilst the LTTE ruled most of the province, the government armed Muslims as *Home Guards* allegedly to defend themselves from being killed and forced to contribute to the Tamil militant movement. The military intelligence also contributed to the tensions between the LTTE and Muslims by recruiting youths from Muslim villages to inform about LTTE activity (Philipson & Thangarajah 2005:42). For an insight into the social dynamics of the East during the LTTE controlled period, Margaret Trawick's (2007) and Patricia Lawrence's (2000) work provide insightful ethnographies.

Important landmarks in the fifth micro-period were the "humanitarian Operation" launched by the government forces in 2006 to recapture a disputed irrigation channel in the Trincomalee district, the subsequent military expulsion of the LTTE from the entire Eastern Province in 2007, and the local and provincial elections held in 2008. Despite reflecting highly significant milestones, they are all a direct consequence of the 2004 Karuna defection and TMVP's emergence. In fact, the 2008 elections could not have taken place without the government's partnership with TMVP. All of this will be subject to deeper analysis throughout this dissertation.

It is necessary to highlight another triad of violent incidents that received a prominent place in the political debates and were also recurrently referred to in the narratives captured in this study. One is the erection of a Buddha statue without legal authorisation in the centre of Trincomalee town, which prompted a series of campaigns opposing the statue, and ultimately resulted in the assassination of the politician V.Vigneswaran in 2006<sup>16</sup>. The second such incident is the January 2006 execution of five Tamil students in the Trincomalee Boulevard, in front of dozens of witnesses, while the third incident refers to the 12<sup>th</sup> April 2006 attacks of organised gangs assaulting Tamils, burning their shops and homes after a bomb exploded in the Trincomalee market. More than 20 people were killed and around 20,000 were displaced as a result, including the subsequent cycle of army and LTTE retaliations (ICG 2008:24). As will become evident in later chapters, these events have

---

<sup>16</sup> TNA leader Vigneswaran led the opposition to the Buddha statue, which was incidentally considered part of a larger strategy of cultural colonisation together with the adoption of the Lion symbol in the Ampara flag, among other symbolic interventions.

unquestionably scarred people's memory in Trincomalee (where a prominent portion of fieldwork was carried out), transforming their relationship with their surroundings and everyday life.

### *Fragile Future, Pivotal Legacy*

Sri Lanka's Eastern Province clearly played a pivotal role throughout the armed conflict. Consequently, it is no coincidence that the twin phenomenon leading to the civil war's end that shape in that region, namely Karuna's split and TMVP's formation. Likewise, and especially due to its particular demographics, the Eastern Province may still host identity- and land- related disputes, potentially materialising in the near future. Therefore, Eastern Sri Lanka is the potential cradle for either sustainable reconciliation or an eventual violent re-ignition of conflict.

At least for five crucial years, the Eastern Province's political dynamics was narrowly connected to the developments within, and towards, TMVP. In October 2008, Karuna was sworn in as a Member of Parliament, just five months after the President of Sri Lanka appointed Pillayan -current head of TMVP - as Chief Minister of the Eastern Provincial Council. However, the movement had tensions of its own, with a rift between the two leaders (latent since 2007) bursting in 2009, eventually prompting the defection of Karuna to the SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party). Back in 2008, TMVP (still officially as one) contested for municipal and provincial elections in alliance with the government (UPFA); however, for the 2010 parliamentary election, they decided to contest independently with Pillayan as their new leader. They were defeated and even failed to secure a single seat.

Today, with Karuna and other prominent members having crossed over to the SLFP and without a seat in parliament, chances are TMVP will soon disappear. However, as suggested earlier, regardless how ephemeral their existence as a political force may become, the argument of this book remains that TMVP's imprint was decisive upon Sri Lanka's civil war and its final transformation. Besides, if willing to assume a rather aloof instrumental view, it can be argued TMVP was at least relatively successful in four aspects. First, it managed to challenge the LTTE militarily. Secondly, for quite a few high-ranking members and some regular fighters, it was a successful way to outlive war (not many former ranked LTTE cadres are still alive today). Third, the defection and structured dissidence of TMVP paved the way a way

for members to enter politics, build up patronage networks and thus in at least some cases make considerable profit. Finally, although such an achievement may still be challenged among others by this work, TMVP's emergence became a way for many to whitewash their violent past.

Whether or not their inclusion in Sri Lanka's political mainstream was ethical, desirable and just, the fact remains that TMVP's emergence became a de facto (yet incomplete and maybe counterproductive in the long-run) Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process. It also proved to be an early symptom of the choices to be made in terms of (transitional) justice and political participation island-wide after the defeat of the LTTE. What this suggests is that aside from the already-outlined documental and conceptual value of this study, TMVP's process also serves as a platform to assess the policy frameworks for political transitions after civil war. Contrary to formal distinctions, TMVP reflects an example (but also a result) of the historically blurry demarcations separating (or rather not) violence from politics, in a concern that is certainly shared in many other locations around the globe.

### Analytical Strategy

The association of concepts drawn upon when conflict is described is a practice already subjected to regulation, wherein grievance, legitimacy, acceptability and voice are inscribed (Jabri 1997:40). I argue that much of the transmission process is actually about descriptions; hence, our ethnography of the local epistemologies of conflict is in a sense a (dense) description of descriptions. Indeed, this is also true of the registers on TMVP's formation: the ethnographer's observed analytical object is generally neither violence nor war or conflict, but rather the nascent local epistemologies of war produced by its participants and victims. Most of the time, we conduct descriptions of descriptions (or a cognition of cognitions), dealing with how violence, conflict and war affect/effect cultural reproduction and how processes of cultural reproduction affect/effect war and conflict. Stated in this way, it seems that this project aligns itself quite well with Johannes Fabian's reading of ethnographic practice as an act of re-cognition: cognising and remembrance (2007:25).

To gear such discussion towards an integrated theory of civil war dynamics, it is necessary to support the unravelling of the two main research questions presented earlier with a series of conceptual dialogues, most of which stem from the

anthropologies of war and the field of conflict studies. These dialogues subsequently represent the building blocks of the central concept of semantic alliances: a concept that will seal the theoretical and practical integration of the pillars sustaining any social phenomenon: transmission and transformation.

### *Dialogues 1: Semiosis*

A great amount of this investigation deals with multiple forms of discourse as practices of signifying the world, of constructing social identities and systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough 1992:64). Therefore, considerable conceptual profit stems from Fairclough's understanding of discourse as *semiosis* (i.e. meaning-making), wherein "the emergence, consolidation, reproduction and transformation of all social phenomena involve dialectic relations between meaning and materiality" (2007:10). Having said that, some caveats are necessary regarding my take on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the school of which Fairclough is part. First, much of CDA's efforts are oriented towards a critique of new capitalism, whereas I hold no such ambition. In addition, I adopt some distance from this schools' recurrent suggestion of discourse analysis and ethnography as complementary methodologies. In my view, ethnography should be neither a complement nor correction to CDA, but rather its core style of research. In any case, tracking TMVP's emergence with its implied new identity formations reconfigured social boundaries and reformulation of history is clearly about tracking a particular trajectory of semiosis.

### *Dialogues 2: Violent imaginaries*

To fully operationalise Fairclough's *Semiosis*, which refers to a general social praxis, this investigation must connect it with a concept specifically concerned with meaning-making in the context of armed conflict: I have chosen Schmidt and Schroeder's *violent imaginaries*, a notion that departs from the premise that, beyond seeking a solution to material issues, people also recourse to violence to assert claims to truth and history (Schmidt & Schroeder 2001:9). Violent imaginaries emphasise the historicity of present-day confrontations, which is often formulated through polarised structures equating the struggle with collective survival, and is inclined to foster the perceived moral superiority of a particular group. Placing violent imaginaries at the centre of the debate provides a reminder that those fabrics of meaning are only translated into violent practice through human agency and consequently do not miraculously spark from structural conditions (2001:9-11). Instead, wars are made possible first by those who imagine violence as possible and thus holding the power to represent it as the appropriate course of action (Schmidt & Schroeder, 2001). In

fact, actors have to talk themselves [and others] into committing violence (Apter 1997:1), towards which a specific cultural grammar is deployed to provide lasting meaning to violent actions, thereby taking incentives beyond private interest (Schmidt & Schroeder 2001:5). TMVP's emergence, as well as the overall transmission and sustainability of conflict, are traversed by the construction and contestation of violent imaginaries.

### *Dialogues 3: Figurations*

Schlichte's insight into armed actors as *figurations* helps to place semiosis and violent imaginaries in the context of dynamic social power structures. Figurations imply conceiving movements such as TMVP as interdependent individuals linked by asymmetric power balances constantly shifting through consent and contestation (Schlichte 2009:17). While consent and contestation both find expression in people's attitudes of either compliance or defiance, they are mostly achieved and mediated by attempts at re-signifying the world (i.e. semiosis) or reframing the trajectories of conflict (i.e. redesigning the violent imaginaries). In the midst of such unstable processes, armed actors produce their own symbolic world and operate as socialising institutions for their members (2009:18). Contrary to the concept of group, that of figuration does not presuppose clear boundaries between members and non-members (2009:19). Besides, armed figurations change when new resources become available, somebody involved loses a capacity, or when new agents enter this social field (2009:19). Accordingly, the unstable and fluid definition implied in the concept of figuration seems to perfectly fit TMVP's emergence and transition into politics.

### *Dialogues 4: Memory, Storytelling and Remembering Violence*

The cultural grammar implied in the construction of violent imaginaries finds no better resource to justify and sustain armed conflict other than the representation of past violence and former suffering (Schmidt & Schroeder 2001:7). Wars are in fact fought from memory and are often over memory (Schmidt & Schroeder 2001:1), further sustained through broad frameworks of understanding (Jabri 1997:30). While any figuration is conditioned by these frameworks of understanding, they also contribute to their development or alterations. Owing to this reciprocal relationship, an analytical conjunction is necessary between memory (with the associated acts of storytelling) and epistemology as the more-or-less structured ways of knowing (associated with institutionalised practices).

If the acts of storytelling are strategies striving to transform private into public meanings (Jackson 2002:15), and the nascent epistemologies seek to assure the private interiorisation of officially sanctioned narratives, it is the permanent interaction between these projections (from the individual towards the collective, and from the collective to the individual) that keeps a conflict going. At the same time, disruptions within these activities also have the potential to radically shift a conflict's course of action, as exemplified by TMVP's material and symbolic interventions.

Memory, storytelling and remembering have most commonly been framed as processes to be discussed in the aftermath of war, and only seldom considered as crucial engines during armed conflict. It is often approached as a segment of the debates regarding transitional justice, producing a considerable amount of crucial literature on the challenges of dealing with and teaching the violent past. While such production (i.e. Cole 2007) is of unquestionable value to this research, their pioneering work calls for an extension and adjustment to also include concerns regarding teaching or narrating violence in on-going confrontations, both within and beyond the institutional settings of pedagogical practice.

At this point, the notions of violence, hegemony and storytelling must be succinctly connected. As a departure, I take Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois' broad definition of violence as a productive, destructive and reproductive continuum out of other possible ways of manifesting conflict extending well beyond its physicality (2004:1). However, when using violence armed actors continuously struggle to transform fear into acceptance and compliance, in an effort compatible with the notion of hegemony: "The never-concluded attempts to produce a fixed point of discourse [hence an order and distribution of power], to which there always be a threat" (Andersen 2003: vii). Incorporations of - as well as resistance towards - these formations of power are heavily mediated by storytelling. Indeed, it is in the empowering act of telling stories that we "testify to the diversity, ambiguity, and interconnectedness of experiences", while claiming some "creative say over how those circumstances may be grasped, borne or even forgiven" (Jackson 2002:253,133). I argue that we construct, reshape and challenge hegemonic structures and relations, sometimes through violence, but always through the stories we tell.

In this research, not only memory and remembering appear as analytical objects but also as a mode of inquiry. After all, a great deal of the ethnographic operation involves “getting people to remember” (Fabian 2003:132). This presents serious challenges in the context of violence, given that actors and researchers may face the imposing limits of trauma. If remembered experiences inform our sense of identity, what is distinctive about trauma is the inhibition of this process (Pickering & Keightley 2009); in this sense, narrating trauma may be impossible. This is not to dismiss the value of trauma as social metaphor, but rather to provide a reminder that what is at stake here are actually *rememberable* events, somewhat adjusting Pickering and Keightley’s argument (2009:238-239).

This investigation not only asked TMVP members, educators, school students, former child combatants and other victims to actively recall how past violence was understood and experienced, it also configured a form of active resistance to the attempts stemming from sections of society and the state to send Eastern Sri Lanka’s war history (including TMVP’s formation) into oblivion.

#### *Dialogues 5: identity, ethnicity and defection*

The four previous conceptual dialogues constantly hint towards the production of social identities: it is one of the aims of semiosis, the target of violent imaginaries, a crucial feature of any figuration, as well as regularly the lens through which knowledge is made and the past organised. Two particularly problematic axes through which social identities are construed in the context of violent armed action are ethnicity and nationalism, notions that have received wide attention within existing literature (i.e. Kaldor 1999; Igantieff 1999; Tambiah 1992; Anderson 1983). Here, we adopt a somewhat different approach paying more attention to the break and renegotiation of those social boundaries through analysing ethnic defection, group fragmentation and their impact on the escalation and termination of organised violence. In fact, TMVP’s story questions the dyadic representations of civil wars and exposes the rather contingent linkage between collective identity and collective action (Staniland, 2012). My focus will be less on exploring why defection happened and more on explaining how such defection was rendered possible, sustainable and effective. In other words, the analysis will centre on how defection was transformed into dissidence and dissidence into a politically viable project, even if only temporarily so.

Addressing these constant restructuring and blurry demarcations implies the recognition that, in wars such as the Sri Lankan, violence becomes *ethnic* through the meanings attributed to it by perpetrators, victims, journalists and researchers, who not only interpret violence as ethnic but also *constitute* it as such (Brubaker 2004:16). Perhaps inadvertently, TMVP's emergence helped to *de-essentialise* the discourses of the Sri Lankan armed conflict, providing an entry point for commentators and participants alike to foreground intra-group diversity instead. Due to such de-essentialisation, analysing TMVP's formation has offered the possibility of reinstating Sri Lanka's Eastern Province and its population - hitherto sidelined in an oversimplified configuration of North vs. South identity formations - to the centre of the debates in national politics.

Abuse of the term identity (implemented either to signify too much or too little) prompted Brubaker to suggest a series of alternative designations to retrieve its analytical potential. Among them is *identification*, which has the advantage of a processual connotation liberating the term from the usual reification associated with identity. Furthermore, it not only denotes a classification but also an emotionally charged connection (Brubaker 2004). The other term is *groupness*, the sense of belonging to a distinctive bounded, solidary group (Brubaker 2004:47). In order to avoid an overflow of new terminology, I will not further these distinctions, but I mention them here to reveal the type of issues captured in a new identity formation such as TMVP. Together with the earlier addressed figurations, groupness and identification provide a prolific conceptual field transcending the tendency towards static approaches to the social world.

#### *Dialogues 6: Kalyvas' theory of irregular war*

One of the most influential works dealing with civil war is Stathis Kalyvas' theory of irregular war and micro-foundational theory of violence, stressing the joint efforts and interests of local and central actors (2006:6). Despite Kalyvas' approach to violence radically differing from those exposed above, I still find much value for this enterprise in many of his conceptual underpinnings. First, I concur with his view that identities marking the boundaries in civil war dynamics are often the result of - or at least radically transformed by - the confrontations themselves, rather than being fixed pre-existing configurations (Kalyvas 2006:3). Second, I too intend to challenge the common assumption of groups being monolithic and thus behaving accordingly (2006:10). Furthermore, I subscribe to his notion of civil wars as the intrastate armed

contestation of sovereignty (2006:18) in which militias – or formations such as TMVP - are part of a strategy of local rule and statebuilding (2006:107).

However, I distance myself from Kalyvas' over-rational baseline in his explanations of violence, wherein emotions are treated as little more than residual factors, while symbolic approaches to conflict are swiftly dismissed as baroque overstatements. Nonetheless, setting up a conceptual dialogue between Kalyvas' instrumental reading and the cultural or discursive approaches presented earlier offer great potential. In fact, the development of a central theoretical concept of this dissertation – semantic alliances – is significantly owing to Kalyvas' exploration of how the so-called master cleavages in armed conflicts at the national level “map onto local-level divisions” (2006:6).

Of the four main interconnected puzzles that Kalyvas sought to resolve in his *Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, two warrant highlighting here: the problem of explaining variation and the disjunction between macro-level causes of war and the micro-level patterns of violence (Kalyvas 2006). In terms of the latter, which is largely also an issue of variation, he advanced the critical concept of alliance, defined as a transaction stemming from a convergence of interests between supralocal and local actors. The claim is that, in return for being allowed access to local networks, supralocal actors provide external muscle, providing local actors a decisive advantage over their rivals. This exchange brings local disputes into the master cleavage of a conflict, rendering civil wars a joint process of violence that is simultaneously unified and decentralised (Kalyvas 2006:365). Such a conceptualisation incorporates the disjunction and ambiguity between centre and periphery, allowing multiple rather than unitary actors, and a variety of preferences and identities rather than a common overarching one (386). Significantly, Kalyvas' theory implies that debates concerning the true cause or type of a civil war may ultimately be unsolvable and counterproductive (Kalyvas 2006:365). After all, an armed conflict is never a singular process.

Powerful as Kalyvas' propositions are, they remain incomplete, mainly given that the establishment of instrumental alliances between supralocal and local actors inescapably requires an even more complex process of sense making: participants need to conceive the venture of joint violence as possible and desirable, as well as legitimating such a venture in front of an audience whose conviction in these alliances is indispensable. My point is that the complexity Kalyvas wanted to revive in

conflict analysis does not simply unfold in the vast array of interests that actors may have, but also in their efforts in making sense out of their own - and other agents' - motivations for participating in violence.

The disjunction between macro-level causes of war and the micro-level patterns of violence is largely the instrumental equivalent of Argenti and Schramm's discursively formulated query. They asked how a body of knowledge collectively recognised as legitimate and representative coalesces out of individual experiences of political violence (2010:1). This question is commensurable with that of Kalyvas, because dealing with variation is analogical to dealing with diversity and polysemy. That is to say that a preoccupation with multiple belongings inevitably faces the challenge of multiple explanatory narratives of conflict and meanings attributed to it. Thus, the social reproduction and transformation of civil war largely involves explaining variation in terms of interests, levels of control and identity allegiances; moreover, also in terms of interpretations of others' actions and the management and plurality of transmittable conflict knowledge.

### *Semantic Alliances*

As an attempt to master the cultural grammar sustaining armed action and the way in which past and present violence are discursively linked, I devised what I have termed as semantic alliances: symbolic and discursive transactions articulating narratives of the past with lived experiences, multiple individual incidents and political goals with private interests, regional with local tensions and memories with perceptions of the future. In a sense, I envisage semantic alliances as the discursive extension of Kalyvas' theory on the logic of violence in civil wars (2006), adapting his more instrumental definition of Alliance. The twist that I propose offers an explanation of temporal and spatial variation in the praxis, interpretations and experiences of war, while incorporating the transitory crystallisations towards provisionally shared narrative constructions. Put otherwise, the concept of semantic alliances enables a survey into the ways of learning, knowing and living war, while explaining how this affects the conflict's sustainability and transformations. In sum, it reflects a concept taking us right to the heart of the formations of conflict epistemologies. If Kalyvas' theory departs from a much-needed decoupling of the explanations of civil war from civil war violence, mine is an attempt (still infant perhaps) at re-joining them from a cultural perspective.

I will argue that armed conflict is reproduced and sustained by a range of (unstable) alliances between meanings manufactured in different discursive domains. One example from Sri Lanka (discussed later on) is the articulation of the notion of historical discrimination and the need for a Tamil homeland. Such types of alliances are unstable because powerful actors have the capacity to rearrange them if a new source of meaning production becomes available or existing meanings are strategically reengineered. Karuna Amman would represent such a powerful actor, rearranging the previously mentioned alliance by coupling discrimination with a North vs. East identity configuration, rather than the homeland. Meanwhile, the documentation of the different generations' knowledge, interpretations and experiences of conflict confirms that no singular narrative of conflict is transferred throughout the years of violence. It follows that instead of rigid texts, the key to the transmission and sustainability of conflict appears to rely on fragmented knowledge held together (or rearranged) by a network of semantic alliances construed at different levels: between peers; an organisation and an individual; regional sets of actors; the civil population and the armed movements; and between the armed movements and global discourses. The alliances offer social relevance to - and beyond - personal experience, provide a Utopia in exchange for the possibility of ideological dissemination and control, and bestow people with empowerment after humiliation in return for the possibility of selfish driven impulses to fuel war.

The concept of semantic alliances can be affiliated with Kristeva's *intertextuality*, Silverstone's *mediation*, CDA's *recontextualization/relocation* and Laclau's *nodal points*<sup>17</sup>. However, contrary to the above, semantic alliances do not refer to impersonal processes or abstract spaces in discourse, but rather to an agent-driven action wherein meaning structures are exchanged, negotiated and co-constructed; not simply one-directionally imposed or translated from alien settings. Furthermore, semantic alliance is clearly also associated with the developments of the notion of framing initially coined by Erving Goffman. However, framing involves the connotation of an imposed interpretative framework, which I wish to avoid. Above all,

---

<sup>17</sup> 'Intertextuality' (coined by Kristeva in her 1966 essay *Word, Dialogue and Novel*) highlights that each text exists within a vast 'society of texts'; questions the fixed boundaries attributed to them and declares as - Barthes did - that 'a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination' (Barthes 1977, 148). Silverstone's mediation refers to the movement of meaning from one social practice to another wherein the appropriation of one set of meanings within a different context is called Relocation/recontextualization, (Fairclough, 2003:30-32). In turn, Laclau's nodal points are privileged discursive points that serve to arrest the flow of relationships without ever becoming a fixed centre of discourse. The struggle about the construction of nodal points is so to speak a struggle about the conditions of conflicts within a specific discourse (Andersen, 2003: Vii).

what I want to suggest with semantic alliances is the widespread participation of actors at all levels in *making sense*.

The following chapters will provide many illustrations for a better grasp of the concept of semantic alliances. For now, let us simply state that TMVP expresses both continuity in the use of violence, as well as instrumental and symbolic transformations in war, by establishing new – and previously unlikely - material and semantic alliances. On the other hand, the knowledge transmission among educators, students and former combatants will further expose the central role of these symbolic exchanges in the reproduction of conflict. Hence, this proposed concept will account for both continuity and change, as well as diversity and identity, theoretically linking research questions 1 (TMVP's formation and the transformation of Sri Lanka's civil war) and 2 (the intergenerational transmission of conflict).

### *Methodological Challenges*

This entire initiative is thoroughly informed by ethnographic material, personal interviews (74) and data gathered from multiple sources, including media and NGO reports, all of which were collected during fieldwork conducted between 2008 and 2011.

Like most ethnographically informed research, this journey commenced with systematically stalking people. Quite some time was devoted to trying to reach high-ranking members of TMVP with the aim of capturing their life histories and perspectives on themselves and the civil war. It finally paid off, and as a result this text contains material from direct personal interviews with alias *Karuna Amman* (former TMVP leader and initiator of the revolt; currently deputy Minister for Resettlement), *Pillayan* (current TMVP leader and until recently Chief Minister of the Eastern Province), *Padmini* (former TMVP secretary General and Mayor of Batticaloa), *Jeyam* (former TMVP Military commander and now member of the Eastern Provincial Council), *Azad Moulana* (TMVP spokesperson and private secretary to the Chief Minister), *Jeyaraj* (TMVP data manager and Vavunativu Town council chair) and many others. In fact, their life histories are the guiding thread of this book and the empirical foundations of this research's conceptual development. Although some have previously provided short interviews to the media, this is the first

time their life histories have been addressed at such length and interlinked to the systematic revision of TMVP's formation.

However, their narratives will not advance without the contestation of life histories of former child combatants under their ranks and some of TMVP's victims. This bricollage of experiences will show how it was decided to split from the LTTE, fight them as a paramilitary force, and subsequently - or rather simultaneously - join the political mainstream, contesting first in local, and subsequently in provincial and finally in parliamentary elections. This represents an intricate process, accompanied throughout - and perhaps largely enabled - by its own forms of violence, victimisation and pain.

In trying to capture the inner workings of TMVP, fieldwork developed as a variant of multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 2011), mainly operating between Trincomalee and Batticaloa (two of the Eastern Province's districts). The former hosts the Eastern Provincial Council with its Chief Minister (S Chandrakanthan, a.k.a. Pillayan), where he and his closest associates spent much time connecting to regional and national politics. The second location, Batticaloa, is the heart of TMVP's rebellion and the symbolic centre of eastern Tamil identity.

As noted earlier, the constant pursuit of high ranking members of TMVP led to an 'ethnography on the move', frequently taking me to Colombo, Batticaloa and Trincomalee, as well as smaller towns such as Vaharai, Eravur or Muttur, or distant locations like London. The same is true regarding the efforts in tracing some of the forcefully recruited child combatants and other TMVP victims scattered across the entire Eastern Province.

I simultaneously followed a more abstract journey from education policy downwards, encountering principals and teachers' accounts on learning and teaching armed conflict. Finally, I arrived at the high schools students, whose responses I collected regarding their knowledge and views of conflict and violence. Many of these students would have been peers of the majority of TMVP combatants, had the latter not entered the armed movement. Tracking the institutional trajectory of knowledge transfer and subsequently moving beyond it through the students and former combatants' responses permitted the practical and conceptual integration of the multiple sites of conflict transmission. Shared with the reader in Chapter Five, such a journey pushed this itinerant ethnography to yet another set of places. I conducted

several interviews and presented questionnaires to 208 high school students in six different towns, covering 11 schools across the three districts of the Eastern Province. The narratives often move beyond the institutional settings, and so too did my interactions with my interlocutors: they took me to the intimacy of people's houses, the solemnity of religious temples, the solitude of the eastern beaches, the refuge of local and international organisations and the shelters of vocational centres<sup>18</sup>.

On the other hand, conducting fieldwork among an armed organisation such as TMVP simultaneously posed a problem and advantage: the need to penetrate the inner workings of the organisation forced a certain degree of intimacy between members and researcher, albeit – contrary to many conventional ethnographies - an unsympathetic one. In a sense, these circumstances presented themselves as an addition to Robben's (1996) *ethnographic seduction*: before attempting to seduce each other by making our discourses appear as truthful depictions of reality, we actually faced our preconfigured mutual aversion, which in turn led to a useful critical and reluctant proximity. In other words, TMVP and I started our conversations seeing each other as truly others, with the implied reciprocal mistrust. Working through that mistrust to construe a dialogue despite never aiming at identifying with one another could be a way of characterising this expedition.

The methodological precept of this research has been one wherein process and change are essential. This involved seeing the subjects "in development, displaced, recombined, hybrid", as well as "para-ethnographers of their own conditions", thus leading to an investigation concerned with people's engagement in knowledge-making (Marcus 2011). This form of questioning entailed a theoretical shift from the primacy of *being* to that of *becoming* (Andersen 2003: xi). Accordingly, rather than providing a catalogue of what TMVP is from the outset, this excursion approaches their formative trajectories as processes that never ceased to be contested and multiplex. In sum, this approach is one that treats TMVP as a discourse under construction.

---

<sup>18</sup> Interviews among educators and former child combatants were coded. Codes starting with *EP* refer to principals; codes starting with *ET* refer to teachers and *EC* codes for child combatants.

I picture this entire enterprise as a narrative helix, allowing me to conduct an archaeology of the actors' storytelling that illustrates the historical processes engulfing Sri Lanka<sup>19</sup>. As Jackson put it, "it makes no sense to speak of individual lives without reference to the social and historical conditions that bear upon them, nor to invoke universals without reference to the individuals who embody, experience, objectify, perpetuate and struggle against them" (Jackson 2002:291). Therefore, the methodological ambition of this narrative helix is an old yet still stimulating and fruitful one: that of grasping the relations between biographies and history (Mills 1970:12).

However, combining the different narrative sources has represented an ethical, methodological and stylistic challenge: ethical, because on the one hand, the inclusion of perpetrator's accounts demands a certain kind of sensibility to avoid making of this a platform for the justifications of violence. Furthermore, it has also been an ethical challenge given that exposing their accounts and those of their victims may have considerable repercussions in all their lives. I faced two instances that are illustrative of these types of ethical dilemmas: one was the possibility to tag along with TMVP members in their electoral campaigning, the other the explicit request by a victim to fully disclose her story. This demands additional elaborations.

I knew that going with TMVP's campaign team was a fundamental ethnographic moment, yet one that could be instrumentalised by them in claiming, for instance, that I - the foreigner - endorsed them as a political party. After long deliberations and my repeated insistence that I was not to be used in such manner, I opted for a middle solution: to go along, albeit remaining inside the vehicle, behind its polarised windows, when they participated in a rally or went knocking on people's houses. This meant sacrificing the detailed documentation of the interactions between TMVP and the community; however, it reduced the risk of my presence's overt manipulation. Moreover, it provided me with valuable ethnographic entries through the journey itself.

Regarding the second case, I remain torn. The disclosure of the most relevant details of the victim's multiple affectations renders her vulnerable to retaliation; however, not only was she fully aware of that, but she resolutely insisted that she wanted me to tell the whole story as it is: "They already know I'm talking to organisations, they already

---

<sup>19</sup> Appendix 1 presents a schematic overview of the main protagonists in TMVP's formation.

tried to kill me. If I die my children should continue denouncing what has happened to us". If I stubbornly rejected her request on the grounds of finding it irresponsible and risky, would that choice save her, or would it save me? Wouldn't a refusal in fact make me complicit in her silencing? Again, I opted for a middle route. As I learned parts of her story had been made public in the media and that she had attended the *Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC)* sessions, I decided that I would reproduce fragments of her story, yet refused to use her real name and mention highly specific places.

As I announced earlier, this narrative helix has also been a methodological challenge, mainly because neither TMVP members nor the people affected by them lack *narrative agency* and are thus capable of forgetting, ignoring or misrepresenting (Wagenaar in Kalyvas 2008:50). This fact makes it all the more important to clarify that using multiple participants' narratives, leading us into the implications of TMVP's emergence and the transmission of conflict, does not mean that I take their versions at face value. For instance, when possible, their discourses are triangulated with alternate sources of information. However, more importantly, I consider misrepresentations, silences and oblivions to be an integral part of the phenomenon that I am trying to encapsulate in these chapters. After all, these misrepresentations, silences and oblivions are the very fabric of contentious political agency, through which we build the boundaries - regardless how unstable - of the identities we consider to be at stake in any given conflict.

Finally, articulating this text has also been a stylistic challenge, given that I have opted in my analysis to hold on to the diversity of perspectives, to the richness of their descriptions and the complexity and often ambivalence of thought and behaviour. Yet, I sought to somehow choreograph this diversity in a way in which the multifaceted story remained intelligible for readers not necessarily acquainted with the context and events themselves. I can only hope to have achieved that purpose.

## [Outline](#)

One crucial aspect of this endeavour is to integrate identity formation (TMVP) and the reproduction of war (knowledge transfer). In effect, the following chapters are five strategies of grasping identity formations corresponding to five ways of looking at the

transmission of conflict. In this sense, the sociohistorical, methodological and theoretical discussions sketched above provoked the following book structure.

Chapter One (*The Dawn of the Split*) deals with the direct circumstances of the Karuna-led collective defection, intertwining the life histories of TMVP leaders with media and NGO reports available on the subject. In addition, these narratives will serve as a window for the debates regarding the legitimisation of violence and the mobilisation strategies in armed conflict. This first strategy is all about registering the break from a previous power structure and the production of a distinction, premises for both a new identity formation and the perpetuation of conflict

Chapter Two (*Acronyms of an Identity in Transition*) looks at the consolidation of TMVP as a political movement, discussing issues of identity and social cohesion in times of transition. It achieves this guided by an exploration and analysis of the changes in the name of the organisation. This chapter will bring to the fore the production of difference within the Tamil community as reflected in the armed movement. This second strategy relates to the setup of new social boundaries and hence the renewed demarcation of the targets of violence.

Chapter Three (*Geography, Economy and Iconography of the Revolt*) deals with the instrumental, discursive and visual strategies implemented to sustain the organisation and its violence. It treats particular features of TMVP's internal demography, specifically focusing on how gender and age are implicated in the revolt. Along the way, the local character of TMVP's emergence is placed in the global context, with military and political alliances as critical agents in this articulation. Finally, symbolic work and new historical accounts occupy an important space in this chapter, through the specific mechanisms of production, distribution and consumption of words and images, such as TMVP's own newspapers, videos and music. Therefore, this third strategy explores the material and nonmaterial instruments of social reproduction, namely the technologies for the mobilisation, legitimisation and organisation of collective action.

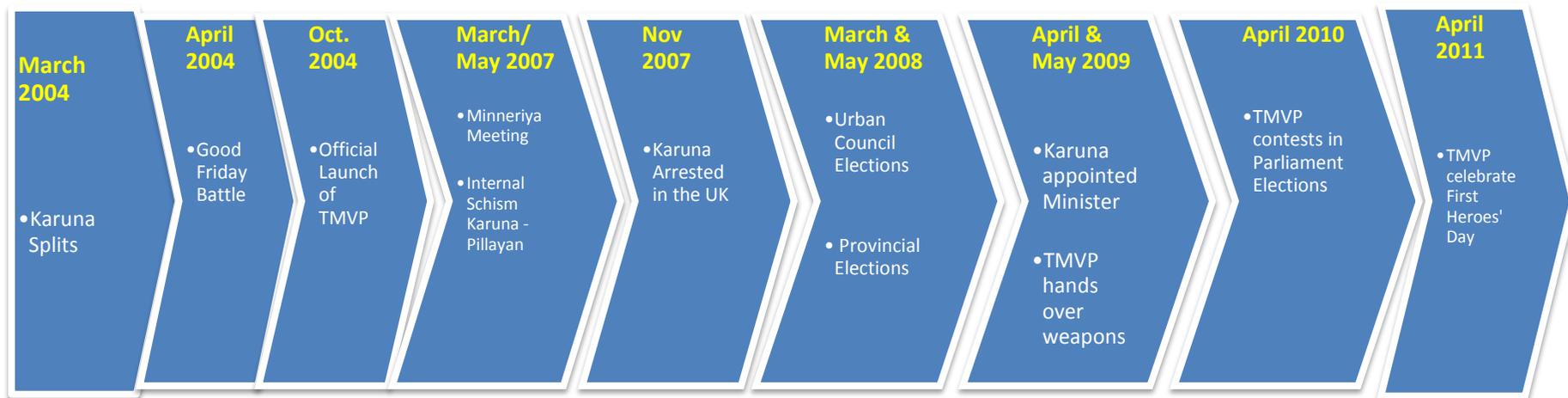
Chapter Four (*TMVP's Implosion and Paramilitary Democracy*) provides an account of how inner tensions led to yet another split from within. However, this internal schism did not stop the movement from making the leap into mainstream politics, becoming an officially recognised party participating in local and provincial elections. With its discursive shifts and violent practices, this crucial transition is thoroughly

addressed here, ending with TMVP's first Heroes' day celebration, reflecting their own execution of memory politics. This fourth strategy is that of tracking the group's transition into the electoral contest, which meant addressing the continuities between politics and armed action.

Chapter Five (*The Social Reproduction of War*) specifically focuses on the transmission process before and beyond TMVP, tracing the processes by which intergenerational knowledge transfer enables the sustainability and transformation of conflict through its different phases and spaces. This segment intertwines texts with memories of the transmitters of official discourses. The broader spectrum of the youth's conflict knowledge consumption will be discussed, including both high school students as former combatants, the articulation of which allows the reintroduction of TMVP to the debate. This chapter will demonstrate the fallacy of treating civil society and armed actor's dynamics as discrete social settings, bringing forward their constant symbolic and epistemological exchanges. Accordingly, this fifth strategy explores the larger systems of knowledge that conditioned the emergent identity formation, including how actors seek to inculcate on others yet also co-constitute with them transmittable narratives to make sense out of violence. In short, this reflects an exploration of the education, knowledge and conflict nexus.

The analytical conclusions (*TMVP and the Transmission of conflict*) will show how the ethnographic and systematic account of TMVP's emergence contributes to the explorations into the transmission of conflict, thereby rendering an explanatory framework for the sustainability and transformation of war in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, it will also show the opposite, namely how the findings of the transmission process help to explain the emergence of TMVP, returning more emphatically to the notion of semantic alliance as a conceptual outcome of this dissertation.

## Figure *Intro.2* Basic Chronology of TMVP



# CHAPTER ONE

---

## ***THE DAWN OF THE SPLIT***

### 1.1. A Triggering Message

It's February 16<sup>th</sup> 2004, around nine in the morning. Twenty year-old *Jeyaraj* receives a message from the political head of the LTTE, known as Tamilchelvan: "Tell Karuna to come to the headquarters in Kilinochchi immediately" – he says. Karuna's reply surprises Jeyaraj: "I'm not going. Something big is going to happen", Karuna confides to him. "I need you to go right now to pick up my wife and kids in Batticaloa. Take them to Colombo and stay there until we arrange for your passport"<sup>20</sup>.

Something big was indeed about to happen. The LTTE leadership had been involved in toilsome peace talks since signing a Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) with the Sri Lankan Government in 2002. As part of the LTTE elite participating in the negotiating rounds were prominent members including Chief Negotiator Anton Balasingham, Karuna Amman himself and the aforementioned Tamilchelvan. Karuna's answer conveyed to Jeyaraj that day in February 2004 would have serious implications for the peace process, the civil war and the Sri Lankan polity in general. In fact, the mythical Tamil Eelam (Tamil homeland), for which the militant movement had fought fiercely over several decades, started to crumble when Karuna ignored Tamilchelvan's request; and so too the equally mythical invincibility, discipline and internal cohesion of the LTTE, pillars of the often proclaimed most sophisticated rebel movement in the world. Only once previously had someone dared to challenge the hierarchy of the LTTE from within (albeit failing dramatically). This time it was different though: Karuna, Military commander of the LTTE until March 2004, was not alone.

This chapter will seek to divulge from a multi-narrative perspective the specific chain of events that resulted in the revolt, which ultimately - I argue - led to the end of Sri

---

<sup>20</sup> Personal Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj. Batticaloa, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

Lanka's civil war. The several yet scattered media and NGO reports concerning this crucial transition will be presented and articulated. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, they will be intertwined with the voices and life histories of those directly engaged in the rebellion, such as the current Chief Minister of the Eastern Province; parliamentarian A.Z. Moulana, who was crucial in the transition; Jeyaraj, and of course Karuna himself. Their lives enable us to jump back and forth in time, along the way sketching not only how they became involved, but also how the armed conflict marked their life choices. Theoretical issues at hand will be highlighted as the story progresses, mainly dealing with defection, collective mobilisation and the (re-) legitimisation of violence.

I have opted to begin this investigation with acts of storytelling, given that they enable people to actually transform what befalls them into experiences and meanings that are collectively viable. In this sense, stories represent a form of situated thinking, but simultaneously also - in Arendt's terms - a "domain of conflicting wills and intentions" (Jackson 2002:252). A reasonable alternative option for the structure of this book could have been to offer from the very start an exhaustive characterisation of TMVP: a depiction of its structures of command, demography, areas of operation, resources, etc. (comprehensively explored in Chapter Three). However, order is much better found "after having let actors deploy the full of controversies in which they are immersed" (Latour 2005:23). After all, the intention here is to explore a process of group formation rather than registering a social phenomenon as if it were a monolithic and static reality. Therefore, despite perhaps demanding more from the reader, it will prove rewarding to allow protagonists ample freedom in portraying the split without shying away from the confused and contradictory character of their narratives. Indeed, violence - as Robben and Nordstrom have argued - is confusing and inconclusive (1995:3). However, to prevent placing the entire burden on the reader, I will recur to short analytical previews announcing pieces of the future state of the emergent formation.

Furthermore, emphasis on the trajectories of the receivers of that message in February 2004 (Jeyaraj and Karuna) was chosen for the following reasons. First, that conversation (request/refusal) operates as a triggering instance providing the conditions of possibility for the revolt. As first-hand participants and 'para-ethnographers' with full access to the intricacies of the split, Karuna and Jeyaraj are crucial reporters of the event, with their narratives and experiences transforming into

privileged and prolific analytical platforms<sup>21</sup>. Second, Karuna and Jeyaraj provide an entry point to some of the lesser-known episodes of the schism, most notably the rebel leader's time in India. Third, these two protagonists ultimately grew apart after having been very close, which means that their stories also encapsulate the seed of TMVP's internal division. Fourth, they belong to different generations involved in Sri Lanka's civil war, thus condensing the intergenerational codependence and simultaneous instability of a social movement. For now, it is time to return to the narratives.

The very same day in February 2004 when the request stemming from Kilinochchi was conveyed, Jeyaraj - as ordered - picked up Karuna's family in Batticaloa and accompanied them to Colombo, where they stayed at the Hilton Hotel. Before flying to Bangalore (India), Jeyaraj collected his birth certificate and national identity card for the first time in his life and arranged for everyone's passports. "I think we left on March 5<sup>th</sup> 2004. It was my first time flying. I was a little bit scared. I didn't know what was going to happen". Once in Bangalore, he recalls how he rarely went outside, maybe just to the market or to take Karuna's children to the playground. "They liked me very much; they even called me Lateeb Mamma [Uncle Lateeb]. We stayed about one and a half month there"<sup>22</sup>.

Jeyaraj (Lateeb) was assigned the delicate task of ensuring the security of Karuna's family on the eve of the split because he had earned the trust of the former LTTE military leader some four years earlier. Jeyaraj had already been in the movement for quite a while, operating within different branches of the organisation. While it was his own decision to join, his journey into the armed struggle began with someone else's footsteps. Jeyaraj recalls: "The first thing I remember is my father carrying me on his shoulders when the Indian Peace Keeping Forces came to the Eastern Province in 1987. He was taking me from Kaluwanchakudy to Ayittianmalai escaping from war and floods".

Jeyaraj and his family settled down in their new village; they did some farming and sold some firewood at the local market. One day after school, Jeyaraj was walking back home when a man standing on the side of the road suddenly lured him to a

---

<sup>21</sup> It would have been appropriate to also have Thamilchelvan attesting directly to the content and context of this exchange. However, he was killed in a bombing in 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj. Ayittianmalai, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010.

place where he invited the boy to play. “He gave me some fruits and chocolates. I stayed there three or four hours and then I went home. His name was Oplaamani. I called him uncle. I was six years old”<sup>23</sup>.

That was the first time that Jeyaraj went to an LTTE camp, which was only metres away from his house. Once there, he would stay increasingly longer every day, until one night he simply did not go home anymore. While it must have been 1990, only by 1995 did Jeyaraj join LTTE training for proper at the ‘respectable’ age of 11. That year, he killed for the first time: “Other groups such as PLOTE and TELO had formed in Vavunatheevu that betrayed and informed on the Tamils to the Sinhala government. I was angry with them so I shot and killed a TELO member on the orders of the man in-charge. An enemy can be forgiven but not a traitor”<sup>24</sup>.

Years later, after winning an internal chess contest, Jeyaraj remembers with joy having received the award from the hands of Karuna. From that time onwards, Lateeb - Jeyaraj’s name then - remained in Karuna’s main camp, initially tasked with making a weapons inventory as well as functioning as Thumilan’s bodyguard, a high-ranking cadre<sup>25</sup>. However, one day he made a cup of tea and gave it to Karuna. He loved it, so Jeyaraj was sent to Karuna and the military commander said to him: “Lateeb is a Muslim name, I don’t like that name; Latiban is better”. “So from the next day on”, Jeyaraj continues excitedly, rediscovering his own past, “every morning at 3.30am I woke up, swabbed the floor, made tea and gave it to Karuna Amman after waking him up: ‘Wake up Amman, wake up!’ I would say. Then I’d leave everything ready for his run together with Vicky and Puma, the dogs”<sup>26</sup>.

Those were Jeyaraj’s basic duties until that message came in February 2004. Meanwhile, some 21 years prior to that request, Karuna Amman - back then only known as Vinayagamorthy Muralitharan - was busy finishing his Advanced Level studies at the Methodist Central College in Batticaloa. He chose the bioscience stream in accordance with his dream of becoming a doctor, although that was not to be. Instead, he came to listen to *Black July’s* tales of horror as told by refugees

---

<sup>23</sup> Personal Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj Ayittiyamalai, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Private diary, Jehanandan Jeyaraj, translated by research assistant alias N.Hamead.

<sup>25</sup> Killed together with Karuna’s brother Reggie in September 2004.

<sup>26</sup> Personal Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj. Ayittiyamalai, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010.

coming from Colombo, temporarily given shelter at a school in Kiran (Karuna's hometown). Decades later, while sitting on the couch in his own office at the Ministry of Resettlement, Karuna recalls how he and his friends felt then: "We couldn't just do nothing...They were killing us". So he made up his mind: it was time to join an armed movement and defend the Tamil people, "our people". Consequently, one day during the second week of August 1983, he did just that: "Among so many movements the LTTE were the most disciplined and liked by the people, so I selected them". He was 16 at the time, although he claims to have been 17<sup>27</sup>.

Karuna received LTTE's political and military training in India. After six months, he started training for the intelligence wing and upon return to Sri Lanka in 1985 was appointed Batticaloa district intelligence leader. However, the army raided their base almost immediately, with only Karuna surviving. He left the intelligence unit and was appointed eastern military commander in 1986. He rapidly acquired prestige as a strategist within the outfit, and - according to him - was already appointed overall military commander of the LTTE in 1994<sup>28</sup>. However, his rapid rise also resulted in tensions and resentments among other leaders within the group, which largely remained quiet until February 2004. Although the confrontation would not be known for another two weeks, the conversation held that day between Tamilchelvan and Karuna (mediated by Jeyaraj) in fact represents the unpublicised first act of the revolt that was about to happen.

## 1.2. D- Night

On Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2004, Karuna was allegedly tipped off about elite groups from the LTTE having moved to surround the *Jayanthan Division*<sup>29</sup>. Karuna knew that this meant the northern leadership wanted to neutralise his power, so at that very moment, he began writing a letter (*the first letter from Batticaloa*), which he planned to send to the media and with which the public start of LTTE's internal dispute would

---

<sup>27</sup> This discrepancy probably results from a culturally different conception of registering age: on the year leading to one's 17<sup>th</sup> birthday one is for many on the 17<sup>th</sup> year. Interview Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan [Karuna]. Colombo, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

<sup>28</sup> Sections of the media signal 2003 as the year in which Karuna became Special Military commander. Karuna argues the only thing new in 2003 was the status of special, but he claims to have been in charge of the overall military wing since 1994.

<sup>29</sup> Around 1,200 fighters then based in the North but mostly originally from the Eastern Province Karuna used to command.

be sealed. However, this required some logistical provisions. As presented below, Karuna first needed to secure an exit strategy, forge new alliances and work on a public support plan.

On the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2004, Karuna called a politician who he had worked with during the previous years of the ceasefire: Ali Zahir Moulana, back then a United National Party (UNP) Member of Parliament. According to Moulana, Karuna said to him on the phone: “Anna [elder brother], I’m no more with them, I’m by myself; I’m a different entity altogether. They are not sincere; they are trying to discriminate. There is a plot to kill me. Please Inform the Prime Minister and let him know I’m a different entity now”. It was just before 9am, Moulana recalls<sup>30</sup>.

The fact that Karuna approached Moulana was hardly a surprise, given that they had long known each other, worked in several occasions together and had even become friends along the way. “I first met him in 1990”, Ali Zahir recalls, “when talks were held in Batticaloa between the Premadasa government and the LTTE. I was there as representative of the people from the Batticaloa district. But Karuna knew who I was long before that because I used to be a well-known football player from the district”<sup>31</sup>.

Moulana, a Muslim born in Eravur in 1956, followed his Advanced level studies at the prestigious St. Michael’s College in Batticaloa. He was in Batticaloa when Black July happened: “In ‘83 I was among the people helping a lot of Tamils; we went to the camps brought them clothes, gave them food. I also met my wife in 1983. She is a Tamil catholic. We lived in the US and in 1988 we came back. There was a vacuum in the Sri Lankan political arena then. People didn’t support national parties; they all started to join communal parties. People tried to drag me into that but I didn’t want to”<sup>32</sup>.

Instead, Moulana joined the SLFP (Sri Lankan Freedom Party) and was appointed chief organiser of the Batticaloa district. In 1994, after being elected Chairman of the Eravur Town Pradesha Sabha [local authority], A.Z. Moulana decided to contest in the General Elections and won - this time under the United National Party (UNP) -

---

<sup>30</sup> Personal Interview, Ali Zahir Moulana. Colombo, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Personal Interview, Ali Zahir Moulana. Eravur, 7<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Personal Interview, Ali Zahir Moulana. Eravur, 7<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

becoming a Member of Parliament for the first time. He became advisor to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka in 2001, and by the time Karuna called him, Ali Zahir had just been nominated to Parliament for the third time through the National List of the UNP.

That Wednesday morning, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2004, Seyed Ali Zahir Moulana, complying with Karuna's request, called the Prime Minister (then Ranil Wickremasinghe), who in turn called a high level meeting with the commanders of all armed forces, the Norwegian Ambassador and the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM). "In that meeting", Ali Zahir emphasises, "*the Prime Minister told me: 'keep the door open with Karuna'*"<sup>33</sup>.

### 1.2.1. The First Letter from Batticaloa

In the meantime, Karuna had given an interview in the Toppikala jungles to Associate Press journalist Shimalee Senanayaka, who sent a wire to all major news sources at 10pm, announcing the rift within the LTTE, followed by the text of the letter written by Karuna to Prabhakaran (LTTE leader) the night before. Fairclough reminds us that as elements of social events, texts can bring about changes in our knowledge and attitudes, and can also start wars (Fairclough 2003:8). Karuna's missive was one of those powerful texts capable of imbuing a private choice with social meaning, while transporting issues pertaining to the armed group's inner workings to the public domain and thereby linking them with broader communal dissatisfactions. If the conversation between Tamilchelvan and Karuna, mediated by Jeyaraj, was the silent trigger of the split, the publication of this letter became its very first and very loud cannonball. It said:

I write this letter to clarify the position regarding the present crisis. Nobody can reject or hide the fact that our Batticaloa and Ampara sections have done great service during the history of our struggle. [...] While we were engaged in struggles in the Wannu we faced many problems and criticisms. You are well aware of all these [...] now the problems have snowballed. It is my duty to explain to you the reasons for this. You have appointed more than 30 heads of divisions in Tamil Eelam. Among them there is nobody from either Batticaloa or Ampara. During the height of the struggle nobody paid any attention to this matter but due to the peaceful environment everybody is making inquiries about this. [...]

---

<sup>33</sup> Personal Interview, Ali Zahir Moulana. Colombo, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

The more painful thing is that when all these divisional heads are travelling in luxury vehicles in Kilinochchi, members of the Jayanthan Battalion resident in Ampara are performing duties at the guard post at Pallai. How can you justify this? [...]

On behalf of North Eelam people I have performed priceless duties risking my life. During times of these opportunities I am willing to serve the people of the South Tamil Eelam.[...] I am willing to serve directly under you without divisional heads of Tamil Eelam. Hence I stopped the Intelligence Unit. We will not desert you and we need you still more. We treat you as our God. This decision may provoke you. Hence I plead you to allow me to bring to your notice the feelings and the aspirations of the people and militants in this part. It is no crime on my part [...]<sup>34</sup>.

Texts tend to convey three types of meaning: action, representation and identification (Fairclough 2003:27). In Karuna's letter, we find a text revealing a division (action); a meaning structure representing a social relation of difference between East and North (representation); and by cataloguing the relationship as a form of discrimination and thus making a judgment, the author is now committed to an adopted position (identification). Interestingly, these analytical categories are treated by Fairclough as issues retrieved in texts that refer back to an event. In my view, at least in the case of Karuna's first epistle, the text itself became the event.

It is impossible to state with absolute certainty with how much anticipation Karuna planned this revolt. Indeed, even people closely involved differ in opinion regarding this matter. Many within Karuna's outfit say it was a decision made on the spot, including Pillayan, Karuna's former deputy and now political rival. However, although he says that it was not planned well ahead, his narrative also suggests that it was not a decision made overnight either. He recalls those days: "Karuna called me in Tenaham Karadinarr. [...] That time if Karuna said something everyone agreed; he was like a God". "More so than Prabhakaran?", I interjected. "Karuna we saw; Prabhakaran we didn't", Pillayan replied and continued:

Karuna said to me: 'we have some administrative problem with the command. [...]'. I accepted his word and his feeling, because I had invested in several economic projects and *Tamilinthe* had asked the day before for a

---

<sup>34</sup> In *The Daily Mirror*. 6th March 2004.

full report of all our activities and profit. I didn't like that [...]. At that time I gave very good advice to Karuna: [...] don't allow this problem to go through the media. Without the eastern cadres<sup>35</sup> they can't get Tamil Eelam [...] so we can discuss that and solve this problem. [...] After one week, I went to Colombo and then spent four days in Kurunegala. While I was there Karuna declared the split<sup>36</sup>.

Others such as *Jeyaraj*, Karuna's former bodyguard, consider that the break was planned since the end of 2003, when Karuna asked his family to come to the East after living in India and Malaysia. Found in between is the version according to *Jayam* (later third in command of TMVP), which claims that Karuna summoned all other senior leaders and took the decision to split several weeks before the crucial day. Indirect evidence indeed suggests at least some degree of premeditated action. One such example is the testimony of alias *Padmini* (former General Secretary of TMVP and current Mayor of Batticaloa). According to her, Karuna had a meeting with her father Rajan Sathiyamoorthy in January 2004 (a month before Tamilchelvan's call). He and Karuna had worked together from the early moments of the Cease Fire Agreement on development plans for the Batticaloa district. However, this time Karuna had a different kind of proposal: he suggested that Sathiyamoorthy could contest for the TNA (Tamil National Alliance) with LTTE's blessing, yet once elected he should cross over and join the government. According to *Padmini*, after having seen what development could do while he participated in peace talks, Karuna now sought to entice Sathiyamoorthy by asking him: "What is the point of sitting in the opposition and shout?"<sup>37</sup>

Sathiyamoorthy agreed to Karuna's scheme. In fact, during the very first days of uncertainty about Karuna's status, Sathiyamoorthy did more than that, organising several rallies during those initial days of upheaval (some of them with the strong presence of the Eastern University Students Union), manifesting support for the issues raised by Karuna. However, the plan of being elected and subsequently

---

<sup>35</sup> It is necessary to clarify that the use of the word cadre by many Sri Lankans differs from its common usage in the literature on armed groups. Whereas generally cadre refers to a midlevel leader, in Sri Lanka often refers to regular combatants. I have avoided that use but left it whenever quoting sources.

<sup>36</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. Trincomalee, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>37</sup> Personal Interview, Sivagheeta Prabhakaran, [Padmini]. Batticaloa, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

crossing over to the government somehow was leaked, with profound consequences. Sathiyamoorthy was assassinated by the LTTE soon after the split and just days before the parliamentary elections. In a defiant gesture, Karuna organised his funeral with the Tiger flag and shots fired in the air, LTTE honours only great heroes received. However, a few days later, LTTE intelligence operatives dug up Sathiyamoorthy's body and desecrated it. In this insolent manner, his remains became the battleground where material force and symbolic action convened.

Ali Zahir Moulana's testimony takes us even further back in the quest for the historical depth to Karuna's decision to split. He explains: "In the later part of 2003 I'd sensed that something may happen. Karuna was encouraging fighters under his command to return to normal life, but then he was forced by the Vanni to recruit new youngsters. Karuna was reluctant, so Pottu Amman [the head of intelligence] was sent to do this job. Karuna however decided to give the new fighters education instead of providing the normal weapon training"<sup>38</sup>.

For Moulana, Karuna's decision to defect was a slow build-up starting no earlier than 2003. Nonetheless, there are written sources tracing that germinal moment all the way to May 2002, when *The Island* newspaper published an article by Bandula Jayasekara, which has been considered as premonitory since the split. These are the most relevant passages:

Most of the Batticaloa cadres are returning to the East on the pretext of going on leave. [...]. Karuna is getting ready to take over the East. He knows that Prabhakaran trusts him even though there is a difference between the Batticaloa and Jaffna Tamils. [...] Like his leader, Karuna is also not very comfortable at times of peace. He is a warlord of the LTTE [...] One must realise that it is Karuna that Marapona [Minister of Defence] and even Prabhakaran got to watch in the coming months and years. He has no kindness like the true meaning of his name or any sort of compassion. Karuna [...] is emerging as the next leader of the LTTE. He could even be more ruthless than Prabhakaran. Karuna may even tell Prabhakaran one day, "I will look after the East and you look after the North (Jayasekara, B. 2002).

These discussions provide the contours of the debate concerning the motive behind Karuna's resolution, enabling the question of why Karuna revolted. According to Staniland, there are three major explanatory frameworks for ethnic defection: *ex ante*

---

<sup>38</sup> Personal Interview, Ali Zahir Moulana. Colombo, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

political disagreements within insurgent movements; intentional state policies of manipulation and repression; and intransigent fratricide (Staniland, 2012). However, there never is a single answer, single version or single explanation. Rather than addressing such issues in terms of definitive reconstructions seeking a fixable cause and 'real' motives, we can shift the emphasis with the same material towards the process itself, by addressing the findings in terms of mobilisation and legitimisation strategies. Such a shift may provide explanations in terms of the dynamics involved rather than the always highly – although sometimes appealing – speculative debates on the causes. Therefore, to avoid making an impossible trip to Karuna's mind and force a reductionist reading (as more than one motive and conditioning factors may operate simultaneously), it might be fruitful to approach the issue in its forensic sense: motive as delimiting the reservoir of possibilities for justifying Karuna's actions.

Karuna's letter presented earlier is an epistolary legitimisation of his and his men's collective decision to defect the LTTE. By contrast, the movement's leadership in the Vanni focused on the selfish reasons behind Karuna's revolt, as will become evident in the following sections. In fact, there were all kinds of rumours set in motion during the early stages of the schism. The latter's role should not be dismissed as a legitimising force, perhaps not even as a major drive in the dynamics of conflict themselves. Rumours point namely to the universe of forms available to render meaning to certain events or actions. Even when they border absurdity, they often still influence individual or collective (re) actions. As Simons once put it, the misguidance and incongruity of rumours is the very stuff out of which history is written (Robben & Nordstrom, 1995:15).

Some rumours are spinoffs of analytical extrapolations in the midst of missing facts, while others reflect the result of mere fantasy, wishful thinking, conspiracy theories or social resentment. Let us explore such a universe beginning with the selfish readings exalted by the rebel's enemies to explain the defection and de-legitimise his revolt. The egocentric arguments, intended to annul any possible interpretation of collective grievances driving Karuna's actions, point to: personal vendetta, private frustration, jealousy, misconduct and greed.

First and foremost, he was accused of embezzling LTTE funds, specifically in the building of the Thenagam and Meenagam complexes. An inquiry had allegedly been established, suggesting that upon realising the leadership in the Vanni were after

him, Karuna opted to break away. An additional (weak yet nevertheless worth mentioning) factor used to explain the defection was sex. Karuna supposedly had a little extramarital adventure, impregnating a senior LTTE women's brigade leader, who went to Colombo for an abortion. Despite the alleged killing of her driver to silence him, the Vanni leadership came to know and wanted to start an investigation (Jeyaraj 2004a). Although a bit farfetched to account for a revolt that may very well have led to the end of one of the most protracted armed conflicts, it would not be the first time men have gone to war over such matters. Implausible as it sounds, this version has entered the sphere of narratives rendering meaning to the crucial transition undergone in Sri Lanka's recent past. It is an expression of the symbolic *thickening* of an event and the proliferation of rumours in times of crisis. History, it seems, always needs a good sex story.

Another less licentious account suggests that the political wing of the LTTE was gaining a more prominent role during the times of a ceasefire agreement, prompting Karuna, the big military commander, to feel sidelined. Karuna's prestige and Prabhakaran's dependence on his conscripts rendered the relatively junior Karuna as someone whose ambitions needed to be watched (UTHR(J), 2004a). Adherents of this view place the original moment of Karuna's plan two years earlier, when the peace process started. His presence during Prabhakaran's press conference in April 2002 would be evidence of an attempt allegedly meant to alleviate suspicion of LTTE's eastern military leadership being out of control and suffering from a bruised ego (Subramanian, 2004). However, it is hard to sustain this claim, given that he had been given the privilege of participating in the negotiating rounds of the peace talks, thus obtaining the recognition that he supposedly sought.

Yet another version puts forward the personal rivalry between two big shots battling for being acknowledged as the incontestable Number 2 of the outfit. Pottu Amman and Karuna Amman were known for disliking each other and had long been engaged in personal vendettas against one another. They both joined more or less at the same time and followed intelligence training in India. From there on their personalities clashed (Jeyaraj, 2004a). Once more, these versions do not make a very flattering case for masculinity.

Moreover, there are further versions moving away from selfish behaviour and entering the sphere of conspiracy theory, albeit not necessarily all being as implausible as they first seem. For example, some insinuate that President

Chandrika Kumaratunga had bribed Karuna to defect, while others suggest that Karuna was contacted during the peace talks by India or the United States, powers who supposedly masterminded the defection. High-level politicians such as the then Telecommunications Minister shared this belief, explaining: "India is angry with the LTTE because it killed her Prime Minister"<sup>39</sup>. Therefore India may have contributed towards bringing a separation between these two hard-core fighters"<sup>40</sup>. There is more to be said regarding India's role in the split, which will be addressed in Chapter Three when dealing with the politico-military alliances set up by TMVP. Establishing any involvement of the US government is, however, far more difficult. US Ambassador Jeffrey Lunstead's response to such accusations was: "We have not spoken to Karuna. We have no interest in such activities. It is absolute baloney"<sup>41</sup>.

Another recurrent argument suggests that Karuna realised his leader had no intention of putting the weapons down. When Prabhakaran asked for additional combatants - the supposed definitive trigger for his defection - it became evident to Karuna that his chief was preparing for war, not democracy (it only took him 22 years).

Finally, there are the political and sociological motivations: the former related to the desired political solution to the armed struggle, the latter to the unequal power relations among eastern and northern combatants, aligned in turn with the socio-cultural differences among Tamils from the two regions. A systematic analysis of identity politics in relation to the split will be provided in Chapter Two. Nevertheless, it is worth advancing here that for some commentators the split was actually the result of external social pressure exercised on Karuna by the eastern people, for whom the renewed child conscription in preparation for war meant a misery that they were no longer willing to bare (UTHR(J), 2004c).

But let us hear Karuna's own version. Shortly after the defection, he provided two main reasons behind the split in an interview to *The Sunday Leader*. First, he claimed that he - the former military commander of the LTTE - did not like war, arguing he had enough experience to recognise that the Vanni leaders were

---

<sup>39</sup> India's former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was killed in 1991 by an LTTE female suicide bomber.

<sup>40</sup> *The Sunday Leader*. 21<sup>st</sup> March 2004.

<sup>41</sup> In *The Island*. 18th March 2004.

preparing for war, reinforced by the alleged request for additional eastern troops to be sent to the Vanni. He objected, because - in his own words - he felt "it was uncalled for". The second reason indeed relates to the continued discrimination and neglect of LTTE's eastern wing and the region as a whole (Handunnetti, 2004a). But long after the facts, on a late afternoon still on the couch in his office at the Ministry of Resettlement on Galle Road and sitting across this impertinent anthropologist, Karuna offered a somewhat different explanation: one providing a very particular twist to the question of how previous violence is discursively used to justify present violence:

I told Prabhakaran [...] this is a globalised system; they [will] never allow [us] to get a separate country here. [...]. Last time when we were in Oslo we signed an agreement, [which] said we will consider a federal solution [...]. I said to Balasingham this is a good opportunity and encouraged him to sign [...]. He signed but was scared to go to the Vanni [...]. I told Balasingham I'd give the agreement to Prabhakaran. He [Prabhakaran] got angry, he shouted at me [...]. 'You sold out our freedom struggle' [...] I explained to Prabhakaran I didn't sign, Balasingham did. Nobody can blame me. First you call him. He was the number one diplomatic man. You ask him. **Then he said only one thing: 'Mahattaya also did me like this'**<sup>42</sup>. Then I thought: Prabhakaran is comparing me with Mahattaya. He's going to do something to me; he will kill or arrest me. This was just after signing the Oslo Declaration<sup>43</sup>

I made the decision I want to escape, otherwise big problem. [I went to Batticaloa but] Prabhakaran got to know and called me (same day) and asked me to come back. I never went because I knew they would arrest me, or something. I told him I'll do whatever you want but give me the time to be alone I don't want to fight you [...] I was fed up and frustrated because for 22 years I fought [...] [but] We gained nothing. [...]. Then after two three months of staying quiet, Prabhakaran tried to kill me<sup>44</sup>.

Through his letters and public interventions, Karuna justified the split mainly through a discourse of discrimination from North to East. The previous passage of our

---

<sup>42</sup> Emphasis mine. In the early years of the LTTE, Mahattaya was the number two of the organisation. He revolted quietly in 1993, supported by 200 men. They were all massacred on order from Prabhakaran.

<sup>43</sup> There is a problem in terms of the timeline as suggested by Karuna. He claims the encounter with Prabhakaran happened the day after the Oslo talks. Subsequently, after three months, the LTTE attacked him. Either far more time passed or this happened earlier. In any case, it would seem fair to say things were unravelling at least three months before the split became public knowledge. See <http://www.norway.lk/Embassy/Peace-Process/peace>.

<sup>44</sup> Personal Interview, Vinayagamorthy Muralitharan [Karuna]. Colombo, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

interview suggests, however, that weighing in his decision to defect was Prabhakaran's explicit mention of Mahattaya's 'betrayal'. Finding his actions associated with that previous incident of dissent was enough for Karuna to preemptively organise his defection and - different from Mahattaya - secure an army of his own.

As argued earlier, both establishing the exact moment of consciousness as well as the one original motive might in itself represent an exercise as futile as that of trying to reduce the origins of conflict to one particular cause. What is very suggestive is to revise what actors and commentators dealing with such issues are trying to establish. For instance, the dichotomy *premeditated* vs. *on the spot* reaction, which is a way of framing and evaluating the schism either as a (political) project or as a self-involved survival tactic. This architecture of the debate suggests in fact that they are expressions of the different schools of conflict analysis. Describing Karuna's motives in such a manner positions the defection within the famous 'greed versus grievances' debates (Ballentine & Sherman, 2003). While Karuna and his supporters frame his defection as being instigated by a kind of relative deprivation, ideological dissent and precautionary defensive measures -roughly in parallel with the conflict theories of say Azar (1990) or Gurr (1994)-; the Northern LTTE leadership resorted to an almost classic economic and private interest-based rationale along the lines of the conflict theories of say Collier and Hoeffler (2004).

While there is no straightforward answer as to why Karuna rebelled, his argumentation based on discriminatory treatment towards the easterners from the LTTE leadership certainly found some echo and was hence useful. A salient and telling feature of the rebellion is the character of the initial supporters, namely eastern traders and educated groups, particularly from the Eastern University. In a sense, they embody what could be seen as the financially and culturally repressed rising up against northern domination. It matters little whether Karuna actually did what he did because he wanted to do something about this perceived inequality. The fact is that using such a discourse of regional discrimination as a legitimising force is one of the crucial elements allowing him to execute, sustain and survive his revolt. It is the connecting feature between private drive and collective grievance, as well as the articulating factor between the armed movement and the society around it. It was, if you will, the crucial ingredient for the *linguistic alchemy* (Apter, 1997) required for the revolt to be feasible.

### 1.3. March 2004: Discursive Battles and Military Standoff

During the days immediately after Karuna's revolt, the front pages of all newspapers were full with extracts of his letter and speculation surrounding the implications of his words. LTTE's efforts to deny the news, published just after midnight in *TamilNet*, were in vain<sup>45</sup>. Meanwhile, after a brief silent shock, chaos, uncertainty and disbelief reigned in Batticaloa. As argued in the introduction, all these manifestations of astonishment, confusion and disorder reflect a fundamental part of the narrative corpus that must be captured and scrutinised. Therefore, what follows is a portrayal of the ways in which people involved in violence "try to define and control the world they find themselves in" (Robben & Nordstrom, 1995:8).

#### 1.3.1. The First Days

On 4<sup>th</sup> March, leaflets were distributed highlighting some of the issues expressed in Karuna's letter, while attributing all past wrongdoings to the Intelligence Wing of the LTTE (UTHR(J), 2004a). On 6<sup>th</sup> March, the LTTE discharged Karuna for "traitorous" activity, desperately attempting to portray a sense of control. On the same day, the BBC Tamil service revealed that Karuna had been summoned to Kilinochchi to face an inquiry during the days prior to the revolt<sup>46</sup>.

Effigies of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and the newly appointed regional leader *Ramesh* were burnt near Chenkalady on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March. According to a senior army officer, approximately 2,000 people took part in a procession in Kiran, carrying photos of Karuna in full LTTE uniform. This was the first ever openly defiant act towards the LTTE leader's authority, which some, such as Nataraja Kuruparaja of the Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), nonetheless found ironic: for him, the very people responsible for unspeakable violence in the region were now attempting to portray themselves as victims. Split or no split, "both factions have stripes", he said (Handunnetti 2004a).

On the same day as the demonstration, Karuna gave an interview to the BBC Tamil service, demanding top-level changes in the rebel group's hierarchy as a prerequisite

---

<sup>45</sup> A website generally perceived to be pro-LTTE.

<sup>46</sup> In Sunday Leader. 8<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

for him to consider re-joining the movement. His demands were for the replacement of LTTE's head of intelligence *Pottu Amman*, LTTE's head of police *B. Nadesan* and LTTE's head of finance *Tamilenthai*. Incidentally, the three leaders behind the alleged inquiry for which Karuna had been summoned to Kilinochchi.

On Monday (8<sup>th</sup> March), Karuna's troops carried out checks to prevent Prabhakaran loyalists from entering the area, while religious and civil society leaders - including the Bishop of Batticaloa Kingsley Swampillay, Vice chancellor of the Eastern University Dr. S. Raaveendranath and TNA candidate Rajan Sathiyamoorthy - were sent to the Vanni in an attempt to patch things up. However, these efforts were in vain. Instead, things became aggravated as Karuna's close friend and LTTE Trincomalee area leader *Paduman* was summoned to Kilinochchi, allegedly to be Prabhakaran's special emissary to Karuna. Once in the Vanni, he was in fact suspended and placed under house arrest<sup>47</sup>. He remained with the LTTE until just before the end of the war and is the highest-ranking LTTE leader to be charged in courts to date<sup>48</sup>.

On Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> March, Norwegian envoy Erik Solheim met Tamilchelvan in the Vanni and stated that in the same way the Norwegians did not get involved in discussions between the Prime Minister and the President, similarly they would "not take any part in the discussion between the LTTE leadership and Mr. Karuna. The first is an internal matter for the South and the second is an internal matter for the Northeast". Soon afterwards, Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM) spokesman Agnes Bragadottir announced they were suspending operations in the east, since Karuna "is not bound by the present truce agreement any longer" (UTHR(J), 2004c). But a lack of clarity concerning how to proceed prevailed among the security forces. As a high-ranking officer put it, "whether we like him or not, he [Karuna] commands thousands of battle-hardened cadres, [therefore] we need to have at least a temporary security arrangement with him. The problem -he added- is that if the SLMM says the ceasefire agreement is no longer valid in the East it means we are technically at war with the renegade group"<sup>49</sup>.

---

<sup>47</sup> In *The Sunday Leader*. 28<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>48</sup> Paduman surrendered in April 2009, but he was among a group of LTTE surrendees from the Eastern province who were kept in a special detention camp due to efforts made by Karuna using his influence within the Sri Lankan government See *Transcurrents* ([www.transcurrents.com](http://www.transcurrents.com)), May 28 2011.

<sup>49</sup> In *The island*. 14<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

On 12<sup>th</sup> March, an organisation calling themselves *South Tamil Eelam* set up a hunger strike executed by residents and school children of Batticaloa at the *Mamangeswaram Kovil* (Hindu temple), demanding the decision to dismiss Karuna from the LTTE to be revoked. The organisers wrote to Prabhakaran:

Respecting our feelings and the sacrifices made by our people and soldiers of the East, we request you to reconsider your decision and without causing a division amongst us to help us work united for the dawn of Tamil Eelam [...] Take back the allegation of traitor imposed on Colonel Karuna Amman; Our father Colonel Karuna Amman is not a single man. He is the only one worthy of being our commander.<sup>50</sup>

In the midst of this tumult, members of the TNA (the strongest Tamil political party due to contest in the April 2004 general elections) were pushed into an impossible position. All candidates contesting the Batticaloa district and eight contesting in Ampara met Karuna loyalists on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March, and were advised not to endorse the Kilinochchi leadership's claim that the LTTE were the sole representatives of the Tamil-speaking people. Karuna urged them to focus primarily on issues specific to the region, rather than supporting LTTE's Interim Self-Governing Authority (ISGA) in the North-East, as the TNA did at the time. However, not all summoned TNA candidates observed Karuna's directive. Indeed, one of them publicly emphasised he would campaign on the basis of LTTE's cardinal principles, as he had fought for Tamil Nationalism and wanted to promote "the unification of [the] North East"<sup>51</sup>. He was killed the following year.

In an interview with *The Sunday Island*, Karuna said that he would maintain his fighting force due to an immediate threat to him from the Northern LTTE. However, he stressed he had no intentions to capture *Vanni land*. Journalist Namini Wijedasa subsequently asked him whether Prabhakaran was now his enemy, to which Karuna wittily replied: "Not yet. We didn't make this move because he's our enemy, but his moves tell us that he thinks of us as *his* enemies". He also stressed that his defection made the LTTE so much weaker that the Sinhalese people should be happy, noting "they can be sure there will be no more war". Finally, he stated: "I'm not a traitor because I didn't make any attempts to kill the leadership or betray this struggle. Only

---

<sup>50</sup> In *The Island*. 13<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>51</sup> In *The Island*. 19<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

thing I did was demand the just rights of my people and soldiers"<sup>52</sup>.

### 1.3.2. Operation Karuna: LTTE's Response

By 18<sup>th</sup> March, Karuna had already gained a provisional cyberspace (www.padumeen.com) that served as a platform to compete against LTTE's strong propaganda machine. On this website, he announced his will to forgive and in turn grant an amnesty to the LTTE commanders who fled to the Vanni. He invited them to re-join their families and lead 'private lives' or function as members under Karuna's leadership<sup>53</sup>. But by 25<sup>th</sup> March, it had become clear from an LTTE statement published on *TamilNet* that a counter-strike (*Operation Karuna*) was imminent. The richness of that text typified the discursive battles being performed to such an extent that I reproduce it almost entirely here:

Dear fighters and divisional heads in Batticaloa-Ampara,

[...]Karuna's immoral conduct, fraudulent financial transactions and arbitrary assassinations were proved with substantial evidence and he was called for an inquiry. Karuna who feared that the charges would be proved and disciplinary action taken against him, refused to comply with the leadership's command and went on levelling false accusations against the leadership.

In the presence of a few civilians and some cadres in 'Meenagam' complex he proclaimed his decision to secede from the LTTE and that he would be the leader of the Eastern Province. He had prevailed upon the cadres not to take the oath of allegiance, a noble sentimental oath that has been, for years together, pronounced by thousands of martyrs and black Tigers.

Karuna has acted in disrespect to our national flag, one that embraces the mortal remains of our martyrs and worshipped by the Tamils all over the world. He has forced the cadres to break and burn the photographs of the national leader. In his various interviews to the media, he has ridiculed Tamil nationalism. Karuna, for the benefit of his selfish motives, has developed intimacy with traitors and enemy commanders who were responsible for several assassinations and destructions in the Batticaloa-Ampara District. By setting on fire, national newspapers that bring out the truth, Karuna has prevented the Batticaloa-Ampara people from knowing the truth [...]

Deceiving the Batticaloa-Ampara people by instigating regionalism, Karuna is planning to continue his life in luxury. [...] Standing before humanity today

---

<sup>52</sup> In *The Island*. 14<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>53</sup> In *The Island*. 20<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

as an offender and a traitor, Karuna, in order to exculpate himself from the charges, is trying to make use of you as a shield and as a result make you all disposables. [...]

Anybody who opposes disciplinary action against Karuna will be considered as a traitor to the Tamil national cause. Based on the understanding that all the cadres enrolled themselves in the movement accepting the leadership of Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran and that the parents entrusted their children on this basis, we request that the cadres who are with Karuna now, without knowing the truth, should abandon him. Our national leader has granted permission to those cadres who abandon Karuna to go home and join their families.

In spite of the above advice, if any of the cadres decide to arm in favour of Karuna, he/she would be deemed responsible for the consequences. The demise of such a cadre will not be with the honour of a martyr. Should freedom fighters of Tamil Eelam die for Karuna and his henchman to prosper? Those division heads that show allegiance to Karuna now should think responsibly and distance themselves from Karuna and circumvent a historical blame. The heroic history of Batticaloa-Ampara should not get clouded with Karuna's treachery. Let us all work with commitment and unity so that we can raise our heads with pride and dignity<sup>54</sup>.

The text above warrants a brief analytical revision. First, LTTE's three condensed arguments explaining Karuna's dissidence must be underscored: immorality, economic malversations and indiscriminate violence. To diffuse a sense of collective purpose in Karuna's action, they actually resort to elements considered to be the ultimate personal flaws: decadence, greed and irrationality. Second, the collection of symbolic/discursive actions that the LTTE leadership recriminated Karuna for should be duly noted: prohibiting the oath of allegiance, insulting the flag, burning the leader's pictures and torching newspapers. These are all the tools of unity, the instruments with which a movement builds its collective solidarity, consensus, support and teleology. Together with direct force, these are the discursive weapons of control, governance and domination. Third, LTTE's tripartite discursive strategy adopted in this message is one of discouraging followers, by accusing Karuna of demagoguery – Karuna as a false prophet - by warning them of the dire consequences if they remain loyal to the 'traitor', as well as offering incentives if they defect the defector. Finally, they embed Karuna supporters' hypothetical decision in a larger timescale, stating that they can repent and re-join the LTTE or be part of history as the spoilers of the Tamil struggle.

---

<sup>54</sup> TamilNet (www.tamilnet.com). 25<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

But beyond – or actually through - the specifically conveyed messages, the text was also something else: it was a direct war cry, a call to arms.

Karuna anticipated from the outset the possibility of a “northern invasion”. He prepared elaborate defence lines with around 800 men being deployed along the Verugal border, appointing his elder brother Vinayagamorthy Sivanesathurai a.k.a. Reggie as commander<sup>55</sup>. However, despite the heavy surveillance in all entry points to the east, by the second half of the month hit squads were already active targeting people having any (possible) association with Karuna’s administration.

They particularly aimed at persons with any trace of regional consciousness. Indeed, on 24<sup>th</sup> March, acting Eastern University Dean *Thiruchelvam*, known for his work on the protection of the region’s cultural identity, was shot, although he survived. Similarly, Ratnam Mounagurusamy, the first Eastern Tamil to become Batticaloa’s Government Agent (GA), was also the target of an assassination attempt based upon his association with Karuna (UTHR(J), 2004b). Finally, TNA candidate Rajan Sathiyamoorthy, former president of the Batticaloa Traders Association and close associate of Karuna, was killed while performing his morning *pooja* on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2004<sup>56</sup>. As suggested earlier, Sathiyamoorthy’s death became a crucial mark in the consolidation of Karuna’s revolt.

After several weeks of a discursive standoff, the prospect of a direct military conflict seemed imminent. From radio interceptions, the security forces knew that an attack was coming. In fact, on 28<sup>th</sup> March Iqbal Athas reported that the Navy was discussing security concerns in their Trincomalee Headquarters after observing LTTE boats stationed in the Verugal Bay (UTHR(J), 2004c).

Although agnostic of what the future held, for many already it was clear Karuna’s split had shaken the LTTE to its very foundations, causing them irredeemable harm. A few also soon perceived that the schism would reconfigure north-eastern relations for good<sup>57</sup>.

---

<sup>55</sup> Sunday Leader. 28<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>56</sup> Hindu ritual similar to daily prayers.

<sup>57</sup> One among those that foresaw this was the known political commentator *D. B. S. Jeyaraj*.

## 1.4. Good Friday's Crucifixion

In a political move aimed at gaining local, government and international support, Karuna sent several child combatants away with Rs.100/- to find their way home. By contrast, on the other side of the divide, the LTTE started an aggressive conscription campaign to make up for the loss of fighters in the East caused by Karuna's rebellion (UTHR(J), 2004c). Subsequently, once the LTTE got rid of Trincomalee leader Paduman, Prabhakaran saw the opportunity to place Sornam in charge and plan an attack across the Verugal River. Swiftly the mediators in the peace process, who imagined the conflict in terms of a classical scheme dealing with two opposing forces - the North and South - found themselves with an additional power emerging from the East. As expressed in a report, "Conflict resolution theorists could not cope with three sides. So they all stood back and waited until there were two sides again" (UTHR(J), 2004c). In fact, they actually facilitated the theatre for such a return to a more manageable dichotomy.

Indeed, on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2004, Pillayan received a call from Karuna stating they had lost communication with the Verugal team, asking him to check it out. So Pillayan went. A claymore explosion caught the first van of his team when it was crossing the Pannichenkerny Bridge, killing five cadres. He cleared the bodies and continued into Vaharai area, but then came across three women combatants who told him the Vanni tigers had covered the area with mines all over. "While they were saying that, just next to my van, they stepped on a mine and their body parts were scattered all over the van and I"<sup>58</sup>. By then, although Pillayan was not convinced about breaking away, seeing the Vanni tigers killing his cadres prompted his anger and resentment to grow exponentially. He remained politically confused yet determined to avenge their deaths.

That incident was part of a larger military operation later known as the *Good Friday Battle*. At around 1.30am on that Friday, the LTTE started an attack in Verugal with a simultaneous assault on Kathiravelly camp. It has been claimed that the tactic accounting for the overwhelming manner in which Karuna's defence line was overrun was what is known as the White flag incident, a story that has several variants. The most accepted one argues that a group of Tigers, including some senior leaders who

---

<sup>58</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. Trincomalee, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

had previously defected from Karuna, crossed the Verugal River saying they wanted to surrender. These men had trained some of Karuna's fighters and thus the latter welcomed them unwarily, so they would suddenly open fire (Jeyaraj, 2004d).

A large number of Karuna's forces at Verugal were actually children who had not seen battle before. Seasoned fighters were later sent to the area but they did not fight for long, as Karuna quickly ordered everyone to pull back. That decision was neither welcomed by Pillayan or Jayam, the Vaharai Area leader at the time. "As soon as I heard the explosions", Jayam narrates, "I informed Karuna, and Pillayan's pistol team was sent. When Pillayan came we went together in the van. I advised Pillayan to drive very fast. As soon as we passed, a claymore mine went off. I thought Pillayan had also died but when I shook him he responded. Then the order from Karuna came to stop fighting and take care of the wounded and dead. I didn't want to withdraw because we could get a bad name if we did"<sup>59</sup>. Similarly, Pillayan recalls: "I returned and went to my boys' funerals, but what could I say to their parents? Then, I went straight to Karuna and asked angrily: now what? [What's the decision]?"<sup>60</sup>.

Although the figures of this military encounter known as the Good Friday Battle are fiercely debated, it is now generally accepted that the number killed from Karuna's side on that occasion is between 60 and 150 (67 according to Jayam), while around 40 died on the Vanni side. This was the only battle in which the two factions fought with clearly distinguishable frontlines. Later on, despite their being high casualties, the operations were more of guerrilla and counterinsurgency style.

On the evening of 11<sup>th</sup> April, pressured by numerous mothers of combatants, Karuna completely disbanded his forces. He also released several of his prisoners, but killed Neelan, a subordinate of Pottu Amman, who Karuna believed had been sent to kill him. Pottu Amman's death squads would soon be back, however, rooting out suspected Karuna sympathizers and reenlisting the former fighters that the rebel had just disbanded, including hundreds of newly released child soldiers (UTHR(J), 2004c).

Karuna got ready to leave the province, calling Ali Zahir Moulana once more to ask whether he could fix a vehicle for him. Moulana replied: 'If I arrange someone the

---

<sup>59</sup> Personal Interview, Nahalingam Thiraviyam [Jayam]. Valaichchenai, 15th May 2010.

<sup>60</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan. Trincomalee, 19th December 2009.

news is going to be leaked and the LTTE is all out to take you, arrest you or kill you. I don't want to trust anyone. I don't want to tell anybody. But I'm going to Colombo [he was in Eravur]. On my way I'll meet you somewhere. I'll take you'<sup>61</sup>.

Moulana claims to have helped Karuna based on humanitarian grounds and in the 'interest of the district', given that all the developmental achievements would be otherwise destroyed if a confrontation occurred. Besides, Moulana's argument goes, here was a man ready to find a political solution, to give up the armed struggle and enter the political mainstream.

The initial interpretation of Karuna's retreat was that he had been 'crucified' during the Good Friday Battle, suffering irreparable losses, forcing the rebel commander to run away. But much as Pilatus, with the Verugal slaughter the Vanni leadership only hammered the final nails that were to sustain the revolt, albeit in a different substance. Between the day of the split and the good Friday battle - a period referred to as the 40 days revolt -, the war lord (as the other one) spent forty days in a political desert, preparing for his future public ministry.

Near Punanai (between Ottamavadi and Polonaruwa), Moulana's car turned left and entered a small gravel road into the paddy fields, on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April. After four miles, Karuna was waiting with a briefcase. Two other vans were there. They shook hands. Moulana stepped out of the car and said: "I'm really glad you are avoiding confrontation and that you are coming with me. It's a good move. It's a very big step you are taking towards peace, you ought to be admired. If someone should be given a peace award it should be given to you". Karuna hugged him and said: "the award should be given to you because I was motivated by you". They both entered the vehicle, together with four women, commanders of the women's wing.

Other leaders such as Rabert, Pillayan, Kohaneshan were also there and received instructions first to get rid of all the weapons and subsequently to follow the parliamentarian's vehicle. Once inside the car, Karuna opened his briefcase and showed it to Moulana.

---

<sup>61</sup> Personal Interview, Ali Zahir Moulana. Colombo, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

- “*Guess what was in it?*” Moulana dared me while having some tea at his assistant and personal friend’s house in Colombo, six years and two weeks after the facts.
- “Millions of rupees?” I clumsily replied.

Maintaining a smile yet clearly disappointed by my lack of inspiration, Moulana said:

- “No, lots of maps”. Karuna said in Tamil to me: “This is my nation”. I just laughed and then said: “Don’t worry Amman the steps you are taking backwards are going to take you forward in the future. Be patient”<sup>62</sup>.

At around 6pm, they passed the Welikanda police checkpoint but did not really check as they were all in a holiday mood. They subsequently became hungry and therefore stopped at Dambulla’s famous Rest House to order some dinner. Behind them were those two vans with 24 high-ranking cadres, including Pillayan, who, recalling that moment, exclaimed to me: “I couldn’t believe Karuna could stop to eat at that point!”<sup>63</sup>.

They arrived in Colombo at 2am. Karuna and the women cadres were accommodated in two rooms at the Jiac Hilton tower, whereas Moulana went home. In the early morning, he spoke with the director general of the Peace Secretariat and secretary of foreign affairs, Bernard Goonatilleke, telling him: “*Karuna is in town*”<sup>64</sup>. It was not the Hilton for the rest of the cadres, though; instead, they were put in a small hotel in Thimbirigasyaya<sup>65</sup>. It was Tamil/Sinhala New Year and indeed a new era awaited them; they just did not know what was coming, especially now that Karuna had switched off his mobile phone. They had no idea where he was and most of them did not really know Colombo.

“I had decided to leave the country and go to Australia”, Pillayan confesses. “So we went to the movement’s agency. But the man in charge was from Jaffna! So that was impossible”. Instead, Kohaneshan rented a house from someone he knew, spending weeks there until Karuna made contact one day. It emerged that he was in an army

---

<sup>62</sup> Personal Interview, Ali Zahir Moulana. Colombo, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

<sup>63</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. Colombo, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>64</sup> Personal Interview, Ali Zahir Moulana. Colombo, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

<sup>65</sup> Hotel Janaki. They had to leave the next day to a house though, which according to Pillayan was in Wellawatta, another (nearby) area of Colombo inhabited by many Tamils.

camp, much to Pillayan's surprise and apprehension: "I was very allergic to that. We had fought the army for so many years, no? But Kohaneshan and I went to meet him at the Apollo Hospital where two unknown Sinhala men approached us. They were army intelligence and said come with us"<sup>66</sup>.

Karuna's wife and *Jeyaraj* were also there, having flown back from India, and were picked up by Moulana's assistant who initially took them to the InterContinental Hotel in downtown Colombo on 20<sup>th</sup> April. Karuna told Pillayan that President Kumaratunga had said he could not stay in Sri Lanka, so he and his family were going abroad. 'What about us?' Pillayan asked excitedly. Karuna replied that they could work with army intelligence, offering little comfort.

That night, Kohaneshan and Pillayan allegedly came to a decision, somewhere around the end of May or beginning of June: "As we had lost even our respect and we couldn't stay anywhere, that day we decided to fight the Vanni tigers". They held each other's hands and said: "you might lose your life this way, or I might. But we will follow the path until the end"<sup>67</sup>. That represented the unofficial birth of TMVP, which counted only fourteen active members by the time that Karuna went abroad. Not much later, Karuna called from Nepal.

## 1.5. Analytical Recapitulation

With its fragile ceasefire and intermittent talks, the 2002-2008 Peace Process partly enabled the revolt. Involved actors reflect on it simultaneously as a space of pollution and revelation, depending on their location in the emergent cleavage. For the LTTE, external (almost demonic) forces were considered to have contaminated, manipulated and confused both the peace process and its participants. Conversely, for their defecting former military leader, the peace process had a reflexive quality: a kind of serenity that revealed the issues previously obscured by the frenzy of warfare. As Karuna himself argued, when waging war all efforts are on combat; everything else is secondary. Only when things settled and normalcy returned were people able to consider issues such as discrimination<sup>68</sup>. The peace process had this

---

<sup>66</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan. Trincomalee, 19th December 2009.

<sup>67</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan. Trincomalee, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>68</sup> *The Sunday Leader*, March 2004.

dual capacity to make people vulnerable to perilous influence; but maybe because of such danger, it also made combatants think twice.

A discourse of war, including a revolt such as that focused on here, emerges as a mythology that valorises history based on concepts of inclusion and exclusion, defining others as outsiders or enemies (Jabri 1996:7). To that end, first prejudices are created or reactivated and then the differences are politicised. Sites for the proliferation of agitators and the institutionalisation of the revolt are subsequently selected. Finally, the environment in which all these events are taking place is transformed into a social problem (Brass 1996:15). Applying this sequence (suggested by Paul Brass for the case of riots) to the events around Karuna's defection proves to be rather useful. The initial step taken by the former LTTE military commander was to highlight a difference within the armed group between fighters of the North and east. He then politicised the difference by suggesting that eastern fighters did not have actual access to power within the outfit. Subsequently, Karuna demarcated the spaces in which his revolt could be institutionalised and prosper, centred on Batticaloa. Finally (analytically speaking, given that much happens almost simultaneously), the revolt's leader connected the internal issues of the LTTE with a broader distinction between northern and eastern Tamils in general, thus transforming the context of his defection into a social problem.

In effect, violence "turns boundaries in the mind into terrains and jurisdictions on the ground" (Apter 1997:1). Such *spatialisation* is very much traceable in the context of TMVP's formation and will therefore be substantially treated in Chapter Three. For now, it is sufficient to anticipate that the transgression and reshaping of those boundaries created new discourse communities connecting moral principle with interest. In such a process, people talked themselves into committing - or in our case, redirecting - violence (1997:2), while submerged in what Apter calls a "linguistic alchemy", the description of which could very well serve as the abstract of this chapter:

Some triggering or focal happening (...) suddenly stops time and resets it. There is a sudden beginning and end. Then meanings become loaded, cumulatively, the event "thickens" symbolically. It serves as a lightning rod for a wide variety of experiences. Individuals convey their individual stories to reinforce a collective one and draw down in interpretative power more than they put in. (...) [These] moral moments (...) punctuate history. They convert time into space. (Apter 1997:12)

At the very least, Karuna's revolt reset the clock of Sri Lanka's civil war. Furthermore, the legitimisation of the revolt's redirected use of violence resulted in the translation of violent events into a social text through which symbolic capital was generated and monopolised (Apter, 1997:14). Despite the rather limited manifested support for Karuna and the later TMVP, the mechanism through which symbolic capital and the social embedding of the split was performed proved to be fundamental in the viability of the emerging group, and therefore in the transformation of Sri Lanka's civil war.

Like any other organisation, this dissident group may have started with the initiative of an individual, yet it soon needed to transform into a collective project (Schlichte, 2009:32). For that reason, this chapter has also related to the participants' struggle in trying to transform Karuna's choice into some sort of regional emancipation. The process, however, bears witness to the ambiguities in the leader's motivations and the diversity of reasons for others to follow him; all configured in the midst of recurrent hesitations. In this sense, the preceding pages have introduced the formation of the soon-to-be-named TMVP as disputed historicities, sites of interference and interaction<sup>69</sup>.

In this chapter, we have established how the split came about; how the people involved reflect upon it; and how this reveals the construction of legitimising and mobilising strategies. It has touched upon three of Oberschall's four basic dimensions of collective action: discontent, ideology-feeding grievances (or at least the discursive construction of such) and political opportunity (2004:27). The fourth dimension (the capacity to organise) will be addressed in more detail in sections ahead. In fact, expanding the adopted organising strategies, the next chapter will retake TMVP's collective chronology and discuss issues pertaining to identity politics using the naming process of this new collective effort as a guiding thread.

---

<sup>69</sup> Adapted from Clifford, J., 1992.

# CHAPTER TWO

---

## ***ACRONYMS OF AN IDENTITY IN TRANSITION***

By mid-2004, Karuna's revolt as an organised armed resistance against the LTTE appeared to be failing. Although they did not kill him, the *Vanni Tigers* had at least succeeded in sending Karuna into clandestinity and subsequently exile. Yet, regardless of LTTE's military victories in the immediate aftermath of the rift, the rebel's decision to split and the collective consolidation of the later-to-be-named TMVP would irrefutably alter Sri Lanka's civil war. Karuna's defection actually questioned numerous of the common assumptions associated with the war, and simultaneously presented several analytical opportunities to elucidate key elements in the dynamics of armed conflicts.

The *Tigers'* internal division not only challenged Prabhakaran's dominance over the North-East, it also refuted the ideological construction of separatism and the government's gamble for a negotiated solution. The fissure within the LTTE forced a revision in the public arena of the classical - albeit naïve - understanding of the Sri Lankan conflict (exclusively) through ethnic lines, challenging the all-too-common perception of homogeneity within the armed movements, particularly within the LTTE. Indeed, the schism brought to light the importance and simultaneous fragility of loyalty as a crucial feature in the sustainability *and* alteration of conflict; moreover, it offered an analytical opportunity to explore the fundamental interplay of force and discourse in armed struggles. In such an exchange, a large group of armed fighters, as well as civilians around them, embarked upon a process of meaning production, trying to make sense out of an altered reality they were both subject and agents of. For it was not only distant and abstract 'others' that needed to be convinced of the actuality of the revolt, but also the protagonists themselves desperately attempting to tame their own confusion.

This chapter will follow the courses and flows leading to the institutionalisation of the revolt, simultaneously presented as a chronological chain of events and a sense-making journey. It will initially trace a trajectory moving from an un-named dissidence marked by survival tactics to the formation of a political movement cum paramilitary

force capable of challenging the world's strongest insurgency. Along the way, it will also deal with the crucial issues of identity formation and naming processes in the midst of violence by navigating through the memories of TMVP leaders, members' diaries, NGO reports and media articles.

If one of the main axes around which Chapter One evolved was Karuna's first missive directed to Prabhakaran, this chapter revolves around his second epistle in which the political movement – TMVP - was launched. The emerging data will be organised in the latter part of this chapter around the acronym of the movement and the different stages it went through. In other words, it will consider the politics of identity in the *letters from Batticaloa* by matching an analytical topic to a corresponding letter of the movement's acronym. Hence, the T (for *Tamil*) of TMVP will help address the debate on *Tamilness*, the M of *Makkal (people)* will assist the issues around community and subjectivity, the V of *Viduthalai (Liberation)* is used to structure a discussion around freedom and resistance, and the P of *Pulikal (Tigers)* is implemented to highlight the ambiguities of these actors, trapped between continuity and change. In-between, a short yet essential discussion will be brought forward regarding the implications of *Eelam's* disappearance in TMVP's consolidation. Furthermore, issues of identity formation, ethnicity and nationalism will be discussed throughout the acronym's disambiguation.

But first let us resume the transition from where we left off in Chapter One, exploring new biographical episodes that mostly stem from the life histories of Jeyaraj, Pillayan and Padmini.

## 2.1. Organising the Revolt

In May 2004, the LTTE leadership successfully implemented women cadres to convince their fleeing partners to reconsider their defection and re-join the Vanni group. Several of the men who had left to Colombo together with Karuna were successfully persuaded, accompanying their wives back to the headquarters in Kilinochchi. Once there, both the women cadres and their husbands were executed on Prabhakaran's orders. Almost simultaneously, the LTTE also forced the four female combatants who travelled with Karuna in Moulana's car to defect the rebellion. They succeeded in this by exerting pressure and intimidating their family

members still living in the Eastern Province. The women cadres re-emerged in the LTTE headquarters and were presented in a press conference, revealing for the first time Moulana's role in Karuna's retreat from the East<sup>70</sup>. Both these incidents paved the way for a certain gendered construction of blame associated with the revolt's initial failures, discussed at length in chapter Three.

When the four female fighters who came with Karuna surrendered to the Vanni group Karuna, his family and Jeyaraj (then still in Sri Lanka) were forced to change residence once more: "We stayed in Galle district for 31 days", Jeyaraj recalls. "Then we rented another house in Colombo and stayed there about three months. We went to India in September". When Karuna's new passport was ready, along with his family and Jeyaraj, he flew first to Bangkok (Thailand) and subsequently to Kathmandu (Nepal), where they stayed for 26 days.

Meanwhile, on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2004 – the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Black July-, seven of the most important and loyal cadres to Karuna were killed in Colombo (Palihawadana & Ferdinando 2004). Among them were alias Castro and Kohaneshan, former LTTE head of Batticaloa's finance unit and Pillayan's closest friend, with whom he had recently sworn to fight the *Tigers* until the end.

The lead over ground operations were assumed by Reggie (Vinayagamoorthy Sivanathurai, Karuna's brother) and Pillayan, who tried to revive the agonising movement, only occasionally receiving telephone instructions from Karuna. Very soon, however, another big military victory and symbolic strike was soon achieved by the LTTE: on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2004, the northern group managed to infiltrate the dissident's main camp in the eastern jungles of Maduru Oya and killed Karuna's brother Reggie. As it turned out, the killer was the brother of one of Karuna's bodyguards. So, an eye for an eye, sibling for sibling, Karuna executed his bodyguard<sup>71</sup>.

---

<sup>70</sup> Interview, Ali Zahir Moulana. Colombo, May 2010. See also: Athas, I. 2004

<sup>71</sup> Personal Interview Sivanathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan], Batticaloa, March 2010.

Meanwhile, Jeyaraj recalls: “in Nepal, we met alias bold Rajan who was sent by ENDLF to help us<sup>72</sup>. My name at the time was *Ganesh*. We met in the Hotel in Kathmandu”. They drove all the way to Chennai (Tamil Nadu, India), taking small roads along the coast. From Chennai, they went to Bangalore and settled in the same house that Karuna’s wife, their children and Jeyaraj (now *Ganesh*) had previously stayed. “It was very close to the Chinnaswamy Cricket stadium”, Jeyaraj remembers.

During that time, Karuna regularly phoned Pillayan, to whom the overall command in Sri Lanka had been handed over after the killing of Kohaneshan and Reggie. Pillayan may not have been the most senior or even the initial choice for the commanding position, but his logistical tasks had equipped him with valuable knowledge and skills. Besides, he certainly lived through his share of the conflict’s history. He had not always been known as *Pillayan* though.

### 2.1.1. Whirlwind Memories: Pillayan’s Journey

Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan was the name Pillayan’s parents gave him when he was born in Pethalai (Valaichennai area, Batticaloa district), on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1975. “The first thing I remember is the 1978 cyclone<sup>73</sup>”, he tells me in his Trincomalee Quarters on Orr’s Hill. It seems to me this memory served as a metaphor for his life. Almost all of his childhood friends died in the struggle: “If you go today to Pethalai, you will find mostly women from my age group. All the boys are gone”. Well, apart from one who was actually there with us during the interview. In the corner of the room stood one of Pillayan’s bodyguards in all seriousness and silence, listening to the conversation. Suddenly, Pillayan addressed him and they started to evoke childhood memories such as the tricycle races they used to have in the dusty streets of Pethalai.

---

<sup>72</sup> The Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) is a former Indian backed Tamil militant group in Sri Lanka. It was formed in 1987 as an amalgamation of splinter groups from other militant groups with the support of the Research and Analysis Wing, the Indian intelligence agency.

<sup>73</sup> Together with the 2004 Tsunami, the two biggest natural disasters hitting the eastern province. They function as crucial benchmarks in nearly all narratives in eastern Sri Lanka.

The first Tamil militant movement operating in the village was the TELO<sup>74</sup>, a group to which one of Pillayan's uncles belonged. When IDP's (*akattikal* [refugees] he calls them) came to town and started to join his school after the 1983 riots, Pillayan first learned about what was happening in his country and started to get the first notions of the conflict. Around that time, two girls who used to help him with his homework began to bring TELO propaganda to the house.

Owing to his size and age, Chandrakanthan (Pillayan) was not approached by the armed groups, which did not really matter to him because at that time he wanted to live peacefully anyway. In fact, he says, "I was allergic to the movements. I even fasted praying for peace". Pillayan remembers that there was a lot of tension around 1990, because the army was using people from the villages to identify members of the LTTE. Motivations for him to join them were building up, particularly after the killing of two of his classmates and the numerous funerals of friends or relatives that he attended. However, one specific incident seemed to spark the definitive decision. As he went with his brother to Valaichenai to buy things for his sister's coming of age, the Army stopped them. Pillayan did not take it too seriously, but then the soldier slapped him in the face simply for being a Tamil. It was then that his mind started to change. "I was ashamed to tell this incident at home. I was really young and small; they should not have hit me"<sup>75</sup>.

At the time, violence was an everyday topic in family conversations, while teachers kept warning students to be careful, advising them on how to avoid recruitment. His parents were not too concerned about this though because they thought he was too small. Nonetheless, after he was slapped by the soldiers, he started to discuss the possibility of joining the movement with fellow students of the Valaichenai Hindu College: "Why should we live like this?" they said to each other, sharing experiences of harassment, such as the army taking the air out of their bicycles, forcing Tamil

---

<sup>74</sup> The Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) functioned as a militant movement until 1986, when most of its members were killed in a conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Its surviving members reorganised themselves as a political party still active today. In February 1984, the TELO, together with the EROS and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), set up a common militant platform called the Eelam National Liberation Front, or ENLF. The LTTE joined the ENLF in April that year, but they were unhappy with the pro-India stance of the TELO. In February 1986, the LTTE pulled out of the ENLF and launched an all-out assault on the TELO. Overall, over four hundred were killed resulting in TELO's virtual wipe out.

<sup>75</sup> Personal Interview Sivanesthurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan], March 2010

students to carry their bikes back home<sup>76</sup>. “Joining the LTTE was 100% my decision”, he emphasises. It happened on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1991.

On the 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Sri Lanka’s independence, young Chandrakanthan became part of the Liberation Tigers, perhaps in his own way of asserting his and his people’s independence. Or so he thought. Two days before joining, he spoke to some people in school, and particularly to a boy called *Jagan*. “The next day I openly asked him where I could find the people from the movement. He said the LTTE is in Vaharai area. I went to my auntie’s house and told her that If my mother came looking for me she should tell her I’d gone to tuition class”.

In what can only be described as reality becoming a metaphor, early the next morning the boy crossed over the Valaichenai River, thereby physically expressing his passage through the threshold into a new life. Fifteen year-old Chandrakanthan was left behind, yet in that liminal moment Pillayan had yet to be born. Towards the end of the year, he was a sixteen-year-old combatant known as *Kuperan* (the Hindu god of Wealth), assigned to LTTE’s political wing based in Batticaloa, where he would soon meet eastern commander Karuna Amman for the first time.

Thirteen years later (in the second half of 2004), Pillayan was busy recruiting some of the boys they had sent home after the Good Friday Battle. From his relatively low profile in both the LTTE as in the early days of Karuna’s revolt, he started to grow as one of the biggest names of the rebellion. Yet, either due to miscalculation by the enemy or issues of seniority, he was not ranked as the Number 2 of the dissidence, as one would expect from the person overall in charge after Karuna. Instead, when the LTTE posted posters with their ‘Most Wanted Persons Criminal List’, his name came only sixth in the list<sup>77</sup>.

It is hard to explain how Pillayan climbed the ladder without Karuna’s consent, something the latter now attempts to deny. We know that the first three of the list (Sinnathamby, Markan, Mangalan Master) were each in charge of military training camps later in the rebellion. In fact, Mangalan would be briefly considered the overall commander of TMVP at some point, while Inniyabarathi remained one of Karuna’s

---

<sup>76</sup> Some people interviewed later claimed that Pillayan never went to Valaichenai Hindu College, but a teacher said that he in fact studied with him there.

<sup>77</sup> See *Asian Tribune*, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2004.

closest confidants throughout the whole process, as discussed in Chapter Four. Meanwhile, Uruthra played an important role in the movement's finances and would grow to become one of Pillayan's closest associates. While how exactly Pillayan eventually managed to surpass all five (still living) higher-ranking members remains something of a mystery, my guess is that his power resulted from accumulated control over information, participation in resource distribution and his role in maintaining external contacts. It almost feels as if no one saw him coming due to his size and modest role within the LTTE. However, Pillayan was in fact the liaison between Karuna and the military operations in the east, as well as the man behind the movement's general logistics. Aside from recruiting, Pillayan was also rebuilding a propaganda machine during that second half of 2004, when he met a young man called Mohamed Mihar Mohamed Hanzeer, who would later become TMVP's only Muslim member.

### 2.1.2. The Muslim with the Voice of a Tiger

Born in Maruthamunai (near Kalmunai, Ampara district) on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1983, Hanzeer is the son of a man initially involved with the JVP (a communist party later reconfigured as mainly Sinhala nationalist). Very soon, he drastically changed allegiance and joined the Eelam's People Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), in fact becoming part of the central committee. In 1988, as the first north-eastern provincial elections were held, Hanzeer's father contested for the Ampara district under the EPRLF and was elected provincial council member. "I remember a meeting held in Karativu", his son says. "My father gave a speech and I went with him on stage. No much later my father went to Trincomalee. That was the last time I saw him"<sup>78</sup>.

That was Hanzeer's final glimpse of his father, because tensions mounted after the November 1988 elections for the North-Eastern Provincial Council, eventually resulting in an LTTE military offensive. The Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) withdrew in 1990 and the EPRLF were left exposed. Most of its leaders, including Hanzeer's father, went to India by helicopter, together with the then Chief Minister of North-eastern Province Annamalai Varatharajah Perumal. However, on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1990, a policeman knocked on the door: "I remember his name, Aipi Jamarthi our village policeman. He said that last night EPRLF base had been attacked in Chennai

---

<sup>78</sup>Personal Interview Mohamed Hanzeer [Azad Maulana], Trincomalee, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

(India) by the LTTE, and all high commanders were dead". Indeed, Hanzeer's father was among them. Nonetheless, despite his grieving, the young boy continued his studies at the Maruthamunai Shams Central College and made use of the books left at home by his dad. "My father was in love with Lenin, and Karl Marx, this kind of leaders. He was from the JVP, no? So when I was very young, I took those books and looked at the pictures. When I was six years old I knew who Karl Marx was. And Lenin, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro..."<sup>79</sup>

Young Hanzeer used to listen to his father telling others about Black July 1983. At the time, he thought that the Sinhalese gangsters were responsible for all of Sri Lanka's problems. But in 1990 he changed his mind. "My mother and I went to Colombo because the Indian government was giving us compensation for my father's death. While I stayed in Colombo with my uncle we went to a shop to eat and there was a public TV. I saw a scene of the Kattankudy Mosque massacres<sup>80</sup>. I saw several bodies, women crying. Kattankudy was very close to my village. Before, my understanding was that Sinhalese were the problem. After this I changed my opinion. If 1983 violence was wrong, then 1990 violence was also wrong... violence is violence." Then, trying to convince either himself or perhaps me, he repeats: "violence is violence"; a rather awkward insistence given his current position.

In 2003, Hanzeer obtained his Advanced level diploma and went to Peradeniya University, where he started writing the political column for a magazine, expressing his anti-Tiger sentiments. However, one day he met an old friend of his father, Mr Shanker Gunasekaram, former Member of Parliament for the Eelam People's Democratic Party - EPDP. He was working as chairman of the state-run cashew nut corporation under the ministry of Douglas Devananda<sup>81</sup>. Gunasekaram asked Hanzeer to work as his secretary within that corporation in Colombo, where Shankar Rajee also worked as an advisor<sup>82</sup>. The latter knew Hanzeer's father well and so they

---

<sup>79</sup> Personal Interview Mohamed Hanzeer [Azad Moulana], Trincomalee, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

<sup>80</sup> The Kattankudy Mosque massacre was an LTTE attack on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1990, which ended in the death of 147 Muslims. More on this in Chapter Five.

<sup>81</sup> Former Tamil militant and leader of the EPDP; currently Minister of Traditional Industries & Small Enterprise Development. Devananda is wanted in India on charges of murder and kidnapping, among others.

<sup>82</sup> Shankar Rajee was EROS (Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students) leader in-charge of its military wing until 1987. He was among the first Tamil militants to establish contact with the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

created a strong bond. He taught Hanzeer all about the different Tamil militant movements.

When the LTTE split in 2004, Karuna approached the EPDP, although he did not really trust the leader Douglas Devananda, given that he was from Jaffna. So he contacted Shanker Gunasekeram (“he’s an eastern man, no?”, Hanzeer explains), who subsequently opted to leave the EPDP, taking Hanzeer with him. “One day he told me he was in touch with Karuna; that Pillayan was operating in the East and that they had asked for his help to start a newspaper. He then introduced me to Pillayan”<sup>83</sup>. Several TMVP cadres came to Colombo and stayed at Gunasekeram’s house. “My first task”, Hanzeer recalls, “was to start the paper as chief editor”. The first edition of the new *Tamil Alai* was published on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2004, becoming the revolt’s own newspaper<sup>84</sup>.

In October 2004, when Hanzeer officially became part of the outfit, Pillayan named him *Sugunthan*. Days later, during a political history class that he was giving to some of the cadres in Tivuchennai, Hanzeer – *Sugunthan* - received a call from Karuna. “He said: I have decided to appoint you as the new media spokesperson for TMVP. Now we have to give you a new name. Let’s use a Muslim name so we show the world we work with the Muslim community too”<sup>85</sup>. Hanzeer was previously thinking of using the alias Castro, but Karuna was determined and suggested a name inspired by his former associate and good friend Ali Zahir Moulana, the other key Muslim in the consolidation of Karuna’s revolt. While this is what Hanzeer tells me, I cannot help thinking that it would make much more sense if the alias was actually inspired by Abdul Kalam Azad, known as *Moulana Azad*<sup>86</sup>. Nonetheless, appointed on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2004, the new spokesperson for the movement carried the name Azad Moulana.

---

<sup>83</sup> Personal Interview, Mohamed Hanzeer [Azad Moulana]. 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

<sup>84</sup> In fact, Tamil Alai already existed launched in 2003, still under the LTTE, but indeed in Batticaloa (Kokadicholai). It obtained a new editorial line after the split, so perhaps to speak of a re-launch is more accurate.

<sup>85</sup> Personal Interview, Mohamed Hanzeer [Azad Moulana], 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Maulana Abul Kalam Muhiyuddin Ahmed (commonly remembered as Maulana Azad) was an Indian scholar and political leader. He was known for his persistence on Hindu-Muslim unity, opposing the partition of India on communal lines. He became the first Minister of Education in the Indian government. *Azad* means free or independent in Arabic.

## 2.2. Baptising the Revolt: the Second Letter

Prior to that October (2004), the revolt had been unofficially named as LTTE (K) or Karuna's faction, while among themselves they intermittently used the term *Eastern Front*. It was time to baptise the rebellion. Curiously, the acronymic letters from Batticaloa's homegrown rebellion were in fact made in India.

A meeting was arranged in Thiruvaannamalai (Tamil Nadu) that month, according to Jeyaraj attended by Karuna, Gnanarajan (ENDLF leader's brother), and a Buddhist monk known as Sumanagiri, among others. The name TEMVP was selected<sup>87</sup>. Furthermore, they also established the movement's symbol (discussed in the next chapter) as well as ENDLF's strategic contribution, establishing that 12 cadres of that group should be sent to Batticaloa. When that meeting was over, Karuna and Jeyaraj returned to Bangalore.

Soon after, Karuna and his family left without telling Jeyaraj anything. Instead, two men took him to the Indira Gandhi International Academy<sup>88</sup>, where he was told Karuna had paid the fees in advance. It was an English medium school set up for refugees. But Karuna – Jeyaraj tells me - lied.

Meanwhile, the rebel leader had been working on a new letter made public on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2004, addressed to the Tamil 'People'. While using the missive to further develop a legitimising discourse for his revolt, in the last paragraphs he officially gave a name to his rebellion: for the first time, the media wrote down *TamilEela Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal*. Here are some crucial excerpts:

To my beloved Tamils,

If Prabhakaran had treated the people of the Eastern province equally without discrimination, he would have accepted my proposals [...].He also commanded me to send 1000 militants to Vanni for his personal protection. [...] Prabhakaran will not be able to bring about peace to the people. Prabhakaran hasn't got the required knowledge, wisdom and sagacity of the mind. After coming to realise these facts only, I decided to ignore Prabhakaran's leadership and I changed my revolutionary path [...]

---

<sup>87</sup> According to Jeyaraj, it was on the suggestion of Pillayan.

<sup>88</sup> The Indira Gandhi International Academy (IGIA) was created by the former Prime Minister Mr.Rajiv Gandhi for Sri Lankan refugee children, in 1990, Bangalore.

All that slaughtering committed in the past was done on the orders of Prabhakaran and as I have been a member of the outfit for the past 21 year, for whatever that has happened, I tender my humble apologies to the Tamil People [...] Prabhakaran is the number one enemy of the Tamils. [...] He is a mentally deranged person, bent on gun and killings. [...]

When he urged me to work against Muslims in the East, I refused to cooperate. [...] Whenever positions and authority were delegated, members of the Eastern province were neglected. When I pointed this out, I was accused of practicing regionalism [...] In the Eastern province not only the Tamils and Muslim people, but also the Jaffna people too openly supported my request. When our candidate Rajan Sathiyamoorthy was brutally murdered by Prabhakaran, the people rose up against the injustice. [...] I am not a fanatic fool who is greedy behind power and authority. If we take it for granted that there is truth in Prabhakaran's allegation, then why did I send 5600 military fighters back to their homes? [...]

Today, many of those innocent youngsters who were sent back to their homes are being shot and killed[...]. Through this statement, what I wish to emphasise to my people is that from the liberation struggle I will never leave. I will continue to fight for our nation, and our people must redeem them from the clutches of the worse autocrat [...] As I am confident that there will certainly be a dawn for the people, I am organizing this movement called TamilEela Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal - TamilEela Peoples Liberation Tigers. [...] I appeal to give us all your help and support to make our liberation struggle victorious. Nanri – Thanks Sgd. V. Muralitharan (Karuna), President, TamilEela Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal, Batticaloa Tamil Eelam.<sup>89</sup>

Karuna's statement contained four critical elements. First, it involved an extensive critique concerning Prabhakaran as the "number one enemy of the Tamils" and "mentally deranged", despite having referred to him as "*Suriya thvam*" (Sun God) in his prior statement just a few months previously. The second feature is an apology. Notice however how this does not include Muslims or Sinhalese. Finally, the announcement itself of his movement arrived, which was originally going to be called TEMVP (Tamil Eelam Viduthalai Pulikal) but became TMVP, relegating Eelam to an appendix (later to be dropped altogether), in a small yet strategic semantic shift of emphasis from the *homeland* - as the LTTE name suggests - to the Tamil *people*.

While Karuna's letter was written in India, the then general secretary G.R Gnanaraja officially launched the political movement by handing over the application in Colombo and releasing the initial *Manifesto of the Party*. Within it, they pledged to continue the liberation struggle under Karuna's command, formulated policies and proposals according to the aspirations of the Tamil People, and guaranteed that liberation would

---

<sup>89</sup> Hariharan, R. 2004b

be achieved in accordance with democratic principles. Finally, after calling for the international community's support, it was sanctioned that the party would thereafter be known by the abbreviation TMVP<sup>90</sup>.

Both written instances reflect attempts at solidifying the collective purpose and thus political character of the nascent organisation. However, neither Karuna's letter nor the official statement could hide the fact that Karuna's defection and TMVP's subsequent consolidation reflected how violence was implicated in the emergent modality of identity. This new figuration (now with a name) manifests how violence creates a new reality by producing particular crystallisations of sociality out of previous larger networks of interaction (Schmidt & Schroeder 2001:34). In fact, Bowman's arguments while discussing Clastre's work among Amerindians seem to fit TMVP's emergence perfectly:

In this instance violence, which had previously served as a force guaranteeing the perpetuation of a community's integrity through the warlike marking of a border between that in-group and others outside of it, begins its transformation into a bifurcated force for refashioning the character of the in-group and protecting the integrity of that new society it constructs. This violence acts on and for the group in the name of the group from sites of power (Bowman in Schmidt & Schroeder 2001:30)

Stanley Tambiah (1996:10) highlights how ethnonationalism works through the reification of attributes as enduring collective possessions, as well as by boundary-making. But despite constant efforts to hide it, such borders are flexible and volatile. Indeed, ethnic groups have always differentiated and segmented according to ideological convictions, historical circumstances and opportunity; articulating primordial "claims of distinctiveness with the pragmatics of calculated choice and opportunism" (Tambiah 1996:21). Yet, in the politics of identity and the scholarly discourses attempting to explain it, the tendency remains to draw back on the mysticism of coherence and harmony, with the diversities from within being recurrently forgotten. TMVP's formation no longer allowed this in Sri Lanka, neither from scholars nor from the broader debates in the public forum.

Furthermore, nationalism – another crucial notion within the debates that concern us - may be interpreted in two senses, as suggested by Paul Brass: as a process by which ethnic groups and communities are mobilised for action to attain political ends,

---

<sup>90</sup> Asiantribune.com. 12<sup>th</sup> October 2004.

or/and as a process by which loyalties are developed to the state. Both are subtypes of a more general process of identity formation (de Silva 1998:13). If so, then TMVP expresses a subdivision of nationalism in which a regionally bounded community seeks to redefine its role both within the Tamil nation, as with Sri Lanka as its state. Karuna's second letter from Batticaloa (although admittedly via India) was a fundamental step in that quest, through the fixing of their name establishing a political purpose and an intended communal representation. However, even though the name and political statement rendered Karuna's project a collective enterprise beyond self-defence that on its own would not suffice to make an entrance into the mainstream political sphere. In order to aspire to such, a more structured practice needed to be developed, like the consolidation of a political wing, although this seemed to be forgotten or relegated in the frenzy and immediacy of warfare and survival tactics.

### 2.2.1. The Birth of the Political Wing

By 2005, the eastern dissidence had construed a solidarity, they had a name and even a small propaganda machine. But they did not have a political structure yet. According to Sivagheeta Prabhakaran, the current mayor of Batticaloa and daughter of the assassinated Rajan Sathiyamoorthy, she was the one who suggested the idea.

Sivagheeta left Batticaloa on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2004, due to the threats they received after her father's assassination. She went with her mother, her husband and siblings to Mahiyangana, (Badulla district) and stayed there for almost a year. "Before we left we did inform Karuna Amman and Pillayan, but once in Mahiyangana the numbers were not working because of the Verugal (Good Friday) battle"<sup>91</sup>.

Police officials from Mahiyangana warned them about suspicious men in the area, probably from the LTTE, so they moved to Matale. They applied for asylum, but given that they never heard back from the embassies, her husband suggested trying with a recommendation letter from a political party. Mr. Thurairatnam, an EPRLF member (now Eastern Provincial Council representative under the TDNA) was a good friend of Sivagheeta's husband, so they contacted him to obtain the letter. Thurairatnam also offered: "I have Pillayan's phone number, do you want it?"

---

<sup>91</sup> Personal Interview, Sivagheeta Prabhakaran [Padmini]. 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

In late-2005, Sivagheeta called Pillayan and asked him what had happened to Karuna and what his plans were for the future. Pillayan replied that the aim was to eradicate the LTTE. "I asked him, do you have any idea to start a political wing? I am the first person to suggest this!" Sivagheeta recalls. 'Could *you?*' Pillayan asked her. She assented. Pillayan then said he would discuss the matter with Karuna and get back to her in a few days.

Karuna was interested. But Sivagheeta had to move to Kandy in the meantime, in a house arranged by Pillayan. People around them started to wonder who Sivagheeta and her family actually were, so they told everyone they were displaced people affected by the Tsunami<sup>92</sup>. Then one night, Pillayan, Karuna and Sivagheeta spoke on the phone and discussed future procedures. Karuna decided to make Sivagheeta party secretary and selected the alias Padmini for her<sup>93</sup>. "We came up with the name – Karuna said to her - when we were having a discussion with some intellectuals in the Mysore Palace in India".

It was time to open a head office in Colombo. They rented a large house in Colpitty (neighbourhood in Colombo) and told the owners they were starting an NGO. Pillayan introduced Padmini to alias uncle *Krishna* and alias *Mano*, both coming from the UK, as well as *Ragu* (over the phone, for he was still in Australia). *Mano* is behind the later drafted TMVP constitution, while *Ragu* (a few years later president of TMVP) helped Padmini to start a website: [www.Tamilalai.com](http://www.Tamilalai.com) (which is no longer active).

### 2.2.2. The Comeback of the Boy with the Seven Names

Meanwhile, Jeyaraj struggled to survive in Bangalore. "Karuna never paid the fees of the school. It was just a way to abandon me. I talked to one of the administrators and begged him to allow me to study". Jeyaraj spent ten months at that school. "The only thing I had was a watch Karuna had bought for me in Europe during the *Peace Talks*.

---

<sup>92</sup> As this passage and later on Jeyaraj's narrative will underscore, the Tsunami (killing 35,000 in Sri Lanka) served TMVP's interest by diverting attention from their production of violence, but also by serving as a cover story for many trying to live inadvertently among civilians.

<sup>93</sup> Padmini in Sanskrit means "She who sits on the lotus" and refers to the God Lakshmi.

I sold that watch for 300 rupees and used 65 rupees to pay for an application form for a computer course”. However, paying for the application form alone was not enough: Jeyaraj still had to find a way of covering the monthly fee of 250 rupees. At the time, there was an English donor called Elizabeth who used to visit the school. Jeyaraj told her he was a Tsunami victim: that he had lost his parents and despite it all, he still wanted to follow a computer course to get ahead in life. Elizabeth paid for the fees and instructed the administration to let him follow the courses. Jeyaraj - or *Raj*, as he called himself then - met a girl called Celestina in the program who helped him a lot: “My life changed, even my hairstyle, I tried to look good in spite of my old clothes. She was the only one to speak to me”. In Celestina, *Jeyaraj (Lateeb, Latiban, Theeban, Ganesh, Raj* and soon to be named *Suranga*) some of the peace, innocence and even hope that he had lost since that day on his father’s shoulders.

Things were good for a while. He wanted to expand his studies and get back in touch with the movement in Sri Lanka’s Eastern Province. He still had the number of *Mohammed*, the military officer who had helped him and Karuna go abroad, and asked him to tell Pillayan to call him. In October 2005, he did call and wired Jeyaraj some money, which he spent in order to join an institute in Vanampadi to study Web design. Soon afterwards, he got a job as an accounting assistant in a shop at Bangalore International Airport, with the help of Elizabeth.

But then 25<sup>th</sup> January 2006, a copy of TMVP’s newspaper – Tamil Allai - was sent to the institute, addressed to Jeyaraj. He narrowly escaped being caught, as he had gone out while two members of the “Indian Q branch” (military intelligence) came looking for him at the school and the hostel<sup>94</sup>. While it is unclear to Jeyaraj who was behind all this, it was obvious that he had to move. Even though he suspected some ENDLF members of having something to do with this, he contacted the group’s leadership and went to Thanjavur<sup>95</sup>. He was taken to the small village (Thirunallur) where he stayed in a banana plantation, waiting for someone who was supposed to take him to Chennai and send him back to Sri Lanka. Two months passed and no one came, so he went to Chennai and paid money to some agents in order to be smuggled back into Sri Lanka. He stayed with ENDLF members until they contacted RAW to sort a way of getting a visa. “A month later I got the visa. In Colombo,

---

<sup>94</sup> In Jeyaraj’s diary, translated by research assistant Alias N.Hamead.

<sup>95</sup> Thanjavur is a municipality in Tamil Nadu.

Intelligence people were waiting for me. Once at the Rajagiriya house, Uruthra Master and Pillayan started making fun of my accent in Tamil”<sup>96</sup>.

Pillayan was proud of Jeyaraj’s achievements in computer science, and consequently gave him money to buy instruments such as computers and cameras. Furthermore, he also gave Jeyaraj mobile phones and a pistol: “After almost two years I picked up a weapon in my hand again in May 2006”. Later Pillayan told Jeyaraj: “We should not make the mistake the LTTE made. We need proper details of every rupee in this historical struggle and of the accidents that occurred every day, the heroic deaths, new members, details of the enemies and so on. The future generation should know about the 25-year-old struggle to redeem the motherland. All for the sake of a single individual who thought the people of the Eastern Province were fools and now in his craze for power wanted to kill the cadres from that region”.

Jeyaraj would soon be named *Suranga*, his seventh name.

### 2.3. Naming and the Letters from Batticaloa

In an interview with *The Sunday Leader* during the early days of the revolt, Karuna was asked about the possibility of naming his movement and starting a political wing, to which he replied as follows: “I don’t see any need for such a separate identity. Names don’t really matter. We shall remain as in the past - the LTTE wing of the Batticaloa and the Ampara Districts” (Handunnetti, 2004b). But he knew better than that; or learned soon enough.

Scholars generally acknowledge naming as a critical element in the production of meaning, the consolidation of identity and the formulation of a collective purpose. By naming, the subject becomes known in a manner that allows certain forms of inquiry and engagement, while assigning a set of characteristics, motives, values and behaviours (Bhatia 2005:8). Hence, the actual ability to name, and to have it accepted by an audience, holds great power. In fact, those who name can highlight their own experiences and underscore what they deem most important (Spender in Bhatia 2005:9).

---

<sup>96</sup> Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj. Vavunathivu, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010.

Naming has the two key functions of recruiting supporters through propagating a discourse of belonging, as well as justifying action through labelling (Bhatia 2005:12). Consequently, it is fundamental in attaching value to actors and assessing blame (2005:16). Paraphrasing Roland Barthes, names seek to fix the polysemy of the world, and as such they reference a moral grammar that underwrites and reproduces power (in Der Derian 2005:27). Therefore, names are not only components of a repertoire of mechanisms of rule and a prominent part of historical transitions; they are in fact a means of tracking power in this process themselves. The words chosen to describe events, actions, peoples, places and social phenomena assert, diagnose and contest power (Peteet 2005:153-157).

A suggestive starting point concerning the analysis of naming in war is the adoption of *noms de guerre*. They allow the development of a parallel identity, which, aside from its practical concealing function, also permits the suspension of the sanctions upon behaviours to which a previous identity would normally be subjected. In doing so, they appear to play a critical role in a remaking of the self as militant and revolutionary (Peteet 2005:161). In TMVP's formation, the trajectories of the *noms de guerre* reveal that the choice is nonetheless subjected to - and reflective of - the authority structures within the movement. The final decision is contingent upon the superior's will, the role attributed to the newly created membership and the desired projection towards other parties to the conflict. For instance, we learned how Azad Moulana wanted to be known as Castro or Guevara, probably not simply revealing a certain admiration for those historical figures and their embodiment of successful rebellion (even if the ideologies and goals had little in common), but also due to the implicated evocation of his early youth and his father's role in it. We also learn how Sivagheeta had no say whatsoever in her alias (Padmini), which, despite her pivotal position, epitomises her lack of authority within the movement. Finally, there seems to be a correlation between the stability of a nom de guerre and the gained status of its holder: the most stable alias – Karuna (meaning compassion, although during our interview he claims he opted for this name because of a beloved uncle) endured his trajectory within the LTTE, the schism and renewed role as TMVP leader, and finally, his entrance into the political mainstream.

There are at least another five distinguishable naming categories crucial in understanding war dynamics that are all retrievable in Karuna's defection and transition into politics. Most of these are generally referenced in scholarly literature

within the common term of labelling; but I find it important to differentiate between them in an attempt to actually establish manageable methodological steps. Therefore, the following neologisms are by no means a fortuitous exercise; on the contrary, they are a necessary refinement of the available analytical frames.

The way in which parties to a conflict refer to themselves either as individuals or as a collective actor can be termed as *egonymy*<sup>97</sup>. For example, think of the way that Karuna refers to himself positively as a liberator, and negatively by explicitly rejecting descriptions of himself as traitor or terrorist<sup>98</sup>. Such references to oneself come with a particular naming of the Other or *allonymy*<sup>99</sup>. Once Prabhakaran was no longer Karuna's leader but rather the enemy, he stopped being a *God* and was instead defined as *a mentally deranged person*. Of course, Karuna also became someone's *Other*, slipping from being the archetypical freedom fighter to the archetypical traitor.

A third nominal endeavour has a geographical denotation, as naming places unequivocally feature in the discursive battles. *Toponymy* (no neologism required!) is thus a fundamental aspect in the descriptions and symbolic interventions of war. In the case of our concern, the most significant example is the appearance of a new geographical concept: The Eastern Province as *Then Eelam* (South Eelam).

A fourth naming category is the reference to the struggle itself, characterising the experience or particular moments and incidents involved. This is critical both during and often after armed conflict. Therefore, the analysis of this *pathonymy* should be a fundamental aspect in conflict studies<sup>100</sup>. Here, naming is a way of evaluating the history, trajectory and methods; the intentions and reasons of a particular process. However, perhaps more importantly, it represents an effort to persuade the audience to embrace the narrator's perspective through naming. Is it a liberation struggle, a terrorist threat, or an illusion; merely the obsession of a mentally deranged leader? Here, the name given to the engagement in violence and its subsequent discursive qualification are critically at play.

---

<sup>97</sup> The alternative "autonymy" already denotes a discourse phenomenon in which a word refers to itself.

<sup>98</sup> The collective extension of egonymy, of which TMVP is an example, will be subjected to in depth analysis further ahead.

<sup>99</sup> From the Greek *allos*: other, another, different.

<sup>100</sup> From the Greek *pathos* as experience; or in its rhetorical sense, i.e. the communication technique to persuade and capture an audience.

Finally, and this is more commonly neglected, naming patterns and names themselves transform over time. In this sense, the evolution of a name may be suggestive or indicative of ideological or tactical changes, and thus crucial in understanding transformations of war. For this, we could use the term *metonymy*<sup>101</sup>, deserving of some additional annotations.

There were significant changes in the nature of the acronyms emerging from the 2004 revolt, reflecting shifts in the organisation's target and tactics. For instance, rather than being internationally known for an English acronym as the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), this dissident movement became known by a transliterated Tamil acronym –TEMVP (Tamil Eelam Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal). A Tamil name for a local audience, as well as for the pursuit of local funding?

Furthermore, the genealogy of the acronym renders testimony to one of the initial yet very brief alliances of this new born movement. As will be further discussed in the following chapter, TMVP and ENDLF briefly became TIVM (TamilEela Ikkiya Viduthalai Munnani or Tamil National Liberation Front). However, when it emerged that the E of Eelam was definitely going to be dropped by Karuna and there was no longer any land to liberate, their alliance became obsolete.

Hence, the transition and formation of a new identity was represented in the nominal mutation (metonymy), starting from being the LTTE (K) or the *Eastern Front*; then TEMVP, TIVM, and TMVP; to finally being divided into two streams much later in the process, as outlined in the chapters ahead: TMVP as such and the TMVK<sup>102</sup>. This last transformation served as the platform for the discussion within the movement concerning whether or not to remove the word *Tigers (Pulikal)* from their name. While Karuna started to see the stripes as the trace of an undesired past, Pillayan insisted upon the Tiger as a symbol of the Tamil community; not of the LTTE. It later became clear that keeping the tiger reference allowed Pillayan's faction to maintain a historical link with the LTTE struggle (continuity), whilst also embodying their transcendence (change): TMVP as the living Tigers free from Prabhakaran's tyranny.

---

<sup>101</sup> I use *metonymy* to distinguish it from the figure of speech "metonymy; both meaning change of name.

<sup>102</sup> Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Koottany or Tamil People Liberation Alliance, which coincidentally matched the initials of the faction's leaders (Pillayan and Karuna).

### 2.3.1. T for Tamilness: Identity and the Jaffna- Batticaloa Opposition

Contrary to a now popular position in conflict studies, I do not depart from ethnicity's implementation in civil war as a device meant to hide other 'more real' factors; rather, I conceive it as a procedure conceived to deal with the experiential need for social meaning. After all, collective action requires collective meaning and every participant seeks to redefine his or her behaviour in collective terms, regardless how selfish they are. Therefore, it is necessary to exercise cautious when arguing that ethnicity is not a real cause of conflict. Much like language, ethnicity is not to obscure the world (although it may), but is implicated in its construction. Every hermeneutical attempt carried upon a material circumstance co-constructs that event. Thus, if ethnicity is the idiom of a struggle, then ethnicity is co-constructing the conflict, not simply hiding other more real material aspects of it. The attribution of meaning to material relations affects the substance of such.

However, within the process of TMVP's formation, we are reminded of the fluidity of *Tamilness* not only as a strategy for mobilisation but more generally as a collective solidarity. TMVP's emergence exposed the common public *and* scholarly "misrecognition" through which variation was edited. Spencer acknowledges this in the context of the JVP insurrection for the Sinhala community: "The misrecognition involved a failure to recognize how temporary or ephemeral the appearance of the Sinhala people as a unified interpretive community was" (Spencer in Das 2001:123). TMVP is a reminder of this ephemeral appearance in the Tamil world; a misrecognition neglecting the socio-historical plurality of the Tamil universe. But the new formation was not simply a matter of finally acknowledging or correcting the misrecognition. Rather, it implicated a struggle in itself, wherein TMVP sought to restructure an identity configuration moving from a negative one centered on what they were *not* (anymore); towards an imagined one, based on what they wanted to become and represent. From being no longer part of the "delusional" leader's charade, they moved into being (in their minds) the rightful defenders of eastern Tamils interests.

Thus, TMVP's emergence shows how regional identification can suddenly overturn ethnicity for the purpose of justifying (new cycles of) violence. Karuna certainly did not invent Tamil diversity, nor did the emergence of TMVP simply revive a dormant identity boundary either. In fact, as recalled in several editorials of *The Island*

newspaper during the early days of the revolt, tensions go back long before the outburst of the civil war. Even before the struggle turned militant, Eastern Tamils resented that the leadership of both the Federal Party and the TULF were overwhelmingly comprised of northern Jaffna Tamils. The latter are considered generally “better educated and commanding greater economic muscle, tended to regard their Eastern cousins as lesser beings”; a belief often strengthened by the consolidation of economic and professional elite of Jaffna migrants in the eastern Province<sup>103</sup>. As expressed in the newspaper article, *the ideological imploding of separatism*, “there is no monolithic ‘Tamil’, and there never has been. [...] Prabhakaran was able to “obliterate” differences by the use of the gun [But] he [disregarded] that other identity signifiers are cut deep into a given social fabric. Too deep for a “common enemy” or a gun to erase for all time”<sup>104</sup>.

Rather than inventing or reviving the differences, TMVP’s emergence placed an internal diversity previously subsumed to external cleavages, now at the same level of relevance; perhaps even subverting such hierarchical boundary formations. The differences of which people were hitherto well aware could be routinely forgotten. Now, with TMVP graffiti on the walls, such distinctions were written and fixed on the murals of the everyday and the grammar of the civil war. Therefore, TMVP is an example of the micropolitics of categories (Brubaker 2004:13) by which imposed notions such as the overarching *Tamilness* can be challenged or activated by situational triggers.

The LTTE ideologues did not wait long to refute claims of discrimination. Anthon Balasingham (LTTEs chief negotiator during the 2002-2003 talks) argued that it was precisely through the merit of his leader that Tamil divisions of class, caste, creed and region were transcended in the building of a unified national liberation movement constructed around the concept of a Tamil Homeland. In fact, Balasingham recalled a conversation during a previous round of peace negotiations, within which former president Premadasa allegedly said he was willing to grant political independence to the North as a separate Tamil state, yet he would never allow the Eastern Province to be part of the Tamil homeland. To this, the LTTE Leader supposedly responded ‘Please tell Premadasa that I’m prepared to give up the North, but I will not, under

---

<sup>103</sup> In *The Island (Editorial)*. 7<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>104</sup> In *the Island (editorial)*. 14<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

any circumstances be prepared to abandon the Eastern Province and its people'<sup>105</sup>.

Whether this statement was a sincere declaration of affection and equality towards the easterners can be questioned; but it certainly reveals the attributed strategic value of the Eastern Province in the struggle, to the point that Balasingham's words could not hide (despite all attempts to minimise the incidents) the great disillusionment among the Vanni leadership. He referred to Karuna's defection as a tragic irony, given that he had played major roles in "the liberation war to redeem the Tamil homeland from Sinhala military occupation [...yet he was] now denouncing and renouncing the homeland concept, the very foundation of the Tamil freedom struggle"<sup>106</sup>.

As Bush argues, recognising the internal heterogeneity of ethnic groups does not suffice; one has also to acknowledge group identities as "situational, contextual, mutable and fluid" (Bush 2003:19-20). It is important to insist that the distinctions between *Jaffna Tamils* and *Batticaloa Tamils* were a matter of common knowledge in Sri Lanka. Yet, the differences were only in the public forum for formal taxonomies, rather than identity based political agency, and let alone issues concerning the ethnic conflict. Perhaps TELO's massacre to some extent reflected tensions between North and east, but they were mainly framed as disputes over control rather than being marked by regional identities, just like other paramilitary groups such as PLOTE, EPDP, and EPRLF, which timidly questioned LTTE being Tamils' sole representatives. It was only in the aftermath of Karuna's revolt that TELO's case was consistently reframed in terms of North vs. East, serving as a kind of pre-history of TMVP's revolt.

TMVP's emergence urged Muslims, Sinhalese and Tamils themselves to rethink more emphatically than ever what each and everyone understood by *Tamilness*, even forcing people to question whether it is an operational notion at all. Such pondering evoked by TMVP echoes Roger Brubaker's call to abandon the category of 'ethnic' to catalogue an armed conflict, instead favouring research focusing on how social categories are made, manipulated and transformed (King, 2007:118). Karuna's discourse of eastern regionalism and inner Tamil discrimination was not massively

---

<sup>105</sup> in Tamilnet ([www.tamilnet.com](http://www.tamilnet.com)). 17<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

<sup>106</sup> Jeyaraj, DBS. 2004d.

supported and followed by the people in the east; at least not publicly, nor for a sustained period. However, even in its relative failure to mobilise, it still made most people seriously revise all the basic constructions that sustained the civil war for more than three decades: Tamilness, *Tamil Eelam*, LTTE's cohesion and representativeness, among many others.

### 2.3.2. Eelam Deleted: Place, Time, Desire and the State

In the Tamil imagination, Eelam is simultaneously space, time, purpose and desire. It is space in the sense that it represents a paradise lost, a utopia still to be achieved, a recently controlled territory and a battlefield. It is time because it refers to an idealised ancient past – and Arcadia, if you will-. But it was also considered a necessary future and simultaneously operated as a chronology organising the struggle's history: Eelam Wars I, II, III, and IV. In addition, it is purpose (telos) in that *Tamil Eelam* was the reason and goal for war, the reason for joining and the tool to mobilise. Finally, it is desire in its colloquial sense (as hope, dream or wish), and perhaps also in its psychoanalytical connotation: as a “fundamental fantasy” of the subject.

Yet, desire's raison d'être is not to realise its goal, to find full satisfaction, but to reproduce itself as desire (Žižek 1997). If we blasphemously understand a political project as desire, we may see how Tamil Eelam fits Žižek's appreciation. In such a case (now that we are using the jargon, we might as well say it), TMVP's discharge of Eelam could be considered as a political castration of Tamil militants' aspirations.

However, the removal of Eelam took place in a slow progression. During the initial stages of the naming process, Eelam still figured as a separate letter in the acronym. Yet, the concept was already fractured from the very onset of the revolt. The term *South Eelam* first appeared in the seminal text of Karuna's secession (the first epistolary letter from Batticaloa), breaking the imagined state into two pieces. The term itself was a form of symbolic violence, implicating the desecration of the struggle's “integral space” through its nominal division (Bowman in Schmidt & Schroeder 2001:25). Karuna created a new threatening outside, thereby marking the boundaries of its identity. Through the perception or construction of an antagonism, he converted the previously inside of sociality into two opposed sectors; moreover,

by designating an *Other* against which violence should be mobilised, he obtained by the process itself that which he and his men were fighting to defend (Bowman, in Schmidt & Schroeder 2001:33-42).

The spatial unit that was meaningful for LTTE's insurgency (Tamil Eelam) could no longer be significant as such for a breakaway faction. Hence, a new delimitation was required and difference was produced through - and inscribed in - a new meaningful space: South Eelam. Indeed, Brun and Jazeel argue that thinking through cultural politics is to think spatially (2009:2), and thus a new space of power, or better said, a space of contestation, was manufactured.

When Karuna wrote the second letter, Eelam had been denied the right to hold an independent space in the acronym and was instead fused with the previous one: from Tamil Eelam, it became *TamilEela*. Interestingly, however, when signing the missive, Karuna sanctioned it with his name and underneath it said: *Batticaloa, Tamil Eelam*. It would seem as if the imagined state needed to be printed in paper in order to be destroyed. Signing from Tamil Eelam offered the demolition of the dream a sense of breakable materiality. Or maybe it was just the force of habit.

As depicted by the acronym's history, TMVP's emergence meant the death of Eelam as a collective binder for armed and political action in eastern and northern Sri Lanka. Through the removal of such a common construct, the fundamental factor in producing loyalty and collective purpose - the teleology of the movement - had to be reinvented. Subsequently, *Eelam* could only serve temporarily to introduce the changes, given that it became clear that the rebellion would require the assistance of groups on the other side of the divide in order to survive; people who would not conceive favouring even the conceptual permanence of Eelam. Indeed, the movement's acronym was already creating the opportunity to shift from *Eelam* to *Makkal* people. Supporting a separate state (Tamil Eelam) was impossible, but supporting the Tamil people (Tamil Makkal) was something that outsiders could do.

Nonetheless, this crucial transformation entailed a risk that would in effect materialise a few years later: Once loyalties stopped being arranged around the imagined homeland, they started to be increasingly configured around personalities rather than purposes. True, LTTE was also structured as an ode to its leader, but the cult to him was awarded for his attributed capacity to deliver Tamil Eelam. Therefore, from a movement organised around a particular *telos* (The LTTE), fighters under Karuna

transformed into a movement having a *charismatic leadership* as its gravitational point.

The argument here has been that the slow progression towards the textual removal of Eelam in the *letters from Batticaloa* mirrors the socio-political process taking place in the eastern province since 2004, with repercussions island-wide. Perhaps the absorption of *Eelam* into the word *Tamil* in the acronym meant the retreat of *Eelam* out of the public, thereafter having exclusive existence within the private spheres of the Self: a state only within its subjects; a homeland de-territorialised and sentimentalised. Eelam was only to survive as a feeling.

### 2.3.3. M for People: Subjectivity, Community and Emotion in TMVP

The scholarly lack of engagement with the inner workings of Karuna's revolt seems to denote a certain general assumption, presupposing that life within TMVP could not be much different from the LTTE experience. After all, the underlying argument seems to suggest that most fighters were previously part of that group. Moreover, it is equally assumed that TMVP's process is analogous to those exemplified by other Tamil paramilitaries before them. On the contrary, it is my impression that TMVP combatants' transition into incumbent armed politics, although comparable, cannot be equated with the cases of say the TELO, EPDP or EPRLF. Similarly, the everyday within TMVP had to be rather different from LTTE's.

I argue that this is based on at least the following crucial elements. First, there was a dramatic change regarding the gender balance within the armed movements, from a proportionally mixed group to an all-male organisation; a crucial aspect further explored in the next chapter. Second, TMVP gathered both former LTTE fighters and LTTE victims among their ranks, rendering the shared experiences a problematic feature. Third, a great amount of the eastern recruits were sent to the North during the LTTE period to either operate as bodyguards or participate in large battles in the vicinity of Kilinochchi or the Jaffna Peninsula. This meant they were factually separated from their families. During the TVMP period, fighters remained more-or-less in the area and could receive parental visits or obtain weekend leave far more frequently, hence significantly transforming the everyday experience from what it used to be in the LTTE. Fourth, the change of goal necessarily implied change in routine from the minutiae of daily life to the broader understandings of collective

action. For example, the hymn for years intoned by former members of the LTTE now had to be adjusted under TMVP. But the imaginations of place (as their camps and jungles around it) also needed to change, no longer experienced as a home in the making but rather as a space in the margins of the already established and now acknowledged state. Finally, changes in tactics took place with the metamorphosis from insurgency to counterinsurgency, resulting unequivocally in mutations of the everyday life.

Capturing community formation and the reinvention of subjectivities in TMVP's everyday life proved to be quite a challenge. The settings were unstructured and unstable, the members were captive of confusion, and the routines could hardly settle in the midst of the extraordinary. As if the death of Eelam implicated the end of bounded territory, the historical and ethnographic efforts that I made repeatedly encountered a kind of wobbly network community, always incomplete and indecisive of its own existence.

Not every TMVP combatant had the same motivations for joining, remaining in or defecting from the organisation and neither did those who undertook such actions share the same motivations for killing, torturing or kidnapping their opponents. However, they all (volunteers and coerced members alike) had to a way in which they could articulate their motivations with the collective identity provided through their symbolic affiliation and the power structure attached to such membership. As Elizabeth Wood argues, all fighters needed to be socialised in the use of violence if the leaders were to control the deployed violence (2008:546). Often, such socialisation went not only through a military training but also initiation rituals and hazing, first dehumanising members and then reinstating them; a social rebirth of sorts with the aim of creating new loyalties.

Still, even among the leaders making the transition from LTTE to TMVP (without partaking in any hazing), the question remains: how do you reinvent yourself when you are unexpectedly becoming a movement with diametrically opposed interests from those you endorsed when you went to sleep the night before? Alternatively, to formulate the question in Veena Das' terms, how was subjectivity – the felt interior experience of the person, including his or her positions in a field of relational power - produced through the experience of [a reinvented] violence? How was it actualised? How, in sum, were violence and subjectivity mutually implicated in the creation of a new context and the removal of the established one? (Das 2000:1-2).

If we take Karuna's first letter quite literally as the opening social script for a renewed identity, such a script still had to be aligned with members' feelings and ultimately with future action. Pillayan's testimony reveals this process was not a matter of course, but rather a mixed enterprise of domesticating confusion and rearranging frustrations and motivations. This is what he said:

My heart did not accept this split. The decision to support Karuna was based more on loyalty than on full conviction. [But] the Vanni then took a very bad decision: to attack the eastern cadres. I became very angry with [the] Vanni that day [...] I felt that 13 years of sacrifice and violence were for nothing. That time I said to my fellows: we have lost everything, we are back 20 years.

The first factor for Pillayan to take part in this new form of collective action was loyalty, not to a cause, but rather to a leader *and in spite of* other sentiments. Whatever contradictory forces were within him, they were appeased by the external aggression that soon arrived. Thus, his lack of conviction of this new boundary formation was overcome because those who he initially refused to view as *Others* acted on him as an *Other*. In this sense, violence engendered identity (Bowman in Schmidt & Schroeder 2001:38), and violence made the *Other*.

But there was more. Pillayan brought to the fore a previously unmet motivational factor to defect the Tigers in order to transitively reinforce the reasons to oppose them. The following incident was the initial factor that prompted him to consider leaving the outfit during the beginning of the Cease Fire Agreement:

One day I saw a body of a girl cadre that had been raped and murdered. I was in my van, [when I saw] the two suspects released by the SL police. I personally arrested them. One of the two was an old man. They confessed [to have] assaulted the girl. I went to sleep thinking I would hand the men over to the Tiger police the next morning, but during the night the old man died of a heart attack because he was very afraid<sup>107</sup>.

Pillayan did not know that the old man was a relation of Prabhakaran. He was forced to attend the funeral of that man, and immediately after to travel to the Vanni and receive due punishment. After that ordeal, he simply wanted to go back home to his family, although no one would allow him that, particularly due to the businesses he

---

<sup>107</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan, [Pillayan]. Trincomalee, 2009

administered for the Tigers. This in fact constitutes Pillayan's biographical alignment with Karuna's later revolt, explaining the possibility of his participation. A personal incident, personal loyalty and an external aggression channelled the diverse frustrations towards the formation of a new political identity.

Jayam, commander of the Vaharai area at the time of the split, was equally torn: "what to do? Is this the reward [I get] for fighting for Tamil Eelam? [...] I met Pillayan and the others in Colombo but I stayed in a different place, because I wasn't sure of what I wanted to do. The on-going killing of our cadres made me take the decision of working against the Vanni tigers"<sup>108</sup>. Similarly, when he heard about the consolidation of the split whilst in India, Jeyaraj's reaction was to cry for three days; while Marcos on the other hand claims that it was Karuna's crying when telling his story on a video that convinced him of Karuna's truthfulness and hence his indispensable participation in the revolt.

Clearly, it took time to adjust to the new order. Even if certain feelings of discrimination were shared, this new solidarity still needed to be buttressed, while the reinvented allegiance settled in the combatants' minds. As will be shown in Chapter Three, wording and imaging the revolt were crucial symbolic devices (even if not necessarily fully successful) for this to happen in the long run. However, such instruments for a solid collective conviction, the moulding of *communitas* (Turner 1995) and the establishment of a sense of belonging were not immediately available. Particularly during those initial instances, the baffled Karuna followers were stuck in some sort of liminal existence, expelled from a category that had ceased to exist, yet without the proper rite of passage to enter a new one (Turner 1995:96).

Perhaps the materialisation of that *otherness*, which would become their *Own*, came for many with the Verugal battle. However, even after that episode they still entered an unnamed category, a form too close to nonexistence. They were loose-pending social actors until the new letters finally appeared on the walls of Batticaloa and the members started to understand who they were becoming.

A surprising element in this restructuration is that although a regionally based discrimination was invoked to reinvent solidarity and uphold this new group formation, the region itself – the Eastern Province - did not obtain a spot in the

---

<sup>108</sup> Personal Interview, Nahalingam Thiraviyam [Jeyam]. Valaichenai, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

movement's new name. Furthermore, despite being aware of the need to extend their hand to the Sinhala and Muslim community in order to survive, Tamil remained their identity stamp. Eastern oppression was constructed as a metonymy of a generalised Tamil subjugation to the tyranny of a leader, and for some even more broadly of the country's affliction under terrorism. The avoidance might have been part of a strategy to denounce regionalism but simultaneously dodge being critiqued for it: questioning Tamil's unity under a certain leader, yet not being too vulnerable to be accused of betraying "their own".

Moreover, TMVP's stepping out of LTTE's doctrine was not a friendly reuniting with the afflicted civil society. On the contrary, if there was a practice that marked the movement's relationship with the society outside them (also defining much of the inner group's daily routines), it was forced (child) recruitment. Habits and schedules were construed around abducting, training, indoctrinating, or paying them, as well as providing visiting hours, accompanying recruits to home visits, sending compensation money to their family and dealing with their resilient mothers.

The point is that being in TMVP implied following a discipline, a moral and a certain ethics, as well as a particular set of aggressions, quite different from what they were used to expecting from the LTTE. Yet, the behaviours and expectations were hardly strict defined. After all, as evidenced by most armed groups' historical trajectories (Schlichte 2009), TMVP's moral code was formulated in the midst of violence, condemning it to an always precarious yet on-going construction.

#### 2.3.4. V for Liberation: Resistance and the Quest for Freedom

Like most Tamil paramilitary groups, TMVP has the word liberation in its name (V for Viduthalai). It seemed as though new entrapments came with each liberation in the cycles of the Sri Lankan war. Some commentators were, however, rather positive regarding the "liberating" potential of our case at hand. Dayan Jayatilleka, a Sri Lankan diplomat, former minister and political scientist, offered an unexpected appraisal in an article published in the *Asian Tribune*, justifying as it were the word liberation in Karuna's movement. According to Jayatilleka, Karuna's actions and words had a powerful message, namely that Prabhakaran could secure neither peace nor Tamil Eelam. It is Karuna's strength, his arguments proceeded, that he had a cause, an idea: "he has raised the standard of revolt and liberty against brutal

tyranny". In addition, Jayatilleka provided a suggestive reading of Karuna's fourfold achievement: first, he succeeded in staying alive; second, he managed "weathering the storms of the April retreat/dispersion" and the massacre of several of the commanders including his brother Reggie; third, he became internationally known; and fourth, he built a politico-military capacity combining counterinsurgency operations with a political frame. Jayatilleka finally goes on to say in a flirtatious way that "Karuna's great underlying strength is that his struggle is in keeping with the spirit of the times and the strongest force in human history: the search for a wider freedom, for liberty" (Jayatilleka, 2004).

Aside from the controversial interpretation presented above, there are a further two suggestive forms of understanding that the liberation TMVP brought with it, albeit against the armed group's spirit. The new context and alliances configured new spaces of resistance to armed action that were previously unattainable. Despite the despair, disillusion and frustration created by the connections of TMVP with the security forces, it also opened a path for reclamation to a previously invisible state as a theoretical mediator, not only (or necessarily) as direct perpetrator. From the parallel or de facto LTTE state, the East was now the scenario for *contesting states*, wherein markets of new and old violences indeed opened up, as well as markets of - if not accountability -, at least denunciation.

Although it kept evoking fear and horror, the Sri Lankan state reappeared timidly as a space of hope. Following decades of absolute disregard, Tamil voices were recorded again within the state's bureaucracy, although they were not necessarily always heard. As noted by de Alwis, Karuna's rebellion nevertheless favoured a renewed and "unexpected space for parents to vent their anger against both armed factions, and reclaim their children"<sup>109</sup>. In fact, in the immediate aftermath of the Verugal Battle, a group of parents (mostly mothers) set up a roadblock outside Karuna's main camp (Meenagam), and after cadres started stalling, they beat them up until their children were released.

Similarly, when the Vanni group re-recruited children released by Karuna, another group of parents stormed their camp in Kathiravelly<sup>110</sup>. De Alwis argues that these

---

<sup>109</sup> In *The island*. 18<sup>th</sup> July 2004.

<sup>110</sup> see UTHR(J), 2004c.

collective acts of resistance (the first of their kind in the struggle's history) led to the massive release of children; complementing the political calculations made by Karuna, as claimed in the next chapter. Parents who might have once accepted to sacrifice their children for the so-called liberation of the Tamils were simply not willing to do the same in a regional or personal standoff.

However, the space for resistance that emerged in April 2004 shrunk rapidly, with armed factions becoming more brutal, while the capacity of international organisations to protect proved to be very limited. That notwithstanding, a group of 48 mothers from Batticaloa submitted a petition regarding the abductions of their children by TMVP to the Supreme Court in July 2006. In the petition, they provided the names of the abducted sons and the context in which it all took place. The same document was sent to the Minister for Disaster Management and Human Rights, the Human Rights Commission, the President of Sri Lanka M. Rajapakse and the United Nations. Investigations into some of the 48 cases began in December 2006, although some have suggested that the army pressured the mothers not to identify TMVP as the perpetrators.

Generally, in what Nimanthi Perera-Rajasingham calls *Maternal politics*, women are both heroic mothers and victims of cultural ideology (2008:126). As in other places around the world, these mothers have become the ambiguous symbol of suffering, resilience and resistance, capable of transforming unbearable pain in a form of agency. Even if sometimes resorting to patriarchal distributions of social roles, their determination has given them a particular position of authority reinventing social order, while rendering their collective body a weapon of everyday resistance. This was the other unintended liberation captured the V of TMVP.

### 2.3.5. P for Tigers: Keeping the Totem Alive

During the same meeting in which the name of TMVP was chosen, the organisation also adopted their new logo. It is perhaps the most vivid example of the articulations of continuity and change embedded in the movement led by Karuna. To a certain extent, it was a replica of LTTE's symbol, albeit with some crucial adaptations, discussed in Chapter Three. What remained intact was the Tiger, which was a highly controversial decision for which the reasons and implications could be manifold. One of the key arguments is that the Tiger represents a symbol for the Tamils in the same

way that the Lion represents the Sinhala people. Therefore, LTTE could not claim ownership. During an interview, Jeyaraj's argumentation was slightly different, though: the maintenance of the totem was to show they were equal to the Vanni Tigers, which I interpret as showing they had the same ferocity and determination in their new liberation struggle. Maybe the use of the same totem points to a symbolic liberation of the tiger from Prabhakaran's mastery; the Tamil struggle from its leader. Finally, it can also be an exogenous metaphor of the continuity in violence; of the same struggle but with a different leader; or the same type of liberation struggle but in a different scope. But the decision to keep the symbol was ultimately also about masculinity: Who is to be the bigger tiger?

## 2.4. Recapitulation

The institutionalisation of the revolt followed two simultaneous trajectories: one domestic and one abroad. The former first developed in Colombo under the leadership of the rapidly promoted new deputy (Pillayan); while the latter took shape in a journey from the Himalayas downwards to Bangalore in India, following the steps of the exiled brand name of the revolt: Karuna. The institutionalisation first required a commitment towards a newly defined project, the establishment of new basic alliances, the set-up of basic military infrastructure and a seemingly simple yet proven crucial baptising of the new collective formation. The new name carried the burden of having to define the aspirations of the emerging movement and appeal to both internal and external solidarity. In order to achieve this, profoundly significant nominal procedures were undertaken, which can be analytically classified according to five categories: egonymy, allonymy, toponymy, pathonymy and metonymy. The first refers to a new way of self-referentiality among the members of the new identity formation; the second to the new descriptions of the other; the third to the changed symbolic geography renaming spaces; the fourth to the way in which the history of the conflict itself is reframed and re-described; and the fifth to the dynamic character of the new identity formation that in fact underwent several mutations before it stabilised (provisionally) on TMVP. In a sense, this genealogy of TMVP's acronym is reminiscent of Koselleck's history of concepts, which he envisaged as tracing the transformations and effects of concepts on social and political practices. Tracking TMVP's acronymic shifts is thus about registering the mutations of political semantics (Andersen 2003:34).

Karuna's egonymy was that of being a new kind of liberator, one that was to free Tamil people from Prabhakaran's tyranny. The latter – only months earlier referred to as a God by Karuna - suddenly became a mentally deranged person; while in Prabhakaran's eyes, Karuna mutated from the ultimate freedom fighter into the archetypical traitor (allonymy). A new spatial concept emerged through the discursive battles of the revolt, that of South Eelam breaking the unity of the imagined homeland and fundamental project of the LTTE. This geographical split was the preamble that accompanied TMVP's formation: Eelam's erasure from the public sphere and its relegation to a private experience. Finally, the evolution of this movement's acronym further encapsulated ideological and tactical shifts in its consolidation, pointing to new political goals, alternative material and semantic alliances.

The same acronym also served to structure discussions on identity, particularly the socio-political implications of re-presenting the Tamil community's internal diversity. It also allowed discussions on the reordering of space through Eelam's deletion and an exploration of the confused reconfiguration of subjectivities after such a sudden turn of allegiances. It facilitated a revision of both the pursued and unintended 'liberations' encapsulated by the dissidence; and a discussion on the symbolic provision of both continuity and change through the maintenance of the Tiger as cultural reference.

# CHAPTER THREE

---

## ***GEOGRAPHY, ECONOMY & ICONOGRAPHY OF TMVP***

Frank Kitson's *Low Intensity Operations* was considered *the* cookbook for counterinsurgency operations by *Taraki*, a well-known Tamil journalist and former militant. He recalls: "I gave that fucking book to Karuna [...] that bugger always liked to borrow books. He never gave it back" (in Whitaker 2007:135). *Taraki*, chief editor of TamilNet, was abducted in Colombo and murdered in April 2005<sup>111</sup>. His assassination was widely attributed to TMVP, with some even suggesting that it was Karuna himself who shot him (although he vehemently denies this).

From the initial stages of the revolt, LTTE leaders, politicians and journalists were targeted by the Karuna faction/TMVP. One of the first major killings accredited to them is that of *Virakesari* journalist Aiyathurai Nadesan, shot in May 2004<sup>112</sup>. Another high impact incident is the ambush publicly claimed by TMVP in which E Kousalyan, the LTTE political chief of the east, was killed in February 2005. Later that year, Joseph Pararajasingham (TNA MP) was shot, killed in a church during the midnight mass in Batticaloa on 24<sup>th</sup> December. Thereafter, LTTE's deputy military chief *Col. Ramanan* was killed, once again in an ambush claimed by TMVP and also attributed to them by the LTTE, in May 2006 (Farrel 2007:17)<sup>113</sup>.

It was during that month (June 2006) that Jeyaraj returned to Sri Lanka from India and immediately tasked with collecting all the TMVP data he could gather, which proved to be a much tougher task than expected; hence, even to date much of the details have escaped systematisation. Of course, limitations were not simply a matter

---

<sup>111</sup> *Taraki's* real name was Sivaram Dharmeratnam. He joined the People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) but left in 1989. In 1997, Sivaram helped www.Tamilnet.org reorganise itself into a Tamil news agency with its own string of reporters, and remained a senior editor there until his death. DBS Jeyaraj is among those arguing Karuna himself shot *Taraki*.

<sup>112</sup> *Virakesari* is the leading Tamil newspaper in Sri Lanka. Human Rights Watch accuses TMVP of the crime. Nadesan was the Batticaloa based columnist for *Virakesari* for more than twenty years.

<sup>113</sup> Interviews and intelligence documentation have established Karuna was mostly abroad between September 2004 and September 2006. However, this does not rule out that he came back for very short visits in-between.

of the intricacies of warfare. In the same way societies and individuals seek a balance (strategically adaptable) between remembering and forgetting, the incipient bureaucracy of TMVP was at least partially made out of tactical or political decisions concerning when and what to register (and where and how). After all, the paper trail of the revolt could one day potentially be traced back and taken out of the archives of desired oblivion by incumbents or impertinent researchers alike.

As TMVP's size increased so did its human losses. Jeyaraj also soon found himself collecting relevant data of those that "attained a heroic death". Occasionally, Jeyaraj was asked to record significant military operations on video and then swiftly return to Colombo to continue the administrative work, including the financial aspects of the organisation. It was a monster task, but luckily for him there were military officers to assist him: "They did all the work we required", Jeyaraj recalls<sup>114</sup>.

He worked in Colombo until March 2007, when Pillayan told him that there were many unregistered TMVP members in the east. He was asked to go to Batticaloa for three months to collect the missing data. However, just before going, Jeyaraj was forced to go to the hospital because his eyes were swollen as a result of his work around the clock in front of the computer: "An army officer and I went to an eye clinic in Colombo. When I was being examined, they asked me for my name. The army officer [promptly] said it was *Suranga*". From that moment onwards, everyone else called him by that name.

Using different sources, including Jeyaraj's partial database and my own conducted ethnographies and interviews, I aim to provide in this chapter a systematic and analytic overview of the numbers, places, people, wordings and visual representations of TMVP, based upon the understanding that they all contribute to the organisation's sustainability.

First, I want to draw attention to the ambiguities regarding the number of combatants within the outfit; an unsolvable puzzle yet a stimulating debate. Second, I want to highlight perhaps the most remarkable demographic transformation that this movement went through when defecting the LTTE: from being more-or-less equally represented in terms of gender in the insurgency, they moved to a near absolute absence of women among TMVP ranks. Efforts will be made to explain such a

---

<sup>114</sup> Jehanandan Jeyaraj's personal diary. Translated by research assistant alias N.Hamead.

transformation, and more importantly how this changed daily life. This occasion will be used to bring the earlier mentioned politics of motherhood, the social presence of widows and the transformations of masculinities to the fore in a manner that hopefully enables us to discuss gender relations as a pivotal aspect in the demography and social dynamics of the revolt.

Third, I want to briefly expose other crucial features of TMVP's population that I find fascinating: the coexistence of former LTTE fighters with direct or indirect victims of the LTTE within the same outfit; the generational shift in power implicated in TMVP's emergence; and the demography of TMVP's dead, following a discursive autopsy of sorts. Fourth, I will attempt to construct a cartography of TMVP, mapping out the organisation's movements, places and networks. The location of their main camps will be identified and so too their most crucial military operations, political offices, their foreign support nodes and all other critical spaces of the transition that TMVP embodies. If successful, such an attempt should result in a spatialisation of TMVP's time: a chronology written in the landscapes of the revolt.

Fifth, a discussion is framed around the critical aspect of the alliances that TMVP made and the both public and undisclosed support base standing behind the movement. Tracing these networks will take us across groups and provinces in the Island, as well as abroad into the meagre yet fundamental diaspora associated with the revolt and/or its institutionalisation.

Sixth, the financial and military resources required by the organisation to sustain their armed actions will be reviewed. The financial structure and distribution of resources not only elucidate how the revolt was economically sustained, but also and perhaps more importantly, it reveals fundamental issues leading to the rise of new tensions and ultimately the emergence of internal fractionalisation.

Finally, substantial attention will be paid to the wording and imaging implemented by TMVP to discursively, lyrically and visually legitimise, mobilise, motivate and moralise the revolt. This will entail an analysis of TMVP's own newspaper (Tamil Alai), their promotional video, logo and flag, as well as the songs in their music CDs.

But first, as promised, a few reflections on the numbers.

### 3.1. The Numerical Struggle: on TMVP's Size

People have asked on several occasions how many armed combatants actually took part in TMVP. The problem with such a question is not simply that a definitive answer cannot be provided – given that all available numbers are contested -; rather that the question was never accompanied by the necessary qualification of *when*. Despite being a short-lived paramilitary movement, its existence was extremely volatile and dynamic, and hence their size varied considerably over time. Yet, regardless of the current impossibility of conclusive results, this important discussion in respect of this quantitative aspect is crucial in TMVP's impact on the Sri Lankan civil war, as well as its differentiation from other paramilitary groups and episodes of internal fracture.

In order to expose the contours of the debate, it is necessary to meander through commentators' estimates, international agencies' data and TMVP's internal records. Therefore, let me present the universe of variation in a time-sensitive manner, which is best achieved by disambiguating the question into segregated sets.

The first reference to be accounted for relates to the overall number of fighters within the LTTE around the time of the split. Things already become fuzzy from this point, as some have estimated the insurgency's force at around 18,000, while others suggest it was around 7,200<sup>115</sup>. Commonly though, commentators talk of around 8,000 to 10,000<sup>116</sup>. While Raman might be the only author to provide something of an insight into the construction of such numbers, he is also far from revealing the entire process leading to the specific figures. His estimations are based on the crucial concept of "Padaipirivu" (unit), by which the LTTE designated its military formations. He argues that many analysts translate this term as Brigade; and given the common standard around the world of around 4,000 soldiers in each brigade, the numbers have been overestimated (a discursive tool for the movement's aggrandisement). In fact, Raman argues, the designation is more likely to correspond to the size of a battalion, with around 1,200 combatants (why this is more likely, remains unclear). Known to have six of these units, adding them up you obtains approximately 7,200.

---

<sup>115</sup>Singh, A.K. 2007; Raman, B. 2004 respectively.

<sup>116</sup> See for example Terrorism: Questions and Answers: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," The Council on Foreign Relations, [<http://www.terrorismanswers.org/groups/tamiltigers.html>]

However, the author understands such numbers as a minimum. Additionally, the intelligence wing is not included in these calculations, nor other unstable and less trained, yet occasionally operational forces. Finally, there are clear indications of heavy recruitment during the ceasefire, which may have passed unaccounted for, as well as a generalised lack of clarity in distinguishing between fighters and overall members. Accordingly, this is why I opt for an approximate 9,000 combatants within the LTTE as a reference (whilst accepting that the statistical validity of this number is debatable).

Out of that total, how many were from the East and thus possibly loyal to Karuna? The range here is between 1,200 and 7,500 (including 1,800 stationed in the North and not under Karuna's command). At the time of the split, the army's estimates were around 6,000, while Karuna himself expressed having 5,700 combatants under his command. But that number is also probably somewhat exaggerated. One of LTTE's units - the *Jayanthan* Battalion - was comprised almost entirely out of eastern fighters, and was largely stationed after a series of successful operations in the East under Karuna's command<sup>117</sup>. This unit, together with a section of the *Vithusha* Padaipirivu (five companies of the women's wing merged together) and other smaller groups should form the core – and let us say the minimum - of combatants defecting with Karuna in 2004, accounting for approximately 2,000 members.

On the other hand, a UTHR report registered the testimony of a girl who was in Karuna's Meenagam base until the disbandment in April 2004, stating that the breakaway military commander had a fighting force of 4,200. This number has reappeared in several documents and other accounts thereafter. Without intending to dismiss the girl's calculation skills, I also do not see why her version should carry more validity than any other source. Thus, offering a range between 2,500 and 4,500 is the safest choice regarding the number of fighters that defected the LTTE in March 2004 under Karuna's command. However, acknowledging that all other estimates are higher, I will commonly assume 4,000 as the reference, again a figure only plausible and intended purely as a guide.

Overall, there seems to be a relative consensus surrounding the notion of LTTE losing around 40% of its force through the Karuna affair<sup>118</sup>, to which the ratio of

---

<sup>117</sup> See for more details Jeyaraj, DBS. 2004e.

<sup>118</sup> See "Tigers prepare to launch counterstrike against Karuna" in *The Sunday Leader*, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2004.

4,000/9,000 seems more or less congruent. This notwithstanding, the number of members under Karuna were heavily reduced in the immediate aftermath of the split; partly because some eventually escaped back to the Vanni and because Karuna sent the less trained (recently conscripted) home<sup>119</sup>. Given the above, by the start of the Good Friday battle the numbers were somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 at most.

Then, a significant number of Karuna fighters died during the Verugal (Good Friday) battle. As expected, how many actually died is also debatable. The lowest estimate points to 22, another report suggests a range between 60 and 150<sup>120</sup>, while one of the TMVP commanders directly involved – Jeyam - assured me that their casualties totalled 67. Whatever the exact number, those deaths caused a new wave of defection, particularly from the heavily affected women's wing. Therefore, it is unlikely that Karuna's forces surpassed the 2,500 fighters after the Good Friday battle. This number, minus around a hundred that remained active, would more-or-less correspond to the combatants disbanded just before the breakaway commander left the Eastern Province.

In terms of how many fighters went to Colombo, we can only rely on the participants' accounts. Initially, it seems that there were 34, according to Pillayan and supported by Ali Zahir Moulana's testimony. More eventually followed, yet many were killed, while others were either convinced or coerced to return to the Vanni. After Kohaneshan and the other top commanders were massacred in July 2004, the active members were just a handful. Pillayan explicitly stated that when the decision was made to operate as a counterinsurgent paramilitary force they were only - and exactly - 14 members.

So from a maximum of say 4,500 at the time of the split, they went to a minimum of 14 at the moment when the decision was made to resume military operations. From then onwards, the re-recruiting process started only timidly at first; but eventually it

---

<sup>119</sup> Among the most prominent senior leaders initially under Karuna that returned to the Vanni Tigers were Ramesh Karuna's former deputy, Bawa, Kuyilinpan, Senathy, Thayamohan and Keerthi. About 2000 combatants were recruited or conscripted in the last three years. Most of them were minors and inexperienced. See Jeyaraj, 2004e; and UTHR(J) 2004b.

<sup>120</sup> SATP (<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/database/violenceincidents.htm>.) retrieved 14<sup>th</sup> July 2008; and UTHR(J) 2004c, respectively.

manifested an exponential growth at a pace that is almost exclusively traceable from TMVP's internal records and circumstantial evidence.

They remained relatively few in number, reaching only around 400 combatants by mid-2006. At that point, the curve steepened as suggested; for example, by the 625 persons qualifying for allowance in October 2006, according to a TMVP budget<sup>121</sup>. By early-2007, *the South Asia Terrorism Portal* placed TMVP's numbers at between 300 and 700 combatants, yet they seem to have reached 720 soon after, according to internal records<sup>122</sup>. In October 2007, an intelligence source considered the number of TMVP combatants to be 1,200 (Farrel, 2008:17).

Pillayan actually claims that TMVP already had an estimated 1,000 fighters by the end of 2004, while Jayam reiterates that they were 1,400 by mid-2007. On the other hand, according to the former general Secretary of TMVP, the number of combatants in fact never surpassed 800 or so. It is easier to count the dead: 207 martyrs, a definitive or at least institutionalised number upon which all TMVP leaders concur. 60 of those martyrs are displayed in the dispatch of the Chief Minister (Pillayan) at his residence in Batticaloa.

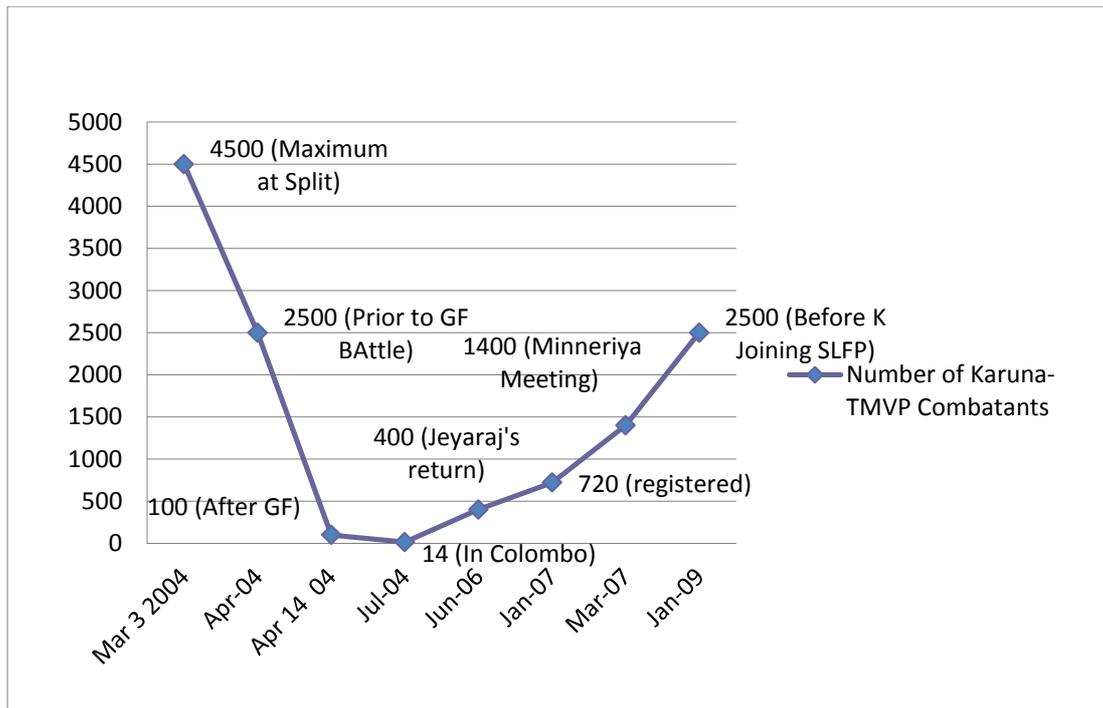
As will be discussed in Chapter Four, Pillayan and Karuna parted ways in the second half of 2007, with the former taking the combatants loyal to him to Trincomalee district. By then, Pillayan argues, the fighters' distribution among them was around 50:50. By January 2008, just two months prior to the municipal election in which they were to participate as a political party, one source (SATP) estimated that there were 1,200 TMVP fighters, 800 with Pillayan and around 400 with Karuna. However, Padmini vehemently insists on Karuna having far more combatants than he did, given that the military wings went with him. Finally, the Chief Minister claims the movement (both factions temporarily regrouped) totalled almost 2,000 at their peak, which would be considered exaggerated if it was not for the fact that when Karuna finally left TMVP in 2009, 2,000 members were reported to have also done so (Jayasekara, 2009). Meanwhile, 209 fighters from Pillayan's wing demobilised and at least another 210 remained with the outfit as of 2010.

---

<sup>121</sup> TMVP internal records (Digital file) obtained from Pillayan's headquarters in Batticaloa.

<sup>122</sup> The number of TMVP forced child recruitment rising to 208 cases in 2007 registered by Human Rights Watch and UNICEF indirectly corroborates such increase. These organisations considered however that the number of child recruits could have been three times higher. See HRW (2007b).

**Figure 3.1 Estimated Number of Karuna/TMVP Combatants**



Source: author's estimations based on Jeyaraj, 2004e; UTHR(J) 2004c; Farrel, 2008, interviews and TMVP's internal documents.

A considerable amount of combatants under Karuna left the country, either at the very beginning, after the *Good Friday Battle* or during the initial phase of counterinsurgency operations. According to Pillayan, around 3,500 (out of 5,000) left, most of whom went to the Middle East. If we disregard the number but accept the percentage of the total (70%), then an estimated 3,000 combatants left Sri Lanka between 2004 and 2006, predominantly ending up working on road constructions in Qatar, Oman and other Middle Eastern countries. Pillayan also argues that around 15% came back when they were established as a paramilitary force. Therefore, an interesting issue for future research would be to explore whether or not the supposedly nearly 2,500 former combatants are still living in the Middle East, with its implications among others in terms of international relations.

An additional question relates to how many TMVP combatants made the transition into politics. Pillayan has admitted that after the demobilisation ceremony of early-2009, 210 of their fighters remained with the organisation, carrying out all kinds of work for the political party. Moreover, most members of the party's advisory committee, the district organisers and heads of the village committees were also former combatants. Meanwhile, on Karuna's side, allegedly 2,000 of his loyalists became SLFP members, although admittedly they were not necessarily all former

combatants. All this adds up to around 2,000 ex-combatants making the transition into politics, which is congruent with the party's claim (TMVP) of having about 2,000 members. Furthermore, they contend to have almost 15,000 collaborators, a demographic study of which would have to remain a task for the future. Finally, one last factor adding to the numerical riddles is that around 400 combatants loyal to Karuna joined the army - or at least received an army salary - during the latest phase of TMVP's institutionalisation, as did a few of Pillayan's followers.

This concern with the shifting numbers of combatants is relevant given that size is a crucial factor in differentiating TMVP from other paramilitary movements in Sri Lanka or other attempts of defection within the LTTE. Their size is further relevant in assessing the impact on the conflict's dynamics, as well as on society at the local level. Moreover, their numbers reflect an indicator of the costs of the revolt, as discussed below. Finally, but no less crucial, determining TMVP's size has a fundamental impact at the policy level, specifically regarding the implementation of DDR programmes, such as that elaborated by the Sri Lankan government and the IOM.

Indeed, it has been mentioned earlier that there was only one previous internal explicit act of dissent challenging Prabhakaran's authority within the LTTE: the case of Gopalaswamy Mahendrarajah alias Mahattaya, in July 1993. His revolt is a crucial reference that serves for an analytical comparison highlighting the singularities of Karuna's case; moreover, it is clearly also an antecedent, a prehistory actively evoked by participants and commentators alike. Karuna actually conceived his revolt in *differentiating it* from Mahattaya's.

Karuna achieved this by – unlike Mahattaya - immediately taking the inner quarrel and decision to defect to the press. In addition, the Cease Fire Agreement was officially in place, thus rendering it much harder for Prabhakaran to eliminate him. On top of this, although Mahattaya had been the deputy of the LTTE with a number of loyalists (around 250), at the time of his revolt he did not have any specific combatant units under his command (Subramanian, 2004), nor did he control territory. Consequently, his dissent clearly lacked a geostrategic advantage and the manpower to survive. Karuna learned from all this, incidentally also because Karuna himself - it has been argued - was involved in the arrest and subsequent disappearance of Mahattaya (Gunasekara, 2008). Gunasekara's impression that Karuna must have felt a sense of *déjà vu* when Prabhakaran summoned him was in

fact confirmed (or played upon) by Karuna himself when I interviewed him: "...Then I thought Prabhakaran is comparing me with Mahattaya, he is going to do something to me, he will kill or arrest me"<sup>123</sup>.

One final difference between these two defections relates to the fact that Karuna's was known to the international community, owing to his involvement in the Peace Talks. Therefore, his death would entail larger political consequences for the LTTE (Jeyaraj, 2004b). Admittedly, Mahattaya was also well-known within the South Asian context, having signed an agreement in India and held talks with Premadasa. Nonetheless, his death would not and in fact did not reach global dimensions in the way that Karuna's defection alone sparked.

As mentioned earlier, size is also a crucial element in comparing this case with other Tamil paramilitary movements. Under such light, Karuna's revolt and TMVP's formation appear significantly broader than any other Tamil militant movement, with the natural exception of the LTTE. The overall number of combatants of all Tamil militant groups put together by 1986 was estimated by Swamy to be around 3,000 (Swamy, 2006:104). While all groups indeed subsequently grew, evidence (for example, the near extinction of TELO in 1986 after some 400 of their fighters were killed) appears sufficient to state they were smaller than TMVP, falling in a range between 250 and 600 combatants.

With such numbers, TMVP, even if unstructured and ephemeral, actually features as the third largest armed actor in Sri Lankan post-independence history, aside from the JVP and the LTTE. For the latter to lose such a force from one day to the next – be they 2,500 or 4,500 - is a severe military loss, an enormous symbolic blow and a gigantic intelligence leak. In fact, it is a double strike militarily, for not only did thousands leave the outfit, but a significant portion of them also actually turned against the LTTE.

I have said that size has implications in the dynamics of the Sri Lankan war but also in the post-war management and external interventions, most notably regarding demobilisation and rehabilitation programmes. It is said that nearly 400 of Karuna's combatants joined the army (in fact, it seems that 650 actually receive a salary from

---

<sup>123</sup> Personal Interview, Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan [Karuna]. Colombo, 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

the army today, although not all are in army camps, some are in Karuna's political offices); and only 12 from Pillayan's side. The latter further argues that when signing an agreement with the IOM, he handed 800 combatants to them. But were those 800 boys handed to IOM in fact former combatants? This issue is raised again in Chapter Four.

Beyond the need to fix TMVP's size, what this debate clearly reveals is how parties use numbers for the pursuit of multiple interests. More importantly, this discussion highlights that the production of numbers - including what is measured, how the data is gathered and processed and which sources are used - is political in each and every stage (Sánchez Meertens, 2010). Although this endeavour does not escape such a reality, it does accomplish the much-needed exposure of the processes and contradictions in the war's numerical industry.

### 3.2. Gendered Transition: Women's Enigmatic Absence

Maunaguru has shown how (Tamil) nationalism is a gendered project wherein 'feminised and masculinised' practices and ideologies are constructed [as well as contested] (1995:157). Indeed, there have been high levels of participation of both sexes throughout the Sri Lankan conflict(s); yet, women's involvement was initially and generally conceived around the notion of nurturance, both as wives and mothers (de Alwis, 1995; Maunaguru, 1995). With the rise of militancy in the North, women were increasingly approached not only to support but also to train and fight. However, such concern with women's participation had less to do with any ideological allegiance with feminist movements and more with plain militarism (Jeganathan & Ismail, 1995:162). In fact, although a shift took place towards the construction of the *women warrior*, the prior image of the *brave mother* was never abandoned. As Malathi de Alwis (1995) pointed out, women's engagement, often articulated through a politics of motherhood, has been marked by a contradiction in the context of conflict and war. As mothers appealing to the natural order of family and motherhood, they have embraced the (patriarchal) cultural scripts of their society, and also reveal the State's transgression to the right of life in their fight against the denial of their mothering. Despite being immersed in such contradiction, the mother's role slowly shifted from being the mother calling for war to the mothers appealing for peace.

There is another highly pervasive side to women's constructed role in war. Besides issues regarding their participation and engagement, women also became embodied sites of struggles for control, foregrounding issues of sexuality and the female body either as something to be protected or posing some kind of a threat or danger.

When Karuna defected in March 2004, the often-highlighted feature of the woman warrior developed by the LTTE was dropped, as the emerging eastern group got rid of almost all of their women fighters. I argue that while such a turn must be explained, more importantly its consequences should be considered, given that they surely shed light on this revolt's dynamics and societal impact. Gender and power are as central to this social phenomenon as any other historical narrative (Jeganathan & Ismail, 1995:171). According, this section is not a fashionable and currently expected "adding of" gender perspective, but rather a strategic revisiting of aspects behind and ahead, crosscutting each and every issue and episode of TMVP's emergence.

I found the first indirect indication of women's absence in TMVP's fighting force in a Human Rights Watch (HRW) report, where only one girl had been reported as abducted out of 208 cases. I thereafter traced their non-presence in internal and external documents and interviews, and did not come across female former child combatants from TMVP in rehabilitation centres; moreover, in interviews, the leaders all manifested that they did not have women amongst their military ranks (with the exception of 15 women used for intelligence or political work at the very beginning<sup>124</sup>. Furthermore, not a single woman's name is recorded in the list of members that I obtained, nor in the list of Maveerar (heroes). After the Verugal battle, the only female members known to be militarily active in the split were the four women cadres who travelled with Karuna in Moulana's car to Colombo; and the much later girl who was forcefully recruited in 2007. So, how can the transition from a heavy female presence in the LTTE to the near absolute absence of women and girls within TMVP be explained?

I suggest the following factors as at least partial answers to this riddle. When defecting, Karuna needed to send a message to the Sri Lankan government and the

---

<sup>124</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan], March 2010. Jeyaraj did say that 25 women joined the political wing in 2007.

international community, whilst simultaneously using the opportunity to “filter” his movement. The best way of achieving both purposes was to select and release combatants across two key categories generally constructed in the humanitarian discourses as victims: children and women. By quickly releasing child soldiers but specifically girls, Karuna sought to obtain the political gain required for him to negotiate his future. Indeed, as signalled by a UTHR(J) report, girls outnumbered boys among the discharged children arriving at the different agencies’ centres<sup>125</sup>.

Several women and girls remained, yet during the Good Friday Battle the most heavily affected troops came from the former Women’s eastern battalion. Thus, not only did women fighters die, but also many defected (their fellow combatants’ death being the definitive deterrent) and further others were thereafter sent home. When, months later, re-recruitment started, numerous women used the civil resistance mechanisms of marrying young or swiftly looking for jobs overseas.

In addition, women were also instrumentalised to counter the revolt from the side of the LTTE leadership. Partly for this reason, women became the target of a kind of gendered blaming process. As the four women cadres who travelled with Karuna ‘re-defected’ and other partners of cadres in Colombo convinced their men to return to the Vanni, women came to be perceived as a source of danger, instability and betrayal. Besides, when TMVP started recruiting again, they needed enough to maintain counterinsurgency operations and replace those who died, but building an army such as the LTTE was not needed. By contrast, a far smaller force was required; hence, recruiting women and girls was an unnecessary “political” burden.

Karuna also sent back the 1,600 fighters in the immediate aftermath of the split due to a lack of financial means. Out of this number, at least 800 were young girls (Jeyaraj, 2004e). Therefore, everything points to the fact that it was a rather instrumentally motivated demographic change. However, no matter how instrumental the reasons, such a transformation also entailed inevitable changes in the sociality of the group’s formation. Besides, one is left wondering if returning women responded not just to cost reduction and gained political recognition, but also to embedded cultural patriarchal stereotypes. Whatever the motives, it remains that a transition

---

<sup>125</sup> According to the Collective for Batticaloa, approximately 60% of the returned children were young girls. See *Also in our name*, 2004 retrieved from <http://www.lankademocracy.org/documents/batticolleive.html>

was made from a mixed organisation (LTTE) towards a masculine movement, which, needless to say, significantly transformed daily routines.

Unfortunately, data on this matter is still scarce, but perhaps it is just sufficient to ignite some suggestive speculations. For instance, the shift in gender balance restructured the relationship between the armed movement and civil society in the region in a particular way. Without subsuming all gender relations to sexuality, consider the following: under the LTTE, the sexual conduct of combatants (accepted behaviour as well as that which is considered pathological) remained an internal matter of the organisation regulated by their codes or dealt with by their own police if at fault (or simply hidden from the public). By contrast, with the advent of TMVP, given that there were no female fighters, any relation between males and females was mediated by the relationship between civil society and the movement. Or rather, the other way around: the absence of women within TMVP produced a gendered civil society/armed movement interaction. While this gendered interaction went far beyond a simple sexualised relationship, as discussed below, it certainly also had sexual implications.

If a gendered civil society/armed actor relationship emerged, a possible indicator would be an increase in the number of sexual assault since TMVP's emergence, not necessarily because it did not happen before, but rather because it remained an internal issue during LTTE times; whereas with TMVP's emergence, matters of sexual violence easily became part of the public domain. An apparent increase of media reporting on sexual assaults since 2004 in the East suggests the hypothesis could hold, although records are neither clear nor sufficiently explored in this research to categorically state that there was in fact an increase of sexual violence parallel to the emergence of TMVP. I leave it up to others to confirm or refute this.

If gender relations were a crucial domain to enforce certain forms of discipline and codes of conduct within the LTTE (what is to be expected of a female fighter, a male fighter, and their way of interacting), daily life cannot but be transformed once women and girls had gone. The assertion of masculinity changed, expressed at the very least in a new division of labour. Typically, female roles in Tamil society such as cooking and cleaning had to be performed by boys and men within the organisation, something that at least occasionally could have been delegated to women combatants under the LTTE. In theory, it could have led to a break with traditional divisions. Instead, it seems to have been yet another case of what de Mel calls the *interregnum* dynamics, a temporary suspension of normalcy: if it ever were a

celebration of equality, it was so by trying to suppress rather than embrace it (Giles et al, 2003:63).

Parenthood, another crucial space of gender relations, was also transformed though not necessarily in a straightforward way. The mother–son tie became even more prominent with the advent of TMVP, as mothers were periodically allowed to visit their sons; whereas fathers generally avoided such visits, if not because it was restricted, then because they feared possible recruitment or other forms of retaliation.

An interesting following analytical step would be to explore how and why this demographic change is consistent with tendencies of insurgent movements around the world to have a considerable female presence while counterinsurgencies or state sponsored paramilitaries tend to be overwhelmingly masculine. It all points to the compatibility of a rejection of insurgent emancipatory discourses (even if fake), as well as the instrumental none-necessity of mass recruitment. Interestingly, this conservative encapsulated in TMVP's emergence provided space for a slightly more progressive role of women in civil society; namely, they became the primary interlocutors with the state as they sought news of their detained or disappeared menfolk (Wood, 2008:552). In this sense, the absence of the woman-warrior led to the full return of the woman imagined as a resilient mother.

Overall, the empowerment of women and subversion of the patriarchal system associated with liberation movements seem to have been part of a liminal experience; a classic ritualised subversion of order simply to restate it. It was less a transformation of womanhood and more a sacrifice of it. The intention was not to sustain change; rather, it was simply a tool for the sustainability of war. Echoing others, my argument is indeed that female participation as well as other transgressions of oppressive relations are not acts of liberation, but symbols of sacrifice (Jeganathan & Ismail, 1995). Women were a necessity within the LTTE once war was normalised, although they were also seen as a problem. Karuna's decision to let them go was in a sense a kind of conservative purification. Once excluded, women regained the possible role as resisting mothers or widows, interlocutors of the state and agents of remembrance. However, as Samuel highlights, Sri Lankan society still values a married woman over a single one, and a wife over a widow (Giles et al., 2003:167). Because motherhood has been the main force to bring about change, women have paradoxically helped to perpetuate the same stereotypes that marginalise them (2003:168). This suggests that although

armed action may have emancipatory dividends in the short term, sustained violence is a conservative force. Similarly, the formations of masculinity within the armed group, with its hyperbolic value attached to combat, is internally challenged by the need to deal with traditionally ascribed female roles; but these are construed as sacrifices rather than transformative engagements.

As a final note, I would like to highlight that despite the evident gender misbalance, TMVP's political face was that of a woman: Padmini. In addition, a frequently mentioned and portrayed image was that of an external female martyr: Annai Poopathy. How can those extremes be reconciled? An influencing factor is that Padmini's participation - despite probably being one of the brightest minds within the outfit - above all responded to political heritage: recall that she is Sathiyamoorthy's daughter, Karuna's close associate murdered at the beginning of the split. On the other hand, the use of Annai Poopathy's image is perhaps more complex. She is probably best known for fasting to death, protesting against IPKF presence in Sri Lanka. For such a reason, the LTTE co-opted (and forced) her martyrdom. Yet, it is my understanding she was also actively protesting against the LTTE's massacre of TELO members. Perhaps Karuna was playing with this ambiguity, simultaneously using her as a symbol of Tamil resistance and the rejection of LTTE's hegemony. That, plus the fact that she is from Kiran, Karuna's hometown.

### 3.3. Financing TMVP

Rebellions have to be financed, even when they occur from within an insurgency (Whitaker, 2007:133). We started this chapter with a discussion on the numbers of combatants that took part in the schism, before subsequently discussing the reduction in combatants, and particularly the absence of women in the nascent organisation following the split. Despite not being the only factor, it is important to highlight that the reduction of the military force under Karuna also responded to economic constraints.

According to DBS Jeyaraj, the Batticaloa-Ampara Districts were earning approximately LKR 4.6 million per day for the LTTE at the time of the split, obtained through taxes, agriculture, fisheries, exports, construction, stone quarrying, timber and diverse businesses. Taxes specifically from Batticaloa town were around LKR 800,000 per day. However, as we recall, Karuna expelled the intelligence, the police

and the finance units from Batticaloa, and thus tax collection stopped immediately after the split, or was at least put on hold for a while. Furthermore, Karuna criticised the tax regime as a legitimising tool for his revolt, and consequently was initially restricted to donations obtained through “persuasion”.

It failed to work, or at least not well enough. He was forced to downsize his troops and opted to send around 1,600 home, reducing expenses by at least LKR 320,000 a day (corresponding to the daily upkeep of combatants). However, he managed to retain some of the businesses. Examples include the seafood trade between Vaharai and Kalkudah, which came under Karuna’s brother *Reggie* and cattle farms administered by *Kohaneshan*. In 2006- when TMVP was rebuilding the military wing and regaining control of the eastern Province- these were their monthly expenses according to a Word document I obtained (last modified in October 2006):

**Table 3.1. Monthly expenses TMVP October 2006**

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| Vehicle maintenance                          | LKR 167,000               |
| Allowance for great Heroes                   | LKR 74 X 7,500= 555,000   |
| Allowance, Meals and Medicine for 625 people | LKR 6,175,000 (9,880 pp.) |
| Office Expense                               | LKR 260,000               |
| Phone Packages                               | LKR 285,000               |
| Walkie and Torch Batteries                   | LKR 45,000                |
| Total  | LKR 7,487,000             |

Source: TMVP internal records.

According to this TMVP record, their monthly expenses reached LKR. 7,487,000 (around USD 70,000 or EUR 55,000) at that time. However, a few aspects did not appear in this document, such as weapon acquisitions, the expenses of the propaganda machine and Karuna’s personal stipend abroad (according to Pillayan, he sent LKR 2 million a month – USD 18,000). Nevertheless, it is indicative of other things, such as the number of registered combatant recipients of allowance (i.e. 625 in October 2006) and the subsidiary weapons of a counterinsurgency: cars, mobiles and flashlights.

Setting aside weapon acquisition, carried out through direct support from the military intelligence, and partly through networks of arms trafficking (as indirectly confessed

by Pillayan, telling me about some clandestine operations to India to that end), it seems that the largest steady expense involved the maintenance of both the living and the dead members of the organisation.

If DBS Jeyaraj's calculations were correct, LTTE's revenues from the East just before the split would amount to around USD 15 million a year. The TMVP monthly expenses record amounts to around USD 8.7 million a year<sup>126</sup>, which should be at least doubled considering what is missing (weapons, propaganda). The resulting figure is in tune with the estimates of intelligence sources, claiming that TMVP revenues in 2007 were LKR 160 million (USD 1.4 million) a month (17 million USD a year) (Farrel, 2007:17).<sup>127</sup>

Although survival for the revolting men was tough during the initial months in Colombo, things became much easier once contact was fully established with the intelligence organs of the Sri Lankan state. Everything, including weapons, was provided by the government (meaning SL intelligence). No effort whatsoever - at least not from the side of TMVP members - is made to conceal the Sri Lankan government's participation in financing the revolt: "Everything was donated by the government" Azad Moulana said to me. However, such a statement served to both denounce the state's involvement and co-responsibility, as well as concealing the organisation's alternative sources of income, such as the activities that they were less likely to tell me about: extortion, ransom, taxation on alcohol, etc. They did, nonetheless, point out that their revenues were complemented by the profit made through selling the Tamil Alai newspapers in Europe for 5 Euros a piece.<sup>128</sup>

### 3.3.1. Money Kills

Besides being a necessary means for it, there is another relation between financial resources and the revolt. On the one hand, there are indeed strong signals of money operating as a crucial motivation for the schism. The LTTE leadership claimed that

---

<sup>126</sup> This includes adjustments for the number of martyrs - USD 14,000 -, plus the one-time payments (USD 47,000) and Karuna's private expenses abroad (USD 216,000).

<sup>127</sup> LTTE generated an estimated USD 200 to 300 million per year, which is around 10 times TMVP's revenues. It is not so much that sustaining a counterinsurgency is cheaper but that given the connections with security forces, the financial burden is shared.

<sup>128</sup> Personal Interviews Hanzeer, M [Azad Moulana] and Chandrakanthan, S [Pillayan], 2010.

the revelation of corruption and irregularities from Karuna and subsequently established inquiry brought him to defect. On top of this, the journalist alias Taraki, murdered in 2005, revealed that Karuna had created a company in his wife and father-in-law's name with a capital of LKR 25 million on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2004. DBS Jeyaraj and others have used this to confirm Karuna's selfish motivation of personal enrichment.

Without questioning their statements, I would like to highlight the misplaced chain of causality. If the company was created on 8<sup>th</sup> March, this alone does not serve as evidence of corruption being the cause of the split; rather, it could in fact be that Karuna resorted to corruption in order to make the revolt feasible or his escape possible. This is not to say Karuna was not corrupt nor to deny that an inquiry was set in motion; it is simply meant to bring attention to the fact that Taraki's revelation is not as conclusive as many would like it to be. However crucial, it cannot be derived from it - as DBS Jeyaraj does - that Karuna is but a charlatan.

In addition to the possible role of money as Karuna's motivation to split, cash was a motivator for some of the youth to join, and also played an important function as compensation for the families that lost their boys during TMVP operations. A wage system, or as they prefer to call it – an allowance -, was introduced in TMVP. But how much the combatants were paid and indeed whether payment actually occurred is a different matter, even though it is claimed in a member's diary that the deposits for the salaries were wired on 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> of each month, while the mobile phone bills were paid on 28<sup>th</sup>.<sup>129</sup>

According to Pillayan, LKR.6000 allowance + LKR.4000 for meals were paid to each fighter each month, which is more-or-less consistent with the budget presented above, corresponding to allowance plus medicine. *Fidel*, a former child soldier abducted by TMVP in 2006, claims to have received LKR. 9000 a month, although Padmini, the former General Secretary of the movement, states that it was LKR. 5000 if you were single and LKR.7500 if married. There seem to be further variants, as exemplified by *Marcos*, the former LTTE child soldier and TMVP abductee, who claims that he received LKR.18000 directly from the CID (Criminal Investigations Department) while operating as an informant. Later on, as a regular combatant, his salary was reduced to 7500 (although he is single). An interviewed boy formerly

---

<sup>129</sup> Jehanandan Jeyaraj diary, translated by research assistant N.Hamead.

abducted by TMVP claimed to receive LKR 6000 a month as a salary, but he only did so for 7 months, as opposed to his entire time within the outfit.

For each Martyr or hero - TVMP now has 207 -, they would allegedly pay the family LKR.25000 at once and subsequently also a monthly allowance of LKR.7500,<sup>130</sup> deposited in their accounts from Colombo on the same day the phone bills were paid<sup>131</sup>. In the budget of October 2006, LKR.555000 (74 x 7500) went to this rubric, excluding the one-time payments (because they are not a monthly expense), which should be adjusted to LKR.1552500 (207x7500) towards the end of 2008. Given that the number of martyrs is now stable, we can add that an additional LKR. 5175000 was awarded to the martyrs' families, if the payments were all actually made.

We have seen how economic resources play a role as a motivation for the revolt, as a means for it being sustained, as an incentive for people to join and as a compensation for those sacrificed in its name. Furthermore, there is evidence that money was also used to deter people from participating in the revolt, or to punish those that did by, for example, offering a monetary reward for killing TMVP members. Indeed, this was the case when *Chachchi Master*, initial spokesperson for TMVP, was murdered in the Batticaloa prison for 5,000 rupees. A number of important cadres and commanders of TMVP were allegedly killed owing to this type of incentive<sup>132</sup>.

### 3.3.2. Money Splits

Moreover, financial resources became the element posing the most serious threat - or at least the most systematically claimed argument - to disrupt TMVP's unity. Earlier, I recalled that Uruthra Master and Seelan were put in charge of TMVP's finances after Kohaneshan's death, with Pillayan approving and disbursing the money. However, when Karuna returned from his exile and a crucial meeting was held in Minneriya (March 2007), a new Karuna loyalist was put in charge: Inniyabarathi (current SLFP organiser for Ampara District). His appointment and its implications in terms of the financial flows were most likely the major factor in

---

<sup>130</sup>Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan], 2010

<sup>131</sup> Jehanandan Jeyaraj's diary, translated by research assistant alias N.Hamead.

<sup>132</sup> Jehanandan Jeyaraj's diary, translated by research assistant alias N.Hamead.

creating TMVP's internal fractionalisation.

Soon after the appointment of Inniyabarathi, Pillayan accused Karuna of diverting funds (LKR 4 million or USD 35350) towards his family expenses. Jeyaraj - who as you recall was Karuna and his family's bodyguard for a while - supports this claim. In fact, he argues that when Karuna was still in India, he contacted Pillayan, saying he was short of cash and demanded an even larger sum (apart from the monthly payments): "Pillayan showed me a box he was sending to Karuna: LKR. 75 Laks [7,5 Million Rupees]. It was all TMVP money. It came from business *Kohaneshan* managed: farms, cattle, etc. At that time we all thought we had to protect Karuna. That's the problem. Karuna realised so much money was involved and thought it was better to control all the money flows"<sup>133</sup>. The Minneriya meeting and its consequences will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Finally, TMVP generated financial consequences in the surrounding community. One such consequence is signalled by Malathi De Alwis, who highlights how parents started mortgaging land and getting into debt in order to send their children to Colombo or abroad. But it also indirectly created a particular kind of resentment among the young non-combatants, pointed out as again by De Alwis: the INGO's response to the massive returns of child soldiers was to reward them with material benefits; this provoked reactions, such as that from a Batticaloa girl who complained that if she had joined the armed actors then she too would have had a new bike, like many former combatants had just received (De Alwis, 2004).

### 3.4. Enmities, Generational Shift and Discursive Autopsy

As expected, TMVP not only became a mono-gendered group but also a mono-ethnic one, with only few (traceable) exceptions: one Muslim in the political wing and one or two Sinhalese members operating in the military wing. Therefore, TMVP became a predominantly young, male, Batticaloa-centred, (mostly Koyaivar) Tamil Movement.

---

<sup>133</sup> Personal Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj, 2010

And yet, these features do not mean the movement was monolithic as a whole. In fact, a crucial demographic feature is the co-presence of former LTTE fighters and direct victims of LTTE violence or their relatives. Indeed, Pillayan argues that around 80% of TMVP members were former *Tigers*. The remaining 20% or so is comprised of anti-LTTE militants, LTTE victims or (non-former LTTE) forced recruits. Perhaps this demographic feature is the strongest marker of difference within the organisation. How could such opposing identities coexist? Is it as simple as “my enemy’s enemies are my friends”? Was TMVP a renewed coalition of LTTE enemies? But what if my enemy’s enemy was also my enemy?

The reverse is also intriguing: after years of indoctrination and joint operations, how could former LTTE members suddenly turn against their former battle comrades? All of the above have serious psychological implications for the actors involved. When I confronted them with these issues, they would indeed point to a series of anxieties that long accompanied them, yet they rapidly tried to trivialise them. Pillayan’s memories are illustrative of such anxieties – often manifested in the form of lack of sleep, paranoia and generalised loneliness-, as outlined briefly in Chapter Two; however, his memories also shed light on how the turn could eventually be achieved. Let me add a little more to the quotation presented in the previous chapter. Referring to the very moment of the split, Pillayan recalls:

I was not eating, not sleeping [...]. At that time there were 40 cadres under my command. I could not abandon them. I openly asked them: does anyone want to go home? 5 or 6 said yes, so I gave them 5000 rupees and sent them home. Several others were mentally upset and left or crossed to the Vanni. I couldn’t know who was loyal to whom<sup>134</sup>.

Managing the psychological burden of turning against the *Tigers* was crucial during those initial stages, yet an aggressive response of the North helped to overcome such a transition. In Pillayan’s case, this was reinforced by his previous clash with the leadership and desire to leave the movement, as already discussed in Chapter Two.

On the other hand, Azad Moulana’s case supports the notion of an anti-LTTE coalition. Not only was his father killed by the LTTE, but also, being a Muslim, one would expect strong resentment to anyone associated with that movement.

---

<sup>134</sup> Personal Interview, SivanesathuraiChandranthan [Pillayan] 2010.

Consequently, the euphoria caused by the LTTE splitting was strong, to the extent that no matter how much Karuna may have been involved in the killings of Muslims or even in his father's persecution, the possibility of LTTE's destruction as a whole (maybe even as a concept) trumped any personalised vendetta. This is how he looks back:

In 2003 I wrote mainly political articles under the name Aiyaz Engal for *Tessan* magazine. That time I strongly supported anti Tigers movements. That was my main topic [...] [Then] in 2004 the LTTE broke apart [...] When I heard the news I was so happy<sup>135</sup>.

### 3.4.1. Generational Shift

According to Schlichte, two predominant forces erode the value of traditional patterns of domination within armed groups. One is the charisma of the warrior (the reputation of successful fighters like Karuna); the other the generational change affecting the internal life of an armed figuration (Schlichte, 2009:87). TMVP's formation contains these two important power shifts. Hitherto, the top leadership positions of all Tamil paramilitaries entirely belonged to a generation already militant prior to the outbreak of violence in Sri Lanka, active since the formative years of the struggle (Prabhakaran Devananda, Adaikkalanathan, Uma Maheswaran, etc.). In fact, Mahattaya, who attempted the mentioned failed rebellion in 1992, belonged to a generation of Tamil militants who still addressed Prabhakaran as 'Thambi' (younger brother). Karuna, who engaged in militancy during the onset of violence or Eelam War I (1983), had two options to become the supreme leader: either Prabhakaran died, or he –Karuna - defected to form a new group. When he defected, a movement emerged with a younger generation in the lead for the first time. In this sense, the transition itself reflected a generational shift in power. Karuna actually belongs to the generation of Tamil militants who addressed Prabhakaran as 'Annai' (elder brother)<sup>136</sup>. In Chapter Five, I will refer to this transfer between generational subgroups as one from Generation 1 $\alpha$  (Prabhakaran and others as elder brothers) to Generation 1 $\beta$  (such as Karuna as younger brothers).

An even bigger generational leap captured in TMVP's emergence occurred with the next in ranks; a kind of premature promotion. With the massacre of prominent TMVP-

---

<sup>135</sup> Personal Interview, Mohamed Hanzeer [Azad Moulana]. 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

<sup>136</sup> See Taraki, 2004.

to-be leaders as early in the revolt as July 2004 (killing prominent figures such as Castro, Rabert, and Kohaneshan) and the later killing of Karuna's older brother Reggie (43), a significant part of the high ranked senior members disappeared. This opened the way for members of a younger generation to arrive in commanding positions.

Pillayan got involved in the civil war during Eelam War II. Following the death of the aforementioned senior commanders, he soon became the de facto TMVP military leader by the end of 2004. With him as the No.1, a third generation of militancy came into a leading role. A shift was also incidentally visible in the political wing of the movement: in 2006, when Padmini was appointed general secretary of the party, she was only 23 years old. Furthermore, even today, it only takes a walk among the TMVP quarters to realise how young their members are.

While this shift in power has several implications, let me highlight just two here: first, it means that the new leadership formed its ideology in the midst of war; and second, it means that their knowledge regarding the very onset of violence and the conditions that led to it were not directly experienced but rather transferred. For Karuna's generation - and even more for Pillayan's - experiencing war came first, while the political framing of violent experiences came second. Both aspects inform transformations in personal and collective behaviour and highlight the relevance of exploring the transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next, inside and outside the trenches. These generationally-framed disputes are simultaneously a manifestation of a Weberian defiant source of legitimacy known as the warrior charisma. Their "growing reputation within an armed group entices successful fighters to threaten the established hierarchy. Many of the internal splits within armed groups are related to these competing sources of legitimacy" (Schlichte, 2009:91).

### 3.4.2. Brief Autopsy of TMVP's 'Heroes'

Another significant population subset is the dead. TMVP's deceased inform us of some crucial demographic aspects, such as the fact that 55% of TMVP's "maavirar" (heroes) included in an early list of 60 (excluding Good Friday Battle deaths) were under 26 years of age, with 25% being even under 21. The youngest was 16 and the eldest 45. 30% of those heroes died in only three days, corresponding to three incidents: the Kottawa killings in Colombo on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2004, the 14<sup>th</sup> April 2005 LTTE

attack on a TMVP camp and a second more devastating attack on a Kandakadu TMVP camp on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

This archival autopsy also reveals that the most reiterated hometowns among the dead were Chenkalady, Kiran, Vaharai and Valaichenai, suggesting these villages to be TMVP's strongholds. Kiran is of course Karuna's hometown, Valaichenai is Pillayan's (Pethalai is adjacent), Vaharai is Jayam's turf and also a traditional stronghold of the LTTE, while Chenkalady was controlled by Uruthra Master (another senior member), located in the vicinity of the Eastern University (a crucial hub for TMVP). In addition, two of the listed heroes were from Mulaitivu (North, though eastern coast), one from Kilinochchi, two from Welikanda (North central province yet later the epicentre of TMVP activities) and just one from Trincomalee and two from Ampara district, the other two districts of the eastern province (Batticaloa being the third).

Restricted as it is, this tiny piece of systematised data provides us with insights into the age distribution, local strongholds, recruitment centres, battle sites and military landmarks. None of the emerging information may come as a surprise, but in terms of knowledge production, the possibility of linking assumptions to recorded details is evident in its value.

The overwhelming majority of TMVP members are thus from the Batticaloa district. Within the district, there is a notable recruitment triangle between Vaharai in the North and Chenkalady in the South, with Valaichenai's peninsula as its most eastern point. However, the recruitment triangle is different from the location of TMVP's main camps, most of which were based in the Welikanda area due to its strategic features, and most prominently the proximity to army bases. Therefore, let us explore TMVP's juxtaposed geographies in more detail as follows.

### 3.5. Local Places; Diasporic Spaces: a Geography of TMVP

Space carries special importance in armed conflict. As Brun and Jazeel argue, claims and contestations over the integrity of the island, which reshape spaces and reproduce certain subjectivities, are at the centre of the disputes around the referent 'Sri Lanka'; for "to think through cultural politics is to think spatially" (2009.1-2).

This is the case in the transition concerning us because the ultimate goal of the insurgent movement out of which the split emerged was a homeland (*Space I*); the dynamics of civil war were expressed in territorial control (*Space II*); the Karuna-led rebellion was geographically bounded (*Space III*); how the revolt, its institutionalisation and eventual conversion into mainstream politics left a trace of places of condensed socio-historical meaning (*Space IV*); and because the sustainability of the revolt contributed a Diaspora specifically distributed around the globe (*Space V*);

### 3.5.1. Spaces I and II

Space I corresponds to the concept of *Tamil Eelam*, which had Jaffna as its cultural capital, Kilinochchi as its administrative capital and Trincomalee as its imagined political headquarters. Karuna's revolt split it in two, launching a new geographical concept: *Then Eelam* - South Eelam -, with Batticaloa as its centre. Accordingly, it can be argued that the ideological justification of the revolt implied a *spatialisation of difference*: unequal circumstances among fighters were expressed in terms of differences among northern and eastern Tamils. Geographically speaking, the new battle became that of North vs. East. Notably, *Space I – the Homeland* - is an imagined yet fixed space.

The split of *Space I* into two had repercussions for *Space II*: territorial control. The area corresponding to South Eelam left the control of the LTTE and became the temporarily controlled territory of the dissidence, a control abandoned and later transferred to the incumbent forces. As such - and contrary to *Space I* -, Territorial control (*Space II*) was a concrete yet dynamic space.

### 3.5.2. Space III

The break of *Space I* and the dynamics of *Space II* resulted in what we could call a Localisation of the revolt (*Space III*), with a centre and a boundary changing over time. The fundamental centre was initially Batticaloa, which would remain the centre symbolically yet not always operationally. The critical boundary localising the revolt was the boundary towards the North, originally established at Verugal. During the course of the revolt, three shifts occurred fundamental to the final outplay: the

operational centre of the revolt moved from Batticaloa to Colombo, from Colombo to Maduru Oya and from Maduru Oya to Welikande. The establishment of most TMVP camps in the latter was the ultimate transgression: after breaking the homeland into two, establishing the camps in Welikande became a geographical expression of the new alliance; a territorialised allegiance, if you will. TMVP's centre was then in Polonnaruwa District, meaning it was outside the old homeland and inside the incumbent's controlled territory (with Sinhala majority). In a sense, the revolt created new boundaries yet was foremost about going beyond them. Overall, *Space III* had a progressive boundary to the North and a permeable boundary to the West (see Map of Sri Lanka).

The border established at Verugal left Trincomalee district in a limbo and created a mismatch between the revolt's boundary and the administrative border of the east. Subsequently, a crucial task involved shifting the border, first to Mavil Aru (Trincomalee), and then all the way to Kuchchaveli. Together with the Sri Lankan Army, this was achieved in mid-2007, aligning the revolt's borders with the provincial ones. For the first time, the political notion of the Eastern Province as a unit actually became a grounded reality.

While it is true that Space II and III overlap considerably, they are not the same: the first answers the question of which territory was disputed; whereas the latter answers the question of where they in fact revolted. Arguably, their overlap actually enabled an effective additional administrative space – that of the Eastern Province –, which was an existing yet not operationalised category.

Fragmented as it was between the scattered and divided Muslim and Tamil communities, the space of the east was now being re-fragmented within Tamil communities. Yet, that space was also being realigned with other social groups. Cross-ethnic linkages between Tamils and Sinhalese were now imaginable, indeed even with ultranationalists. Despite the instrumentality of such alliances, their presence slowly changed the horizon of meaning construction and social networks. Moreover, it is also in this way that the revolt transformed the space of Sri Lanka's civil war.

### 3.5.3. Space IV

Within the bounded space of the revolt (*Space III*), there were particular sites transformed into lived spaces of the rebellion and thus endowed with socio-historical value: battle sites, abduction sites and sites of political and physical presence (i.e. offices). As Rich argues, a place on the map is also a place in history (Wood, 2003:45). For TMVP members, these are often spaces of military pride; for many others, it represents a topography of terror. Let us explore this in a little more detail.

The initial base of the revolt was the Minaham (Meenagam) Camp (Illuppaiyadichchenai), allegedly the place where Karuna wrote the famous letters and designed the rebellion, or at least his exit strategy. After the Good Friday Battle and the dismantling of the initial force, there were a couple of focal points of the rebellion in Colombo and suburbs: Kottawa; an Army base near the Apollo Hospital and Wellawatta. Once the counterinsurgency was set up, they went back East and held as base a camp in Maduru Oya, which was soon infiltrated by the LTTE. Finally, the headquarters of the paramilitary movement, with multiple camps and training sites, was lifted near Welikande, more specifically in Tivuchennai, from 2005 onwards<sup>137</sup>.

The first TMVP political head-office was located at 11/3A, Schofield Place (Colombo); later moving to Anderewatta Road (Colombo), run by Padmini. Meanwhile the Batticaloa office was run by Pradeep Master at #39, Govington Road (Meenagam); and later T. Ealamaran opened the Trincomalee office on #56, Customs Road, Trincomalee. Many other offices opened during the course of their consolidation, all of which are allegedly places closely connected with check posts operated by the Sri Lankan security forces. Furthermore, these offices were associated with notorious abductions recorded in places such as Mankerni, Valaichechenai, Kumpurumollai, Korakallimaddu, Maavidivembu, Vantharumoolai, Chenkalady and Eravur areas (Singh, 2007b). These abductions themselves constituted signifying practices that in a way rendered them an emotionally charged space of its own.

---

<sup>137</sup> Also in Mutugalla, Maduarrangala and Karopolla as disclosed by an aid worker HWR, 2007a. See also Singh, 2007b.

Time was framed in terms of specific military landmarks. The biggest and most symbolically saturated battle in the rebellion's history is without a doubt the *Good Friday Battle (Verugal, April 2004)*. But beyond that initial confrontation Jeyaraj registered several significant confrontations that complement the three most visible instances of TMVP losses mentioned earlier. If the Good Friday Battle was the biggest defensive encounter that the split faced, the 6<sup>th</sup> *October 2006 Vaharai Battle* was their biggest offensive strike. These are Jeyaraj's notes on that incident, which he read out loud to me: "It started at 4:42am. We attacked a LTTE camp in Vaharai. 48 LTTE fighters died, 60 were injured. We captured 21 rifles, one sniper rifle, 6 walkie-talkies. On our side 8 people died, including Esayalan (head of Essayalan regiment)"<sup>138</sup>.

Two things are worth noting here: first, there is extended video footage of this battle (or rather of its immediate aftermath); second, besides the dead, 28 LTTE cadres were arrested. I present to you here a few lines of the conversation that followed once this was brought up between Jeyaraj and myself:

A: - What did you do with the arrested LTTE combatants?

J: - We returned some to their parents.

A: - And the others?

J: - The others were from Jaffna and the [LTTE] intelligence team.

A: - So what did you do with them? –I insisted.

J: - [Hesitates]. They died [uncomfortable giggle]...That time we knew this was not good, but that time we want our safety, no? That's why in four years TMVP was winning fast<sup>139</sup>.

I will leave it for others to discern the legal implications of some of these statements. Let me instead shed light upon how the media registered the incident the Saturday after the attack:

The Army yesterday captured two LTTE camps and it is believed that a large number of LTTE cadres had perished in the process [...]. Military sources in Batticaloa said 32 LTTE cadres were killed in the counter attack. The LTTE cadres had attacked Army positions in Batticaloa with mortar fire and the Army had counter attacked and captured Mankerni and Pachchankerni

---

<sup>138</sup> Personal Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj. April 2010.

<sup>139</sup> Personal Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj. 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2010.

LTTE camps (Palihawadana, 2006).

As Mankerni and Pannichankerni are part of the greater Vaharai area, the battles reported so differently by TMVP and the Army can only refer to the same confrontations. Indeed, the testimony of Chelvan, a former child combatant within TMVP ranks and deployed to Pannichankerni for his first battle experience, confirms that these were one and the same military operation:

We were taken there in army vehicles. Once there they gave us some cookies and then we received a 30-minute briefing on how the operation was to be carried out. We were given a black bandage to put around our arm so the army could distinguish us from the LTTE. The operation was directly supported by the SLA who was in constant communication by talkies with TMVP. The fighting started at 5:30 AM till 12:30, but finally TMVP had to withdraw. They thought LTTE was retreating but they had actually moved around them and SLA was taking a lot of fire. 30 TMVP members died but they could only take one body with them. The TMVP team, in which I was, detained civilians from the area. But then a second TMVP team came and shot them all in cold blood. After the battle TMVP and the SLA said they had killed several LTTE members, but the truth is most of the casualties they showed were civilians<sup>140</sup>.

Here too, the discursive, numerical and historical battles are displayed and the cliché that truth is the first casualty of war is almost redundantly exposed.

Besides the aforementioned battles, several spaces in the revolt's trajectory were endowed with special density, becoming watersheds pacing the revolt and organising its time in a specific spatial distribution. According to this logic, aside from the Verugal and the Vaharai battles, the Eastern University was also a concrete as well as symbolic battlefield. Discursive inputs to legitimise or de-legitimise the revolt stemmed from its premises, with supporters recruited, detractors threatened and vice versa. Political science lecturers were forced to take sides, while vice chancellors were forced to leave or disappeared. If there was one space during my fieldwork period where fear was still palpable, where silence was the language, it was at the Eastern University, and with good reason.

The University was indeed a crucial site of mobilisation, ironically most clearly evidenced outside its premises in the very early moments of the revolt, as presented below. Soon after the news of Karuna defecting broke, manifestations and marches were organised, particularly by his close associate Sathiyamoorthy. His Daughter

---

<sup>140</sup>Personal Interview with alias Ernesto Valaichenai. April 2011.

Padmini – former general Secretary of TMVP - recalls:

During that period Annai Poopathi<sup>141</sup>, she is a Martyr, was being remembered in Mamangam temple premises [so people went there] also supporting Karuna's ideas. The eastern university students union was [then] mobilised<sup>142</sup>.

A few weeks later, on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2004, Sathiyamoorthy was killed. Karuna organised a large funeral, burying his body in the Annai Poopathi martyr garden (made by Karuna in Nawalady). As mentioned in Chapter One, Sathiyamoorthy's remains became the battleground where force and symbolic action coalesced; it also rendered the burial site a space of condensed meaning for the revolt.

Another landmark of entirely different characteristics is the Hilton Hotel in Colombo. While it may appear trivial, I insist upon its relevance due to three reasons. First, the paradox of highly covert operations occurring in one of Colombo's most prominent spaces, an almost oxymoronic high-profiled anonymity. Second, because putting Karuna at the Hilton while the remainder of the high-ranking members of the split were left somewhere in Wellawata already created an internal rift that could potentially grow. Third, because I want to highlight and leave for future explorations the significant role played by five stars hotels in the dynamics of war and peace. Hotels are both sites of peace negotiations, war reporting, clandestine insurgencies, counterintelligence operations as well as temporary shelters or safe heavens<sup>143</sup>.

It is worth noting a few places that, despite being outside of the Sri Lankan polity, were still crucial spaces of the revolt. Such examples include Kathmandu, where the first official alliance between Karuna and the ENDLF was born; Bangalore, shelter for Karuna, his family and Jeyaraj; Thiruvaannamalai, where the revolt was baptised; an undisclosed place in Kerala where an agenda was established between government officials and Karuna; Wormwood Scrubs Prison in London, where Karuna was

---

<sup>141</sup> In 1986, the eastern Mothers' Front took to the streets with rice pounders to prevent a massacre of members of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) by the LTTE (Hensman, 1992:503). In 1987, one of its members, Annai Pupathi, fasted to death to protest the presence of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF). She was subsequently immortalised by the LTTE. See De Alwis, 2002.

<sup>142</sup> Personal Interview, Sivagheeta Prabhakaran [Padmini]. 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

<sup>143</sup> The centrality of hotels in the revolt evokes Hemingway's *Hotel Florida* in his play *The Fifth Column*, but could also be connected to *Hotel des Mille Collines* in Kigali or the *Commodore Hotel* in Beirut; one of the so called "war Hotels".

detained for several months; and the Middle East, more specifically Qatar, where hundreds if not thousands of former combatants fled. The site of the commemoration of TMVP's fallen fighters held in April 2011 should also be mentioned in this list as a crucial mnemonic space. A detailed description of that event will be presented at the end of the next chapter.

The last of the rebellion's spaces (Space V) is materialised as a network. Given its importance for other aspects of this figuration, I will tackle this in a separate section, connecting the discussion with TMVP's support base.

### 3.6. Diaspora, Ghost Members and Alliances (Space V)

The usual assumption is that the Tamil Diaspora -such a crucial player in sustaining the civil war in Sri Lanka - was almost exclusively aligned with the LTTE. Although this is indeed generally the case, TMVP's revolt required the assistance of a limited yet fundamental set of members in the Diaspora in order to render it a feasible project. Probably the most prominent among them was Kumaraswamy Nandagopan a.k.a. *Raggu*. He started as a financial supporter, but his level of engagement was such that he returned to Sri Lanka after living for years in Australia and briefly became TMVP president. While I was in the process of getting in touch with him for an interview, he was shot dead in the outskirts of Colombo on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

Furthermore, two UK-based Tamils also figured as part of the diasporic support, with a particular influence in TMVP's transition to politics: Suppiah Krishna, a.k.a. *Uncle Krishna* and R. Manoharan, although when interviewed, the latter insisted that he has never been part of the movement. Nonetheless, they were both behind the writings of TMVP's Constitutions, they taught political science courses to area leaders and were also probably behind the All Party Representative Committee (APRC) proposals that TMVP submitted (see Chapter 4.5.).

Thinking back to the days of Karuna's revolt, Alias Uncle Mano, now vice-president of the TULF<sup>144</sup>, recalls: "The split didn't make me sad...The decimation of the LTTE was essential for a Tamil solution". One of the lines held by Manoharan, Krishna and few others trying to influence TMVP was to make this group pro-India and pro-West.

---

<sup>144</sup> Tamil United Liberation Front, led by V. Anandasangaree.

The problem was, Mano argued, that they had intellectual influence yet no money such as that at the Sri Lankan government's disposal, and consequently they lost control over the revolt. However, Manoharan did assist Karuna with legal counselling while the former TMVP leader was detained in the UK (discussed in the next chapter). Naturally, none of the details could be revealed to me due to legal privileges<sup>145</sup>.

Former LTTE and later PLOTE member Uncle Krishna also saw an opportunity in Karuna's split and thus became part of TMVP's international network. Looking back to his days in the LTTE, he strongly regrets the day that he introduced Anton Balasingham to the movement. Krishna said, "Balasingham was LTTE's biggest problem". Later he added that the fact that all its leadership was under 50 years old when they were established was a significant issue within the movement. When Krishna established contact (he was introduced to most cadres at the Minneriya meeting in 2007, discussed in the next chapter), he was put in charge of promoting TMVP among the diaspora and establishing its propaganda machine. Today, he is rather disappointed and considers Karuna joining the SLFP as the latter's biggest mistake. Krishna argues that TMVP is treated now as a banana peel, having served its purpose and can now be thrown away while people enjoy the benefits that it brought. In politics, he rather solemnly states, "there are no permanent enemies, nor permanent friends. It's important you learn how to take a U-turn"<sup>146</sup>.

An unconfirmed link is Mathi Kumarathurai, who has been accused in pro-LTTE sites of being a TMVP international spokesman based in Denmark<sup>147</sup>. However, this could not be verified. In addition, France is also referenced as part of TMVP's geography, where a significant group apparently supported the split. It was the base of *Shinna Master*, considered among the ideologues of the split. Finally, there is also evidence of a network in Switzerland and indeed in India.

A short-lived yet nonetheless significant alliance was that made between Karuna and Devananda's (EPDP) combatants. The brief alliance was made clandestinely, although its break became public when Devananda feared a political backlash. The

---

<sup>145</sup> Personal Interview, R. Manoharan. London, 2012.

<sup>146</sup> Personal Interview, S. Krishna. London, 2012

<sup>147</sup> Correspondent for Asian Tribune.

latter feared being associated with a group increasingly portrayed in the press as a child conscripting and corrupt TMVP. This is what Devananda once said: “from the very start I came strongly to welcome Karuna, but now I’m not happy about his activities” (Farrel, 2007:17). Incidentally, Karuna and Devananda appeared in leaked cables from the US embassy, accused of plotting together in the assassination of parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham. That same cable suggests Karuna was behind the killing of parliamentarian Nadarajah Raviraj, and that he operated prostitution rings near IDP camps, where the women and children were forced in to prostitution.

Of course, another high profile alliance is TMVP’s association with the Sri Lankan armed forces. In particular, issues surrounding their joint operations in the so-called *Liberation of the East* are claimed, although vehemently denied by the government and scarcely ever proven with hard evidence. Having said that, it is worth mentioning TMVP’s official diary does state that on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2006 – a Saturday -, Pillayan, Jayam and other leaders met with Sarath Fonseka, then Sri Lankan Army Commander-. They met in one of TMVP’s Welikanda camps to discuss the partnership with the security forces and the work ahead. Issues regarding this known - yet obscured - alliance will repeatedly resurface throughout the next chapter’s discussions.

In terms of the representation of other armed actors within the lines of TMVP, they claim that around 80% of them were former LTTE. EPDP operated together with TMVP for a while, although only a couple of former EPDP cadres actually became TMVP members. Something similar happened with ENDLF, the group that formed with TMVP the alliance known as TIVM, with an estimated 15 ENDLF fighters operating directly under TMVP at a certain point. Furthermore, it is claimed that up to 50 PLOTE members joined, even though they distanced themselves from the split within official party politics.

Additionally, some eastern businessmen who found themselves affected by Jaffna dominance manifested some support to Karuna’s pledge. While the LTTE supported big businessmen from Jaffna, local traders such as Sathiyamoorthy resented this. Shopkeepers were given two choices: either pay huge sums in extortion to the LTTE and go broke, or work for them. The owner would also have to accept LTTE agents planted in his venture as employees. Inevitably, these ventures in Batticaloa received

favoured status. Given that Karuna was nevertheless associated with previous physical and economic harassment, there was not much overt local support anyway. Besides, for ordinary individuals, the calculation was simple: Karuna needed to show a new face and would not kill so easily. Prabhakaran would kill for sure. Maybe that is also why, having halted the LTTE practices of child conscription and extortion, Karuna found that local businessmen refused to give him the funds he so desperately needed at the very start of his revolt (UTHR(J), 2004).

While support in the East was difficult to find, in the western province, and particularly in Colombo, unsuspected alliances emerged. One example of this is the collaboration received by Buddhist Monk Vr. Uvatemme Sumana Thero, currently in custody after weapons and bombs were found at his Bodhirajarama Vharaya temple (Malgawatta, Colombo)<sup>148</sup>. Having a Buddhist monk working with the former military commander of the LTTE to set up a counterinsurgency remains hard to grasp for an outsider.

### 3.7. Wording and Imaging the Revolt

Thus far, we have seen how numbers, demographic characteristics, spaces, alliances and financial resources played a role in sustaining the revolt. However, all of these had to be accompanied by discursive and visual cultural tools in order to convince, entice and justify the split to others and themselves. As De Mel craftily wrote, war “is to be seen in the pockmarked walls of shelled buildings, read in posters and graffiti on the walls, and heard through songs played over the radio, all of which are conduits for how the ideology of militarism is shaped and shared (2007:156). Furthermore, in the same way Fuglerud commented for the LTTE, their visual expressions and poetic works provided them and the society under their control “a definite aesthetic quality worth reflecting on” (2011:71).

---

<sup>148</sup> *Ven. Uvatemme Sumana Thero & 4 Others Further Remanded in the Colombo Times*. March 17 2010.

### 3.7.1. 'Unmortal Truths'

It must have been soon after the revolt became publicly known that *Marcos* - a former LTTE child combatant (later on TMVP) - sat down together with another 260 combatants to listen and watch a video that Karuna had made:

I was in Vaharai when the video was shown to me. Karuna said in the video: 'why should Prabhakaran's son and daughter be allowed to study in London while we are here suffering in the Eastern Province?' Karuna also told how Prabhakaran requested 500 cadres from the East to go North. But within two days their fate was unknown. Prabhakaran then requested another 500 but Karuna refused. He was then summoned by Prabhakaran, but thought he would be killed and decided we [eastern cadres] had to separate from Prabhakaran. I believed his words because he was crying while speaking<sup>149</sup>.

A couple of years later, TMVP would launch an institutional and promotional video of their organisation. In a sense, this visual tool was used at three different levels: to connect leaders with combatants creating a cohesive and informed body; to connect the movement with civil society and more specifically the Diaspora as a way of legitimising as well as financing the revolt; and as an inwards celebration of a purpose and sense belonging.

The power of that medium is naturally found in the images, but let me nevertheless sketch in a few words what is presented to the viewer. It starts by thanking "Supreme Commander Pillayan, Uruthra Master, Pradeep Master, all warriors and publics", yet notably not Karuna. Then, TMVP's logo is formed out of a shooting gun, and the roar of the Tiger is heard. Subsequently, a white dove flies towards the viewer and the name of the video emerges "*Unmortal [sic] Truths*"...

The video proceeds by showing the beauty of the Eastern province, with its paddy fields, beaches and landscapes, as well as its Kovils, Churches and Mosques (although not the Buddhist temples). After showing schoolchildren and religious leaders, they state: "All these people need to live in peace, that's the motto of the TMVP". While this sentence is still being uttered, the image of very young combatants marching towards the camera is shown. Thereafter, a brief preview of 'naming the enemy': *the fascist Prabhakaran* is provisionally labelled, although not yet targeted. In between images of military operations, shooting practices and openings of TMVP offices, Jeyam, Markan, Pradeep Master, Uruthra Master and

---

<sup>149</sup> Personal Interview, alias Marcos. Batticaloa, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

Mangalan among others give their initial statements. The first image of Karuna appears, with TMVP speedboats in the background, and a few minutes later Pillayan is shown practicing with a semi-automatic rifle. Neither of them speaks in the video. A myriad of dead bodies and crying family members are subsequently presented, thereby denouncing the cruelty of Prabhakaran. At this point, Karuna becomes the focus, with his trajectory being appraised. We are told that during the CFA he understood the fight for Eelam as going beyond the destruction of the enemy, and that with Karuna's efforts "the barren land became greener and more developed".

Next, the legitimisation of the revolt is put in motion and so too the distribution of blame: Prabhakaran's orders of unnecessary killings during the CFA were disapproved by Karuna, who asked his leader to put a stop to it; but nothing is done because Pottu Amman (head of intelligence) and Nadesan (head of Police) are behind all this. Together with Tamilenth (Finance), they guided Prabhakaran in the wrong direction out of jealousy concerning the achievements and organisational capacity in the East under Karuna – so the viewer is told. Coupled to this explanation, a suggestive flashback is provided, presenting the case of Mahattaya and how Prabhakaran did not like his growing popularity. The argument is that he was assassinated under the pretext of false accusations. This story is then linked to the disappearance and killing of all Muslims from within the movement, to finally state: "In that same way Prabhakaran planned to kill Karuna Amman". The by now famous debacle of the eastern fighters sent North and Karuna's refusal to send more is addressed, followed by an explanation of his withdrawal as an act of kindness (Karuna means kindness) to avoid further "brotherhood killings".

TMVP's strength is subsequently shown: manpower, weaponry, training skills, motorbikes. Besides the constant display of dead bodies, two very disturbing images are presented: the execution of a man and the brutal torturing of another. Both are used to exemplify the viciousness of the LTTE; but just by having those images in their archives and deciding to show them the effect – at least on me - is almost the opposite: it becomes a reminder of what they themselves did whilst in the LTTE, and most likely part of how they operated as TMVP as well, albeit in relation to different target.

Then comes the video footage of the battle in Pannichenkerny (Vaharai area) mentioned earlier. Combatants seem to be wearing a green band around their pulse, as opposed to a black one as suggested by *Ernesto*. Perhaps his memory coloured

the atrocious experience as it was felt. The video ends with Karuna posing next to other TMVP leaders. Karuna and Pillayan appear laughing together at some point. Only a few months after those images were shot, that would no longer be the case.

### 3.7.2. Milk as Poison

Parallel to the institutional video, TMVP also launched two music CDs: the first called *Songs of the East*, which was presented on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2006. Jeyaraj remembers: “Pradeep Master, Theeban and I launched the first TMVP CD. It was on Karuna’s birthday. Everywhere we put a speaker. It was a big celebration, with firework. We made 3000 copies. Very famous that time. Some people gave us money for that CD: doctors, lawyers... then we sent the CD to UK, France, Switzerland, Germany, Malaysia, and India. This was recorded in India, the arrangements are made there, but the lyrics are mine”<sup>150</sup>.

The second recording, entitled *Rising Flower of the East*, was launched in February 2008. Here is an excerpt of this album’s second song:

Many hundreds of struggles; disappointment to many people; (We) did not get disheartened by seeing anything.  
Many, many distressing difficulties, Inexpressible miseries. Seeing these, our mind did not stop for anything....  
We ran and ran without respite. We searched for only one thing. We prayed for only one thing. Is he the one who’s going to kill me?  
Without knowing this, we were with him. (We) did not know whether it was day or night. We did not understand the outer world. We held aloft in our heart what was taught to us.  
You poured poison as milk into our mind. (Our) hands that should carry books carried something else. (Our) legs that should go towards the school went elsewhere.  
But today I have come out. I am upset having seen the reality. I see in front of my eyes people who are suffering. I am dismayed seeing life which is a mirage.  
We don’t want this. We don’t want this any longer

That one thing they prayed to was obviously Prabhakaran and Tamil Eelam as one. A life of devotion for him and the homeland, yet now He would try to kill them at all costs. Anxiety and ambiguity -though perhaps not intentionally so - are almost tangible in this song. Then, the powerful metaphor of poisoned minds fed with the sweet taste of indoctrination is revealed; and the lost youth, if not reclaimed, is at

---

<sup>150</sup> Personal Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj, 2010

least denounced. Textbooks - a crucial element in the last chapter of this book- is what they now claim they should have been carrying, instead of the guns with which they were fighting for only a mirage. The song's structure suggests a clamour of a younger generation rebelling against its elders.

That tune came just after an introduction in the CD, which conveys the institutional message to the listener. Such communication is therefore highly relevant for our exploration of the discursive strategies of legitimisation, mobilisation and motivation. The following passage is richer than generally expected concerning a group accused of lacking an elaborate discourse, or any kind of ideology for that matter:

These are not songs. They are true poems about the injustice caused to our people in recent times due to terrorism. They are poetic teardrops created gathering each tear shed by the Tamil people. Tamil people should not shed tears any longer. They should not live separated due to differences of ethnicity, religion or language. TMVP are those who have come up to unite all and lead them towards the political path and thereby create political leaderships.

We do not need violence hereafter. We do not need terrorism. TMVP are those who have come to stop all these and through a political solution, obtain a peaceful life for helpless Tamil.[...]. We, TMVP, are on your side. We will give our lives to voice your rights. We, TMVP are involved in a political journey towards peace because no others should face the injustice caused to the people of the eastern province, the denied rehabilitation, the oppressed rights, the snatched lives and political murders. We strongly declare that this journey will not go towards any personal and individual interest [...] The world for which TMVP is writing the constitution will be tomorrow's history. What this record contains are not songs. They are stepping stones of our people's journey. They are poetic drops engraved with the tears of the people of the East [...]The verses for our political journey in the future – The bridge of bondage to unite people of the three ethnicities – silent songs of our relatives who have died – The revolutionary rain of the Tamils living displaced

The sceptic reader may question whether such a message could even remotely echo among communities that are well aware of what was happening on the ground and what some TMVP members had done in the past. It is a valid argument, given that probably only few candid minds would fall prey to this type of attempt at legitimising the rebellion. However, it is worth considering the importance of such devices in creating internal unity and bringing serenity to those already involved, including those forcefully recruited. While these lyrical messages may indeed have had very limited effect in terms of convincing youths amongst civil society to voluntarily join TMVP,

they might have been crucial in reassuring those in the outfit that their life and participation had a meaning and justification.

### 3.7.3. From Rifles and Bullets to Rice, Hands and Sunrays

Many must be familiar with the LTTE's logo: a tiger surrounded by 33 bullets with two rifles across. It has provided plenty of elements for mystical speculation as exemplified by an article in the Daily Mirror, often cited thereafter, which highlights how the 33 bullets (never officially explained) could correspond to each year of the LTTE's struggle (1976-2008). The fact that there was not a 34<sup>th</sup> bullet corresponding to 2009 - the year in which they were defeated - is now seen as some kind of premonition. What might be perhaps less sensational yet of great analytical value is tracing the iconographic changes in the transition from the LTTE to TMVP.

**Figure 3.2 LTTE's Logo**



Source: <http://andamansaravanan.blogspot.nl>

First, let us recall a continuity already mentioned in Chapter Two, namely that the figure of the tiger is also still present in the name (remember P for Pulikal, tigers). The link between the figure of the tiger, the Tamil people and their struggle was crucial in keeping this "totem" alive. That aside, unnoticeable for many due to the imposing presence of the feline, everything else changed in TMVP's logo. 25 sunrays – one for each district in Sri Lanka, they tell me - replaced the bullets, while the sun itself evokes the East where it rises [or is it meant to symbolise a new dawn upon the 25 districts?].

The two rifles across are also no longer there; instead, two rice flowers surround the tiger, serving as a symbolic reference to the dependence on - and importance of -

rice for both the eastern province and the nation as a whole. Risking going too far, the rice flowers may additionally suggest a move from armed struggle (the LTTE rifles) to food as a metaphor for development. Finally, above the tiger there is a handshake, which according to Jeyaraj indicates unity, yet could also be extended to signify the intention of entering politics, attempting to leave the armed struggle behind.

**Figure 3.3 TMVP Logo**



Source: TMVP internal files

Given far less visibility was also the design of a new flag, which moved away from the monotonous LTTE red, to a yellow, green and red banner representing the three districts of the Eastern province and the three ethnic communities.

**Figure 3.4 TMVP Flag**



Source: TMVP internal files

Overall, it is safe to say that even if one understands the revolt as a selfish act, the effort and complexity in the logo's transformation shows how the need to mobilise, to create cohesion, meaning and justification became pivotal activities in TMVP's sustainability, converting the schism into a collective movement .

### 3.7.4. Waves of Meaning

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the first issue of TMVP's newspaper Tamil Alai was published on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2004, under its new editorial line. That issue featured an interview with Karuna with the heading *I will capture the East very soon*. "In fact, Azad recalls, "I never actually interviewed him. I prepared the questions and I provided the answers!"<sup>151</sup>

Azad was the only college graduate within the outfit, so he was invited to give some seminars in the Tivuchennai camps to 45 selected TMVP members: "I introduced things about the world: Israel, Palestina, Irish problem, Congo problem, East Timor problem... After, I came to the Sri Lankan problem. So I explained important agreements: 'Banda-Chelva' Pact agreement (1957) Dudley Chelvanayam agreement (1965); JVP problem; 1972 constitution; 1978 constitution; Black July, Indo Lanka Accord, Thimpu peace talks, Oslo, Tokyo peace talks...I explained why we broke from the Tigers, why we needed our homeland in eastern province. I am a good speaker; in school also I won some prizes"<sup>152</sup>.

In those training camps, leisure activities were not just about taking your mind off war; on the contrary, it was often a space to reinforce indoctrination. One such example is the performance of "Dramas" (theatrical plays), typically representing the LTTE's wrongdoings or making a mockery out of them. However, behind TMVP leaders' backs, the nascent organisation's purpose and structure was also challenged. For instance, *Ernesto* how, although he was given a copy of the TMVP video and music CD, together with other abducted boys they would actually sing *Eelamist* songs together while in the TMVP camps, in an act of defiance.

The newspaper and other cultural devices became crucial aspects in TMVP's activities. The articles depicted battles and other military operations, whilst also including political debates as well as some entertainment news. Interviews and editorial articles were printed providing further arguments for the split and their posterior actions. The following are excerpts of an article that appeared in November 2007, representative of how the legitimisation discourses were structured and

---

<sup>151</sup> Personal Interview, Mohamed Hanzeer [Azad Moulana]. 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

<sup>152</sup> Personal Interview, Mohamed Hanzeer [Azad Moulana]. 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

restructured, strategically adding new elements or twists. Note the way in which Karuna is portrayed as simply following the will of the men under his command when he defected.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> stage of the talks in Oslo, the government and the tigers agreed to a solution based on the federal system and Anton Balasingham signed the agreement on behalf of the tigers. Prabhakaran [...] forced Balasingham to tear up the agreement. In this regard, Karuna Amman tried to bring Prabhakaran to an accord and then realized that the latter will never agree to come to a settlement [...]. Karuna Amman gathered his commanders and cadres together in Thenakam and explained to them how crazy Prabhakaran was about war [...]. Those who understood the position decided to disband the eastern province LTTE's military division. Karuna Amman who accepted the decision of the commanders and cadres contacted the leadership and informed their decision.

Karuna Amman is completely different from Prabhakaran. Although many accusations have been piled up against him, Karuna Amman has the mental maturity to ask for forgiveness with an open heart for them all. This has brought about a situation where many people accept him<sup>153</sup>.

These waves of the revolt's meanings broke on to the shores of the public debate. But just as easily, they were pulled back by the strong undercurrents of war into the dark ocean of violence, disappearance, kidnapping and forced recruitment.

### 3.7.5. A Boat in a Political Sea

It may be claimed that a discursive and visual analysis extracts more out of the words and symbols than originally meant by the actors. This is exactly the reason why iconography and wording are so crucial to any social movement: their force resides in their capacity to condense an expected meaning, but even more so in their ability to evoke more than what one could anticipate. A new representational phase began once TMVP was consolidated, focusing on their formation as a political party. This required different discursive and visual skills and ultimately proved to be a much greater challenge in terms of mobilisation: it is one thing to get people to join or support armed action, yet quite another to convince thousands to vote for you.

How the transition into politics came about is the subject of the next chapter. Nevertheless, I would like to anticipate a few elements stemming from their textual and visual campaigning strategies. Why were they the better choice according to

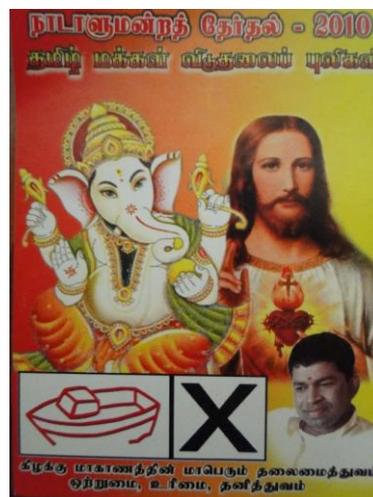
---

<sup>153</sup> In *Tamil Alai*. November 2007.

them? Who did they perceive as their potential constituency? How did they portray the competitors? Just as a sample, let me briefly expose, on the one hand, a visually eclectic yet revealing poster distributed mainly in Batticaloa; and on the other, an extract of an audiocassette that they played with loud speakers in their vans in the streets and roads of the Eastern Province.

The poster achieves three things: it reflects the target audience or potential constituency; it equates TMVP's leader Pillayan with divine figures; and it excludes a significant portion of the overall potential voters.

**Figure 3.5 TMVP Campaign Poster**



Source: author's photograph

Visually, TMVP immediately relinquishes any attempt at engaging the Muslim population. It does so by choosing to appeal to the population with religious imagery, yet excludes references to Islam (and also to Buddhism, but given that in the Batticaloa district the Sinhala population is less than 2%, it was electorally insignificant). It plays with a distinct demographic characteristic of Batticaloa, especially Batticaloa town: besides Hindus, they try to appeal to the relatively large Christian Tamil community. However, it remains intriguing that they chose for a religious language rather than finding a symbolic reference to *Tamilness*. Three reasons come to mind: a common *Tamilness* had been somewhat questioned with the split itself; religious iconography carries particular force; and finally, it may have allowed the alignment they were seeking of their leader, standing in the same stratum as the deities invoked.

As exemplified by the following excerpts, the strategy implemented in the campaigning audiocassette is somewhat different:

Oh, Tamil people! If each vote you cast is not for the TMVP but to another party, it means you are digging a pit and burying the Tamil community collectively in it. We have changed the undemocratic environment. In this Eastern province, the eastern sons are governing the eastern people. All of you should think because you have been giving your votes abundantly to the Alliance [TNA] for 60 years. How many thousands of kin and kith have we buried in this soil for our rights? [...] There are 45,000 widows in the eastern province. The Tamil National Alliance is obliged to give explanations for all this. [...] We have lived as orphans in this soil. [...] The parliamentary election to be held this time is a huge divine gift for the Tamils. We, the Tamil, should use this divine gift properly. [...] We had four TNA representatives from Batticaloa. When our problems were occurring, where were these four representatives? They were living luxurious lives in foreign countries. They were releasing announcements from Colombo. Did they hurry to this soil to extend support to us to work for the people and wipe out their sorrows?

On the contrary, the TMVP party has got on to the field and is providing services. There is no forgiveness at all for a decision not taken at the right time. Would you do sun worship after you have gone blind? [...] TMVP is making history in the eastern province. Let history say tomorrow that all the Tamils have got together and won victories in the parliamentary elections this time. Let us, the Tamils, be proud to be brave history makers.

Our motto is unity, rights, individuality.

Although the divine theme is used again, this message focuses on differentiating TMVP from its immediate contenders, the TNA. But once again the structure suggests a claimant youth breaking apart from the traditional practices of the elders. My point is that TMVP - an improvised movement; politically weak and under severe operational restrictions - still invested in creating a historical narrative of legitimisation, an embellishment of the great leader, enactments of the foolishness of the enemy, searched for collective belonging through music songs and spread their work through visual aids. True, without economic resources, greed and force, there can be no armed movement. Nonetheless, their dynamics cannot be captured without the exploration of the multifaceted paths towards the meaning-making that they embarked upon. A series of semantic alliances are performed within such a quest, connecting local dynamics with global discourses, national references with personal grievances, regional disputes with national politics. These attempts at meaning creation - and destruction - are just as vital for their subsistence. Overall, these exercises in semiosis serve as valuable input for the notion of semantic alliances, as presented towards the end of this book.

Despite such semantic efforts, TMVP jumped into the boat with thousands of followers but, as Chapter Four will show, they never made it to the shores of electoral success. It surely did not help that the boat in their campaigning logo seemed to be sinking...

Figure 3.5 TMVP 2010 Elections Logo



Source: TMVP internal files

### 3.8. Analytical Recapitulation

In this chapter, we explored TMVP's identity formation by addressing characteristics of participants beyond the leadership, by recording its spatial manifestations and by revealing the material and nonmaterial resources that made the new identity more-or-less sustainable. Emphasis was placed upon the importance of transcending static depictions of this social process, demanding instead the inclusion of its fluctuations. Therefore, variations in size and composition were incorporated into the analysis, thus exposing the strategic instrumentalisation of numbers and social categories.

Special attention was devoted to three crucial demographic features of TMVP: the number of combatants participating and the corresponding discursive contestations around it; women's absence and the implicated gendered transition in this new figuration; and the equally fundamental generational shift in power, responding to the overrepresentation of the youth in the armed organisation.

In spite of the undecidability of people's exact participation in the revolt, this chapter presented the possible numerical limits of membership, acknowledging first that we must distinguish between the total of eastern combatants within the LTTE at the eve

of the revolt, the number of those taking part in the split under Karuna's command, the founding members of the counterinsurgency operations and the number reached at the peak of TMVP's expansion when the group entered mainstream politics. As a result, it was established as a general reference that around 4000 fighters defected the LTTE in March 2004; many were soon thereafter disbanded, and once counterinsurgency operations were re-launched, they finally reached an estimated 2,500 combatants in 2008.

The discussion on manpower is important towards understanding why TMVP is categorically different from other Tamil militant movements and the only previous attempt of explicit dissidence within the LTTE. In fact, it has been shown how Karuna construed his defection and dissidence in differentiating it from the case of Mahattaya, which lacked the support of battle-hardened combatants to guarantee his survival. But addressing TMVP's size is also relevant to capture a sense of their impact on the immediate social world in which they operated. After all, each and every fighter that defected and later joined TMVP had family in the eastern province. The shockwaves of their dissidence penetrated, therefore, Sri Lanka's eastern civil society far deeper than any other splintering group. Finally, determining size is also pertinent to address the cost of the revolt and the design of public policies for their reintegration and participation in politics. Truth be told, the lack of careful analysis of this numerical fluctuation by policymakers is partially responsible for the rather ineffective programmes on disarmament and rehabilitation.

TMVP is also the embodiment of a gendered transition from insurgency to counterinsurgency. For TMVP, any relation between males and females became mediated by the relationship between civil society and the movement due to women's absence within the outfit, which necessarily transformed the dynamics of (among others) parenthood and the combatants' sexual behaviour. Having been a domain to enforce forms of discipline and codes of conduct under LTTE rule, gender suddenly vanished as a reference for participants' inner morality in TMVP's formation. Rather than determining internal routines, gender conditioned their engagement with the outside world among the new figuration, as well as the way in which they were judged as a movement.

To a certain extent, Karuna's decision of letting women go followed a logic of conservative purification that paradoxically facilitated the revival of women's role as resisting mothers or widows, interlocutors of the state and agents of remembrance

and accountability. Three female figures were highlighted as significant exceptions to women's absence in TMVP's imaginary: the female fighters who joined Karuna in his escape to Colombo, whose re-defection rendered them a gendered symbol of treason; Padmini, TMVP's political head in charge of combating their overwhelmingly masculine image; and finally Annai Poopathi, an external and historical reference serving the double symbolic function of linking TMVP to both her martyrdom for the Tamil cause and her critique of LTTE's aggression towards TELO (now reinterpreted as a violence towards easterners).

Continuing with salient demographic features, not only did TMVP bring together LTTE victims with former combatants of that very organisation, it also represented a shift in power within Tamil militancy. If LTTE's consolidation in 1976 implied the emergence of 'younger brothers' taking their elders' political resistance to the level of armed action, the 2004 schism brought one of their own 'younger brothers' in arms (Karuna) to a leadership position for the first time since armed action had erupted three decades earlier. In fact, TMVP is the result of such a shift and the producer of another. In a sense, TMVP accelerated time: the generational relay that previously demanded three decades only took four years within this new figuration. Actually, if the shift from Prabhakaran to Karuna is one from an elder brother to a younger brother, the transit from Karuna to Pillayan within TMVP is a full generational transfer (the latter being born long after the initial outbreak of violence). Anticipating the discussion presented in Chapter Six, whereas the power shift from Prabhakaran to Karuna is a transfer among 'siblings in arms' (from Generation 1 $\alpha$  to Generation 1 $\beta$ ), the move from Karuna to Pillayan is from G1 to G2.

In terms of funding, the Sri Lankan government (through some of its structures) adopted the role of main contributor for TMVP, mainly by providing them with weapons and logistical support. In addition, some of the structures of taxation and businesses run by the LTTE were kept by TMVP. In 2007, TMVP revenues were estimated to be USD 17 million a year, with the allowances of living and deceased members of the dissidence reflect the major registered expenditure.

But aside from the overall costs of financing the revolt, it is also suggestive to register what the distribution of expenses reveals about the group's reconfigured military role. From an insurgency that functioned in many ways as a regular army (due to its stable territorial control), with TMVP's emergence former eastern LTTE members transformed into a tactical counterinsurgency now with different operational

requirements. Examples of these include the explicitly distinguished rubrics of flashlights, vehicles and mobile telecommunication, all instructive of the abandonment of positional warfare, the focus on itinerancy and the preference of nocturnal target-specific missions typical of a government-backed militia.

Furthermore, beyond its indispensability in the dissidence's maintenance, money also played the following triple role: first, it was a major motivation behind the split; second, it became an incentive for some to join the splinter formation; and third, it actually developed into a major argument for TMVP's internal fragmentation. Whether or not Karuna was embezzling funds, the debates concerning the alleged investigation conditioned the understandings of the dissidence. On the other hand, Pillayan's dissatisfaction over LTTE's oversight into eastern assets actually helped him come to terms with his participation in the split. Several other combatants saw an opportunity for social mobility in the allowances that TMVP provided. However, the restructure of TMVP's financial arrangements and the expenditure of Karuna abroad eventually prompted the leader and deputy leader to clash, sponsored by external spoilers hoping to fish in trouble waters.

Moreover, the dissidence found spatial expression in five distinguishable ways: dividing the previously unitary Tamil Eelam into two spaces; developing new territorial control; materialising the revolt in certain locations; imbuing places with restructured symbolic and historical meaning; and finally, also generating a new diasporic network. These new cartographies became crucial weapons with which TMVP asserted its emerging identity, while forcing the LTTE's long-lasting architecture to crumble down. The rearranged spaces of power could indeed only be achieved through the establishment of critical alliances with individuals and collectivities willing to assist TMVP's rise. The Sri Lankan army, but also other Tamil militant groups such as ENDLF, PLOTE and EPDP and key members in the diaspora (like Krishna and Manoharan) configured this indispensable network.

Finally, the chapter discussed the textual and visual arsenal of the dissidence through a detailed analysis of videos and music records that they circulated, as well as the development of their flag, logos, campaign poster and some of the articles in their established newspaper, with the latter clearly being TMVP's most consistent propaganda machine. Each and every aspect analysed highlighted multiple meaning-making strategies to endow the dissidence with social significance beyond private interests. The discussion on the videos, first manufactured individually by Karuna

and later by TMVP as new collective, reveal the importance of the deployment of emotions in consolidating the revolt. They also project new semantic alliances to reimagine their justifications of violence and reassert their political project.

In short, this chapter has delved into what Weinstein (2007) refers to as the industrial organisation of rebellion. It addressed the question of how the armed group organised its violent enterprise by considering recruitment choices, command structures and the consolidation of instruments of control, governance and compliance. Furthermore, the strategies for engaging people beyond the movement were addressed, as well as their stratagems to secure economic endowments and social capital. Together, these structures engineered the dissidence's viability; a process traversed by "the formalisation of a set of expectations about who will do what for whom and when" (Weinstein, 2007:44), the final crystallisations of which form the subject of the next chapter.

This chapter exposed how the legitimisation of new forms of violence was stabilised and knitted into elaborated cultural products, but also how pre-existing routines of violence were implemented and re-presented to justify the new cycles of collective action (Schlichte, 2009:21). In other words, this chapter thoroughly depicted the way in which an intricate web of instrumental but also semantic alliances was weaved to redesign the country's constellations of violence.

## CHAPTER FOUR

---

### ***TMVP'S IMPLOSION AND PARAMILITARY DEMOCRACY***

"I have a secret for you", Pillayan confessed at the Chief Minister's residence in Batticaloa, while discussing their nexus with the Sri Lankan Government. The secret was that Pillayan went abroad for the first time in his life in October 2005, to the destination of Kovalam Beach (Kerala, India). He eventually reveals that he embarked upon this trip because Sri Lanka's current President Mahinda Rajapakse asked for TMVP's support during the Presidential election campaign of 2005. When approached, Pillayan replied he needed to discuss that with his leader Karuna Amman: "He was in India, so I went. The current Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapakse [the president's brother] went with me and another Sinhala person. We met Karuna and discussed the presidential election"<sup>154</sup>.

That was the first of two visits Pillayan paid to Karuna in India. The second was in Goa to discuss the safety of Karuna's family in mid-2006. Pottu Amman (LTTE intelligence chief) had allegedly come to know about their whereabouts, and thus it was up to Pillayan first to take them back to Sri Lanka, and subsequently to arrange for them to go to London and seek asylum. However, Pillayan argues that Pottu Amman did not know their location; it was just Karuna's way of getting his family to Europe<sup>155</sup>.

Pillayan's confession and these two trips serve as preludes to the discussion concerning the armed movement's transition into politics and the required codification of their practices.

Indeed, in the midst of extreme suspicion and continuing violence, TMVP had to develop a moral code to regulate members' internal and external behavior. Furthermore, it also had to construct and implement a kit of symbols in an attempt to transform the unstable and immediate power of violence into longer term and more

---

<sup>154</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

<sup>155</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

structured forms of domination. While much of this was pursued through unstable alliances as well as the wording and imaging efforts discussed in the previous chapter, a decisive step in which the new social boundaries were to be translated into canonical texts of morale and ideology was still needed.

This chapter focuses on the steps taken by TMVP to formally enter the political mainstream. It will address this group's political constitution and the provisions of internal regulations to their military wing. A discussion follows on TMVP's APRC proposals<sup>156</sup> - a crucial programmatic document -, succeeded by an assessment of TMVP's participation in the democratic arena. Along the way, explorations will be made into the movement's fragmentation, Karuna's detention in the UK and his eventual abandonment of this nascent political project.

Finally, as a symbolic closure of this journey into the intricacies of TMVP's emergence and impact, we will look into their first commemoration of fallen fighters: TMVP's own *Maavirar Naal (Heroes' Day)*. The stories and issues explored will take us beyond the armed organisation itself, allowing theoretical discussions on loyalty and political transitions in the sustainability of armed action.

However, as usual, let us first retake the events as they unfolded from where we left off in Chapter Three.

#### 4.1. Karuna's Return and the Liberation of the East

Karuna eventually returned to Sri Lanka from his partially covert exile in India, although it remains unclear when exactly he did so. It is public knowledge that he was present for the crucial TMVP summit held at Minneriya in March 2007; however, key testimonies suggest that he had already been staying in Colombo for a few months prior to that assembly. On 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006, TMVP's first Conference was

---

<sup>156</sup> All Party Representatives Committee. On 11<sup>th</sup> July 2006, President Mahinda Rajapaksa appointed a committee of representatives of the parties and mandated it to formulate a draft proposal for Constitutional reform. The Chairman of the APRC Prof. Tissa Vitharana presented a draft containing the main features to form the basis of a new constitution on 13th August 2007. This draft contained 21 Chapters, which were discussed reaching consensus in June 2010.

held in Colombo, and was seemingly attended by Karuna, as declared by former Secretary General Padmini and a.k.a. Krishna. This is further commensurable with an intelligence source claiming that Karuna came back to Sri Lanka in September 2006 (Farrel, 2007:17).

The relevance of Karuna's return lies not only in the establishment of a proper timeline; moreover, his comeback makes a difference given that several of the most crucial military operations took place from mid-2006 onwards. It was also from his comeback onwards that the internal rift developed and a new phase in this young movement was fuelled. Karuna's own take on this is as follows: "When I was in India the people here had no discipline, the TMVP people. No control. I called them, I organised very well, I changed some people and organised the political wing"<sup>157</sup>.

Around the time that Karuna returned, TMVP's military operations gained greater impetus, playing a vital role in many of the victories claimed by the Sri Lankan Army. As Pillayan recalls, it was in 2006 that they first went all the way into LTTE controlled areas:

Now the Sri Lankan government doesn't accept this. But really we were in front of the *Mavil Aru* battle. *Special Forces 1*, a special commando team came together with the TMVP team. They trained us for a night attack [...]; after we cleared the way the SL Army came in. The next day they claimed they had captured Mavil Aru. This created many clashes between the military commanders [of the SL Army] and TMVP, particularly with Azad. In fact, the former SLA spokesperson called Azad and gave him a warning telling him he could not claim this type of attacks.<sup>158</sup>

With the unofficial start of Eelam War IV in July 2006, the Army's essential objective was to cut the sea link between the LTTE's eastern bases and the Vanni, thus depriving the LTTE of the means to land troops and weapons in the east<sup>159</sup>. On 4<sup>th</sup> September 2006, the LTTE was ousted from Sampur (Trincomalee District) and thereby China Bay's Airfield and the naval base were no longer within LTTE artillery range. On 19<sup>th</sup> January 2007, the strategic and historic rebel stronghold of Vaharai (Batticaloa District) was also captured. That area's coastline was previously used by the rebels to bring in supply ships from South East Asia –the source of most of their

---

<sup>157</sup> Personal Interview, Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan [Karuna]. 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

<sup>158</sup> Personal Interview Sivanesanathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan] 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

<sup>159</sup> However, I believe that Eelam War IV can be seen to have started with Karuna's split.

weapons - and served as a base to launch maritime attacks against convoys supplying government forces stationed in the Jaffna peninsula (Farrel, 2007:15). The campaign continued with Operation *Niyathai Jaya* (definitive Victory) and the LTTE's political headquarters in the East –Kokkadichcholai - was captured on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2007. Finally, the rebels' last remaining stronghold in the Province (Thoppikala) was captured on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2007, bringing the entire East under government control for the first time since the early-1990s (Farrel, 2007:16).

However, battlefields, joint operations and shady alliances were not limited to the Eastern Province alone. United National Party (UNP) parliamentarian Lakshman Seneviratne accused retired Air Force Squadron Leader Nishantha Gajanayake of masterminding abductions, extortions and extra-judicial killings in Colombo, using Karuna combatants<sup>160</sup>. Two weeks after Seneviratne made his accusations during an emergency session in Parliament, the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) arrested Gajanayake, who had allegedly carried out the abduction and killing of two Tamil Red Cross employees on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2007. According to sources of the US embassy, the underlying motive was that one of them – supposedly a former Tiger operative - recognised Gajanayake as he was talking to Karuna's cadres in the lobby of a Colombo hotel<sup>161</sup>.

Gajanayake was indicted before the Colombo High Court on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2008 for abducting a Tamil businessman and his driver and taking a ransom of LKR. 6 million<sup>162</sup>. However, Gajanayake and his accomplices were released on bail and subsequently acquitted of all charges<sup>163</sup>. This notwithstanding, a Sinhala journalist who reported on TMVP activities (whose name I will omit here) actually confirmed to me that it was Gajanayake who put him in touch with Karuna's cadres and arranged for him to visit one of their camps<sup>164</sup>.

---

<sup>160</sup> Apparently on orders from Gotabhaya and with the assistance of police officers under Colombo Deputy-Inspector General of Police Rohan Abeywardene, although that link was never officially proven.

<sup>161</sup> Information disclosed through Wikileaks.

<sup>162</sup> He was also charged with conspiracy to abduct, abduction, extortion and aiding and abetting in the commission of the offences. See Fernando, S. 2008.

<sup>163</sup> The Sri Lanka Guardian. *Is Tamil Businessman abducted by Deputy Minister?* 12<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

<sup>164</sup> Personal Interview, alias Vira Herald. 2010.

Paradoxically, it was in the midst of such military, counterinsurgent and criminal activities that TMVP put forward several documents underscoring its intention to be consolidated as a political force.

## 4.2. The Magna Carta and the Nine Commandments

In January 2006, TMVP's Party Constitution was adopted with the following opening statement: "The TMVP strives for the achievement of equality, social and economic justice, community solidarity and freedom. It seeks to have these values reflected in the laws and institutions of Sri Lanka and in its relationship with all its citizens"<sup>165</sup>. Much of the document is devoted to procedural issues such as the establishment and operation of different bodies, including the Polit-Bureau or National Executive Council<sup>166</sup>. Moreover, it also contains articles dedicated to the ideological outlines of the party, establishing for instance that TMVP believes in democracy (section A 2.1.); that it shall represent the *Tamil speaking people* (section A 2.2); it shall represent the concerns of minorities (section A 2.3.); and strive for a more equal distribution of wealth and power (section A 2.4). Furthermore, TMVP claims commitment to the recognition of diverse identities and experiences (section A.2.5.) and believes in inter-community solidarity (section A 2.6.). Noticeable here is the desire to embrace diversity and go beyond limiting ethnic boundaries by attempting to reach out to other minorities, specifically the Tamil-speaking Muslims. In fact, in an article highlighting the importance of freedom, they explicitly state that TMVP is "committed to the preservation and promotion of the values and identity of Muslim people as a historic and thriving national minority" (section A2.8). Nonetheless, their indecisiveness regarding such matters simultaneously comes afloat with the second passage of article A.2.2 the Constitution stating that they will work towards achieving the *Tamil* quest for equality; or article C.1 establishing that acting members shall act in the interest of TMVP and for the benefit of the *Tamil people*.

Another significant element of this Constitution is that it gave normative form to Karuna's indirect proclamation of Tamil Eelam's death, by stating that TMVP

---

<sup>165</sup> In the Introduction of TMVP's Party Constitution (unpublished)

<sup>166</sup> The Polit Bureau or National Executive Council should consist of a maximum 15 members. There is also a 35 member Advisory Committee; District organisers, Divisional Committees and Village Committees. In total there are about 2000 members of the party. Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan Pillayan. April 2010.

“believes in the territorial integrity of the state of Sri Lanka”, while considering substantial devolution of power as sufficient guarantee for the rights of the minorities (A.2.9.). Finally, and perhaps incongruously, the newly created party made the following statement part of its constitution: “TMVP rejects the use of force, intimidation and violence as a means of achieving political aims in a democratic society. It also rejects all forms of corruption” (A 2.7.). The schizophrenia of a paramilitary cum political party was further rendered obvious with the evident distance between this text and the overall practices in Colombo and the Eastern Province. Clearly, the rules for the party were not the rules for the combatants. So what regulated the latter? A letter.

#### 4.2.1. The UNICEF Letter

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2007, TMVP’s General Secretary (Padmini) sent a letter to UNICEF with the *Regulations for the Military Division of the TMVP*. This UN agency became the recipient of such a letter after having established a basic report with the armed movement when Karuna returned hundreds of child soldiers years earlier; moreover, when TMVP started recruiting once again, UNICEF were among those exerting the most political pressure on the armed outfit. The nine rules captured in that letter speak both to the hierarchy of prohibitions (and thus to what is catalogued as major concerns by TMVP leadership) as well as to what was likely to be part of the daily routines (for one codifies mainly what actually occurs). The regulations are as follows:

**Table 4.1 TMVP Military Wing Regulations**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If one commits murder he shall be removed from the organisation and handed over to the police.</li> <li>2. Those found involved in sexual abuse shall immediately be removed from the organisation and handed over to the police.</li> <li>3. Those found involved in child abuse shall immediately be removed from the organisation and handed over to the police</li> <li>4. Those found involved in looting shall immediately be removed from the organisation and handed over to the police. The organisation will take steps to return the loot to the owner thereof.</li> <li>5. Smoking and consuming liquor both are completely prohibited and those found involved shall be immediately removed from the organisation.</li> <li>6. Those who circumvent highway rules shall be handed to the Traffic Police. If death</li> </ol> |
|---|

occurs due to an accident, the organisation will grant a sum of LKR. 100,000 as compensation to the family of the deceased. If the person subjected to the accident sustains injuries, his medical expenses will be borne by the organization.

7. Those who are found involved in women abuse shall be immediately removed from the organisation.
8. If one conscripts children to the force he shall immediately be subjected to the punishments within the military structure.
9. The following factors will be considered when enlisting people for the military structure:
  - a. He should be above 18 years of age.
  - b. Submitting his Birth Certificate should prove that he is above 18 years of age.
  - c. Those who join the military division of TMVP should do so with full consent.

Source: TMVP letter to UNICEF taken from internal records

A few considerations regarding these regulations are required. Unsurprisingly, murder comes first on the list of prohibitions; however, it does not specify what exactly constitutes murder in a paramilitary organisation and what “legitimate” killing would be. It may be a fair assumption that what was punishable were killings of unauthorised targets and/or using TMVP’s name and cover to settle personal disputes: in other words, any killing that could not be conceived as serving a military purpose in a self-defence and counter insurgency campaign.

We have discussed TMVP’s gendered transition and its redefinition of the paramilitary-civil society relationship in the previous chapter. One plausible corollary of this alteration is the apparent increase in sexual abuse, which, though unproven, is often pointed out by local practitioners and activists in the East. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the leadership was quick to list this as a major offence, together with the third rule against child abuse. An additional distinction is made between *sexual abuse* and *women abuse*, yet whereas most previous offences imply being handed to the police, regulation 7 - abusing women - only involves the consequence of being removed from the organisation. It is perhaps commendable that there is a difference established between regulations 2 and 7 (the latter presumably attending to psychological abuse and non-sexual physical violence). However, what is harder to grasp is the differentiation in punishment, suggesting nonsexual violence against women to be if not a minor then at least a secondary offence.

Many claim to have witnessed TMVP members drinking and smoking, particularly around the Batticaloa lagoon. Whether such behaviour is explained as an act of defiance, a symptom of loss of purpose or a manifestation of the breakdown of discipline, it certainly dominates the external portrayals of TMVP members' conduct and is only reinforced by its explicit prohibition in this set of regulations. One must not forget that, besides being a gendered transition in which masculinity was continuously reasserted, TMVP's emergence was also a "generational" shift. Drinking and smoking are behaviours that can be considered as attempts to reinforce a new rebellious young male identity formation, challenging previous suppression and reconfiguring - as well as testing - the moral boundaries.

The presence of traffic offences in the regulations may initially provoke surprise; yet a series of arguments can be put forward to explain it, offering indirect insights into key daily routines within the organisation. First, TMVP's operations, legitimacy, symbolic power and assertion of masculinity heavily relied on their vehicles and the velocity achieved with them. As a force operating more like a police squad than an army, patrolling the streets was a major component of the paramilitary's activities, with its high-speed motorbikes and feared white vans. In this sense, TMVP's material and symbolic practices primarily occurred on the road. Thus, reflecting an important part of daily routines, it was deemed necessary to regulate traffic behaviour.

The presence of sanctions related to traffic rules may also suggest something else. Perhaps this inclusion was equally meant to communicate that they *were* part of society, hence subsumed to some rules of law that non-combatants can relate to. Extreme as their measures may be, none are meant as random actions: they still want to convey a sense of belonging to the community that they claim to defend. Furthermore, TMVP cannot compensate for the practices which they believe to exist (combat and counterinsurgent killing), but they can afford to show a sense of remorse or "no harm meant" in the area of death where military and political value can be least associated with: a road accident, for example. In a sense, announcing compensations can provide a sense of integrity, which I imagine they hoped would contribute to the build-up of legitimacy. Whether such an increase of legitimacy was actually attained is a different matter.

Another practice around which many of TMVP's daily activities revolved was (child) recruitment: abducting, training, indoctrinating, paying, providing visiting hours, accompanying them to home visits, sending compensation money to the family and

dealing with the resilient mothers. Strangely (given the recipient of this letter), it is the offence with the least grave punishment, resulting neither in the expulsion of the organisation nor in its surrender to the police. Two examples of what punishment for child recruitment may entail are provided in the letter: the offender is either made to cook for three months, or forced to engage in farming work for no less than three months.

Aside from this codified disregard of what is a major offence in international circles, the description of the specific punishments also reveals what is deemed insulting for a TMVP combatant to engage in. For instance, the negative value attributed to cooking once again exposes how the reinvention of masculinity (due to women's disappearance from the organisation) did not translate into the reassessment or reinstatement of traditionally female tasks; on the contrary, it became a marker of hierarchical and moral differentiation among men. In its turn, farming, was transformed from a normally respected occupation into a denigrating one, plausibly denoting an attribution of passivity to that occupation in contrast to the immediacy, visibility and - in their eyes - modernity of their 'weaponised' livelihood.

Despite their apparent simplicity and regardless of the level of accomplishment, through these regulations TMVP sought to construe a discipline, morale and certain ethics, while theoretically acknowledging an external authority to which members could be held accountable. In any case, if certain violations were committed, combatants could be threatened to be handed over to the police. This is at least theoretically a significant change compared to the LTTE, where there was no authority outside the movement, but rather only branches of themselves.

### 4.3. The Minneriya Summit and TMVP's Implosion

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2007, under the mango trees of the *Agri Holiday Resort* in Minneriya,<sup>167</sup> Karuna met most combatants for the first time<sup>168</sup>. Surprisingly, the fact that the date of this summit marked the third anniversary of Karuna's revolt went largely unnoticed in the media. As it turns out, however, this anniversary did not have its expected

---

<sup>167</sup> Hingurakoda farm owned by CIC Holdings, a private conglomerate dealing with agricultural produce and chemicals. The fact that a clandestine counterinsurgency movement could hold a summit there does raise the issue of the involvement of the private sector.

<sup>168</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan], 2010

ritual force of continuity, but would instead end up becoming a symbol of instability. This was the case because, while steps were taken towards a consolidation of the political wing, an internal rift was also making its way to the spotlight; with violence pertaining to that division appearing soon after.

Karuna's presence in Sri Lanka became public knowledge on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2007, when he made a series of statements to the media. It was reported that Karuna went to chair the ceremony of the latest "badge" of TMVP's newly trained recruits. What was remarkable about his reappearance was that while addressing his fighters he professedly uttered two sentences of great importance in TMVP's political reorientation. He said: "We believe today in the rule of law, democracy and pluralism. *Sri Lanka is our motherland*"; and later added that "our military wing is a *self-defence force* to protect ourselves from the *oppressive regime* of the Vanni Tigers led by Prabhakaran"<sup>169</sup>. This is significant in many ways: *Sri Lanka is our motherland* is in itself a powerful statement in the context of the island's secessionist civil war. It is also the completion of a series of discursive steps taking the obliteration of LTTE's project to its final demise. From a negative configuration wherein Tamil Eelam is no longer achievable, Karuna shifted to the even more defiant positive affirmation of the government's project: the consolidation of Sri Lanka as the only motherland in which Tamils - even former Tamil rebels - would have to find their place.

The second statement characterising TMVP as a self-defence force yet also actively fighting the oppressive regime of Prabhakaran also fulfilled several purposes. It manifested a sense of fighting out of necessity rather than choice, hence portraying themselves above all as victims rather perpetrators. Moreover, it presented the use of force as inevitable, while manifesting a longing for submitting (eventually) to the rule of law. The statement also allowed them - albeit in slightly contradictory fashion with the above - to break free from a sense of passiveness and imagine themselves as the new liberation movement. In this way, TMVP fighters could combine the images of victimhood and heroism in the construction of their public identity. Finally, in a media interview that followed soon after, Karuna stated: "Today we represent a section of the Tamil People"<sup>170</sup>; a phrase with which TMVP's public identity became a distinctly political one.

---

<sup>169</sup> Asian Tribune, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2007, emphasis mine.

<sup>170</sup>In *Sunday Times*, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2007. Reproduced in SATP ([www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org)).

While these events and pronouncements were projected outwards, internally the Minneriya meeting was about the restructure of the outfit, and particularly its financial flows. TMVP's coffers (initially under the supervision of Pillayan's trusted man Uruthra) were subsequently transferred to Inniyabarathi, a man faithful to Karuna. While money was certainly an issue, this was principally a matter of reasserting authority and regaining control. However, some have suggested that outsiders such as the LTTE or the Military intelligence actually engineered the inner split. In both cases, manipulation was allegedly undertaken through bribes or other forms of pressure. Nonetheless, Azad Moulana insists in characterising the rift as ideological in nature: 'Karuna changed his ideology' he said<sup>171</sup>. The ideological transformation essentially referred to a turn into self-interest in contrast to Pillayan's alleged genuine concern with the collective wellbeing of the Tamils.

In a later encounter, Pillayan himself offered a more detailed prologue to the schism:

The first time I met Karuna in India I saw Karuna's children playing each with their own laptop (three laptops). By that time Karuna had asked me to buy a recording camera. So I bought a new camera in India -nearly 6 lakhs Indian Rupees, a very expensive camera. I gave it to Karuna. The second time I went to meet him in India I saw his youngest son playing with the camera. Each month I sent a lot of money to Karuna. While we are fighting against the Tigers and working very hard to collect money, Karuna is wasting it. So after Karuna's family was sent to London, I limited Karuna's monthly allowance, because now he was just one man, no? [...] I never told the cadres about Karuna's waste of money. But some knew<sup>172</sup>.

In Pillayan's eyes, Karuna's financial restructure performed during the Minneriya meeting was payback for reducing the leader's allowance. Karuna -The Chief Minister argues - "was never really thinking about TMVP becoming a political party. He was thinking of collecting the money, enjoy [life] and give a show to the world. His talk was big but his mentality was very little"<sup>173</sup>.

Padmini's take on the internal divisions is also quite illustrative. She recalls:

---

<sup>171</sup> Personal Interview, Mohamed Hanzeer [Azad Moulana]. 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

<sup>172</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

<sup>173</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

Chuti came to my floor and said: don't you know there's a huge problem between Pillayan's and Karuna's people? There is a big split [...] and you are here uploading news? I actually didn't know about these things. Then I called Karuna Amman and asked him. He said "yes Pillayan doesn't understand anything; he's acting like a fool". Then I called Pillayan and he said exactly the same thing: "Karuna is acting like a fool". I then contacted the government. They told me: "You be calm, we are trying to patch things up' [...]. Pillayan told me "if you take my side you must vacate the Colombo office and come with me to Trincomalee". I said to him I will remain here in Colombo [...]. Then Pillayan told me: No, you have to take one side. You cannot keep talking to both of us. Either you take mine or his side, that's your wish but you have to choose.

She believes that this tension arose because Pillayan allegedly said to Karuna that he was in it for the money, sending all of it to his wife, while salaries were not being paid and fighters could not be fed. "I have no idea if it was true", Padmini clarifies. "What I *can* say... [she hesitates] as I told you some cadres were sent to Colombo office; well they didn't receive their salaries... That I can say. They struggled a lot"<sup>174</sup>.

As the situation developed, Padmini felt she could no longer cope and consequently decided to move to India, the only way out suggested by Pillayan. Then, just before her departure, Karuna called her on the phone and announced that he was in London. She replied: "you are in London?! While we are here in Colombo?! What is then our position?"<sup>175</sup> Karuna's suggestion was to handle the pressure, but Padmini felt she could not. She stayed for around three months in India.

Putting aside the motives behind the schism, Padmini's testimony clearly illustrates how a progressive alignment of commanders took place, expressing (willingly or coerced) their loyalties to either Karuna or Pillayan. The tensions until then, manifested in organisational and discursive terms, would soon be embodied in a short yet significant violent outburst and geographical redistribution of control. Unfortunately, the main protagonists - Karuna and Pillayan - remained vague when I invited them to discuss the details of the incidents. However, some journalists managed to discern (something that proved hard to corroborate) the following:

Karuna's restructuring at Minneriya was deemed insufficient to guarantee his monopoly of authority within the outfit, so he undertook two simultaneous actions to

---

<sup>174</sup> Personal Interview, Sivagheeta Prabhakaran [Padmini]. 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

<sup>175</sup> Personal Interview, Sivagheeta Prabhakaran [Padmini]. 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

try to neutralise Pillayan's imprint on the movement for good. He summoned Pillayan to Colombo, allegedly to sort the disputes out; while at the same time calling Seelan (intelligence chief) and Sindujan (military commander Ampara and Commander of the Deep Penetrating Force) to a meeting in the East with his trusted man Inniyabarathi. Whilst entering the outskirts of Colombo on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2007, Pillayan received a telephone call. It transpired that Inniyabarathi's men had killed Sindujan; but an injured Seelan had somehow managed to escape and warn others. Therefore, Pillayan immediately returned to the east, escaping from 20 Karuna loyalists who were waiting to arrest him upon his arrival at the venue in Colombo<sup>176</sup>.

Consequently, TMVP's territory and internal solidarity fragmented into two sets: Pillayan and his loyalists, with Trincomalee as a base; and Karuna loyalists, distributed between Batticaloa and Ampara (with Karuna remaining in Colombo for a while before going abroad again). Figures like the Secretary General (Padmini) and the official spokesperson (Azad) were left in an impossible position. The latter recalls that once he opted for the side of Pillayan, Karuna explicitly threatened him on the phone: "straight forwardly he said to me I will kill you in Colombo or anywhere"<sup>177</sup>. With a smile in his face, Azad mentions that he was later threatened again once Karuna had already been appointed Member of Parliament. He then warned Azad: "you are going against me, you are giving too much information, I will take action against that". Meanwhile, the government and military were also incapable or unwilling to take sides, given that they needed Pillayan's support to retake Toppikala in the East and Karuna to capture Elephant Pass in the North (Rutnam, 2007).

Initially, all bets within this standoff were on Karuna as he represented the 'brand'. However, as time went on, loyalties towards Pillayan appeared stronger than expected. The first numbers of combatants believed to have sought refuge in Trincomalee with Pillayan were around 300, although in the midst of the discursive clash, his followers eventually claimed that they were 860 out of the total TMVP force of 1,200 at the time: "We have enough strength to chase out Karuna from TMVP and take over the entire Eastern province. Therefore Karuna must apologise for his

---

<sup>176</sup> Later that week, Sindujan's father was also killed, seemingly for pointing towards Inniyabarathi and Karuna as the forces behind his son's murder. See "Open warfare between Karuna and his deputy Pillaiyan" in *Asiantribune*, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2007. See also "Karuna faction kills the father of Sinthujan" in *Asiantribune*, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

<sup>177</sup> Personal Interview, Mohamed Hanzeer [Azad Moulana]. 2010

misdeeds and leave the country”<sup>178</sup>. Conversely, former TMVP general secretary Padmini swiftly dismissed this when I interviewed her, arguing that those loyal to Karuna (Thileepan, Inniyabarathi, Riyaseelan) were in charge of the larger military camps and thus had a larger number of fighters under their command. Once again, the value of numbers is apparent in the discursive (re)construction and contestation of legitimacy.

A few months after the Minneriya meeting, it seemed that the tensions were slowly being appeased and Pillayan himself allegedly helped Karuna to go to the UK. Imagine then his surprise when he discovered that - just before leaving - Karuna had appointed *Mangalan Master* rather than him as commander! A press release after a central committee meeting soon confirmed this decision.

With this renewed crisis, once again TMVP seemed to be heading for defeat by mid-2007, just like three years earlier; although this time, the challenge came from within the outfit. Its implosion appeared to be its political death before it was even born as a proper party. But then, as we will see later in this chapter, a sudden arrest unexpectedly revitalised TMVP’s aspirations and offered the movement the necessary respite to complete its transition into mainstream politics.

#### 4.4. Fluid Loyalties: a Conceptual Vignette

The notion of loyalty emerges as vital in TMVP’s double schism. In fact, the dynamics of loyalty seem to be a crucial factor in the sustainability and transformation of every armed group (or any social formation, for that matter). Yet, my sense is that the treatment of the concept in the existent literature is inadequate. The term is most commonly used as a proxy of mobilisation or deterring forces. Loyalty is said to materialise, for instance, when participants see an economic or existential gain in remaining within an outfit (1); when members display obedience out of fear or self-preservation - a “forced loyalty” of sorts (2); and perhaps most convincingly, loyalty is associated with a leader’s charismatic capacity (3). In such a scheme, loyalty is the followers’ response to the leaders’ charisma (Vinci, 2006).

The problem with the first two approaches is that they refer to social actions masquerading for loyalty, despite both actually being about something else. Hence, they cannot be part of loyalty’s description. While it is true that the calculation of

---

<sup>178</sup> In *Asiantribune*. 30<sup>th</sup> May 30 2007.

benefits and the implementation of coercive strategies are decisive characters in determining participation and permanence in an armed group, they are analytically discernible from loyalty, which should be possible to conceptualise in its own terms. In the above, interest is false loyalty, whereas 'forced loyalty' is - as I see it - oxymoronic.

Loyalty is more than a signifier of obligations and reciprocities, a cognitive shortcut of sorts that allows actors to quickly understand a relationship. Loyalty is in fact an emotion that serves a justification for action behaviour and cognition (Connor, 2007:3-5).

Finally, the problem with aligning loyalty with charisma is that it seems to impose a highly unequal exchange. Charisma is construed as a spell upon followers, which renders loyalty as nothing more than the manipulated, almost unconscious tagging-along of the enchanted. Without expelling power from the equation, it seems to me that loyalty instead is precisely about the simultaneous reinstatement *and* suspension of hierarchy; an acceptance of order yet an emotive equaliser.

Human resource management in armed groups is fundamental and the key can indeed be found in the proper administration of grief, interest, obedience and fear. Loyalty is none of those, although a group and individual within it can certainly capitalise from loyalty and the consolidation of committed soldiers. However, I insist that loyalty is neither interest nor obedience. The power of the concept relies in its capacity to refer to what goes beyond submission, egoism or survival.

I also discard the notion of loyalty based on preexisting allegiances resulting from being members of the same social categories or sharing a pre-established ideology, the falsity of which has been masterfully exposed by Kalyvas' work (2006). Instead, I imagine loyalty as a product of specific and continued interaction: a signature of being together in the world. In its existence as a distinct source of social capital and spring of trust, it lives in the vicinity of faith and friendship. Moreover, it is also an attachment to a social boundary and the creation of solidarity. Loyalty is thus about identity. Our social roles and memberships become valuable to actors precisely when emotional attachment – such as that of loyalty - is developed (Connor, 2007:49).

Having said that, loyalty is indeed menaced by the factors others use to define it: greed, fear, indoctrination. The instability of loyalty is caused by the fact that it takes

longevity and intensity to emerge, yet very little to break. In fact, in many respects the problem of loyalty is connected to that of honour, and negatively to betrayal, arguably the leitmotif in almost any genealogy of an armed group's formation and disintegration. Just as betrayal contributes considerably to the dynamics of armed groups, even in its fragility, loyalty accounts for much of their sustainability over time. We may not always feel comfortable imagining the existence and solidity of strong emotional bonds among members of militias; rather, we find it far easier to conceive them as exclusively egotistic, deranged, manipulative or instinctive beings, dispossessed from their human capacity to love the other. However, uneasy as it is to admit it, that illusive concept/feeling also finds ground among men that kill. It is only for this reason that betrayal can function as a constant transformative engine.

Is TMVP's second degree of fragmentation explicable in the same way as the first? Can the Karuna-led arguments and circumstances for defection explain the internal TMVP rift between Pillayan and Karuna? Not entirely, but perhaps partly so. First, in as far as it was a top down induced defection, the first schism allowed the emergence of the second due to the former's rather fragile initial cohesion and conviction. Second, TMVP's internal rift owes much to a factor that recurrently affects loyalty in a negative sense: distance. Loyalty builds upon sharing experiences together; therefore, Karuna's separation from both the eastern territory and the combatants provided little input for loyalty to consolidate in this new endeavour.

But why then did some remain with Karuna? Possibly such a choice is indeed grounded in private and material calculations, although I suspect that a generational connection also played a role. A great deal of those who stayed with Karuna may not have shared much with him under TMVP, but they did once whilst they were still part of the LTTE. Among that senior segment of the later TMVP, loyalty had a larger incubation period.

The field of conflict studies has much to gain from a deeper and more sophisticated development of a theory on loyalty, treating the concept not as a proxy of hidden material interests, doctrinal routines or fear, but rather as a complex and emotionally charged social feature. The above reflects a possible entry point, although its full unraveling is a task for the future. For now, it is time to return to TMVP's discursive industry and track how they manufactured the viability of their entrance into the political field.

## 4.5. The APRC Proposals

On 28<sup>th</sup> May 2007, Padmini and her husband handed over their contribution to the APRC proposals (with Karuna being notably absent)<sup>179</sup>. Several aspects of that document are worth highlighting. First, it is immediately made clear that TMVP considered the devolution of powers to the provincial councils as the basis for the solution to the Sri Lankan conflict. Second, it considered “that the role of ethnicity and religion in the political life of the nation should be minimised and individual and human rights permitted [to] predominate”; a somewhat strange statement from a party having “Tamil” as its first word in their acronym. Third, they demanded that state-aided colonisation in the North and East should be put to a halt. Finally, they strategically - yet nevertheless surprisingly - recognised the importance of Muslims’ political aspirations and the need to enable the return of those evicted from the North and East. TMVP even suggested that those who were responsible for such acts should apologise to the Muslim community, which was taken by many as rather ironic given the often claimed role Karuna that played in that ordeal. However, perhaps the most fascinating aspect of TMVP’s APRC proposals is the unexpected and relatively sophisticated historical reading given as a preamble to their specific recommendations. This is interesting both for its content and that it points to the participation of an unnamed group of intellectuals in the writings of the proposals. An extended quote is pivotal in illustrating TMVP’s official reading of the conflict’s history:

Three decades of civil war and the accompanying mindless, brutal violence has consumed over eighty thousand valuable lives, forced the migration of hundreds and thousands of people and left equal numbers internally displaced. (...)The underlying cause for the problems besetting our nation is our single inability to find acceptable and durable solutions to the problems of the minorities, particularly the Tamils and other Tamil-speaking people.

The dawn of independence for Sri Lanka opened a dark chapter in the history of the Tamils [...]The Tamils have become a people under constant siege and on the edge of destruction as a distinct people in terms of numbers, language and culture, livelihood and areas of habitation reflecting their way of life. The majoritarian and highly centralized system of governance in independent Sri Lanka has singularly failed to meet the aspirations of the minorities [...] This narrow minded, majoritarian, parochial

---

<sup>179</sup> All Party Representatives Committee (APRC), Proposals chaired by Tissa Vitharana was meant to put forward solutions to the conflict from all the political forces. However, several key parties withdrew their participation.

approach to governance has led to an ugly civil war and challenges the very existence of Sri Lanka as one nation-state.

The Tamil people were forced to fight for their due rights because recourse to any other civilized means was denied to them by the political system operating in Sri Lanka [...] The armed struggle, which commenced with the only aim of defending the Tamil identity and upholding Tamil rights, was gradually hijacked by a self-centered and visionless group, which made violence its founding philosophy and debased and undermined the struggle itself [...] This approach of the LTTE and its leader has only aggravated the problems of the Tamils.

[...]

Depending on defeating the LTTE only by engaging it in war will at best provide a temporary respite and not provide an enduring solution. [...] we of the TMVP were in the frontlines of the Tamil armed struggle for nearly thirty years [...] we have moved away from the armed struggle and have decided to pursue a democratic path to find lasting solutions to the problem of our people<sup>180</sup>

On the same day that the proposals were handed over, a newspaper article appeared with the following headline: "Pillayan gives 'final warning' to Karuna"<sup>181</sup>. Thus, while Padmini and her husband were posing for the camera with APRC Chairman Vitharana as they handed their political recommendations to end the conflict, the head and the deputy of TMVP were on the brink of a military stand off<sup>182</sup>.

#### 4.6. Interlude of Defiance, Suffering and Resilience

TMVP's implosion also and foremost had external consequences, leaving civilians caught up in the factions' display of intimidating faculties. As both wings were in need of strengthening their base, forced recruitment and abduction increased even after expelling The LTTE from the Eastern Province. The following account illustrates four dimensions of the intricacies of TMVP violence: first, the violence exerted upon a survivor reflects the consequences of counterinsurgency tactics in their fight against the LTTE; second, the testimony below projects the violent implications for civil society of the schism within TMVP; third, the account epitomises the connivance of

---

<sup>180</sup> TMVP All Party Representative Committee proposals. pp. 1-6.

<sup>181</sup> AsianTribune. 28<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

<sup>182</sup> Use to expand on notions of the past and history of conflict? Maybe taking things from roots of conflict] Interesting also an absence in the historical reading: the east (recheck the document)!

the state in violent practices; and finally, this case also reflects the criminal character of at least one sector within TMVP.

On 7<sup>th</sup> September 2007, two months after the final eastern battle, a white van came to Manuela's home,<sup>183</sup> located just a hundred metres from a Police station. She was dragged into the van, beaten and blindfolded while the Special Task Force of the Sri Lanka police passively witnessed the incident. She was subsequently taken to the Thirukovil camp under the command of TMVP's Inniyabarathi (currently SLFP's district organiser). Manuela argues that she was targeted because a humanitarian agency - considering she had two female daughters - allocated her two houses as compensation for her damaged one due to the 2004 Tsunami. The Karuna Group forcibly took over one of her houses. She insisted that they should get out, but they would not. Consequently, with the help of local youths she took all their things out. She defied, but probably more damaging, she ridiculed TMVP's authority.

Ambivalence took over as I recorded the next part of her story. The problem of representing violence suddenly became most salient to me, and I wondered if I was bordering what Valentine Daniel (1996) calls a pornography of violence in reproducing the horrific details that she recounted. However, I feared the alternative of omitting her narrative even more. She wanted the horrendousness of what was done to her to be registered, particularly by an outsider like myself. Moreover, in this attempt at capturing the emergence of a group formation that radically changed the dynamics of Sri Lanka's civil war, plenty of space has been given for the voices of those who incurred in violence. Sterilising the words of those upon which that violence was executed would represent a double betrayal and would render me complicit in their forsakenness.

Besides, the horridness marking the limits of the communicable is also constitutive of TMVP's genesis and continuation: it exposes their identity formation as the configuration and cohabitation of political agency, excessive violence and confusion. Certainly, Daniel's pursuit of a way to communicate "shocking events without giving in to a desire to shock" is as commendable as it is necessary. However, in an *anthropography* of violence wherein perpetrators' lives and accounts occupy such a prominent place, a moment of shock is necessary: both for the reader and writer.

---

<sup>183</sup> Evidently not her real name.

After all, re-humanising the other is also about exposing its - our - capacity for the unimaginable.

Rather than evaluating the truthfulness of Manuela's account, I treat her storytelling as the articulation of her private re-mastering of her experience with the public retelling of war. In other words, aside from the political act of providing a space for it, my concern with her story is less with a truthfulness I cannot verify, and more with the limits of what TMVP's emergence may have implied in people's lives, as well as their victims' attempts at transforming private meanings into public ones (Jackson, 2002).

Once in the TMVP camp – Manuela's account continues -, she was stripped naked and tortured with a pipe and a wire. Nails were put in her fingers and a plastic bag filled with petrol was repeatedly placed over her head. At some point, they sent a young boy to rape her. Manuela recalls that three captured men and another abducted woman were there experiencing the same as her. Eventually, they were put in separate rooms and kept without food for 13 days. When she asked for water, they gave her urine. On the 14<sup>th</sup> day, they were taken to the beach, where they shot and killed the other woman and three men in front of Manuela. She was left last because they were still trying to get some kind of information from her. Just then, Inniyabarathi received a phone call inviting him to a function where he could hand over some sweets to schoolchildren. They all went for the function and left a boy guarding her. She cried and begged him to spare her life and let her go. The boy said that he was forcefully recruited and that he would be killed if he let her go. Manuela somehow convinced him and decided to run away together. Weeks later, she heard that they had caught and executed the boy<sup>184</sup>.

Manuela's story does not end there, but in order to keep her voice present in TMVP's formation, we will suspend her narrative and jump instead to the journey Inniyabarathi's boss was about to embark upon at the same time.

---

<sup>184</sup> For several of the interviews held with Manuela, I was aided in the translation by Earl Barthelot.

## 4.7. The Rebel's Rebel Behind Bars

“Six months after the Minneriya meeting I went to the UK”, Karuna tells me. Indeed, it has been established that TMVP’s first leader arrived at Heathrow Airport on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2007<sup>185</sup>. But how could the former military commander of the LTTE and the then head of a para-state counterinsurgency force enter the UK?

On 30<sup>th</sup> August 2007, the Sri Lankan government issued a diplomatic passport for Karuna, who would be known to the UK border Agency as *Kokila Gunawardena*. Karuna’s new alter ego claimed to be the Director General of Wildlife Conservation attached to the Ministry of Environment, travelling to attend a climate change conference in Britain. Allegedly, Aviation Deputy Chief Shalitha Wijesundera personally accompanied Karuna to the airplane at Bandaranaike International Airport, collecting him at the main Air force checkpoint at 1.45am. Karuna then boarded Sri Lankan Airlines flight UL505 scheduled to depart at 2.15am (Jayasundera, 2008).

After successfully passing through immigration, “Kokila” took a cab to Kensington in London and met with his family, who had been living there lawfully as asylum-seekers. He enjoyed his new-found anonymity for several weeks and enrolled in an English course. However, one Friday morning started differently. Two and a half years later, here is how Karuna described that day to me:

Suddenly, one day early morning, a big noise came. I always get up early and make tea for the kids. That day was no different till with a big noise the British police broke the door and entered the house. They shouted at me. Then I also shouted and said this is not the way, there are children here, three children... And you break the door... if you call me I can come. I’m not a thief, I didn’t do anything I am here to see my family. These are not the British rules... I said I can’t come with you, where is the arrest order? You show me. Then they sat down, they explained. I said: You say you are the number one democratic country but then you come and break the door like this? I was a leader, I fought for Tamil rights, now I’m working with the government; I’m working for the Tamil people. You can’t go like this. You want to deal with immigration issues; that’s a different thing. My wife called immigration and finally they brought the arrest order. Ok, now I can challenge you at the court, no problem. Then I went with them<sup>186</sup>.

---

<sup>185</sup> Sunday Leader. 11<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

<sup>186</sup> Personal Interview, Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan [Karuna]. 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

That was the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2007. He was detained under the Immigration and Asylum Act of 1974 and subsequently taken to the Collingwood Detention centre. He remained there until 22<sup>nd</sup> December, when he was officially arrested for breach of Section 25 of the Identity Cards Act No. 15 of 2006, before being sentenced to nine months' imprisonment on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008. After his sentence, he was sent to Wormwood Scrub prison in central London, spending four and a half months there. "First time in my life I went to prison!" Karuna tells me, laughing. He was kept in the B-Wing where no one knew who he was. People actually thought that he was from India, including Jerry, his 28 year old cellmate sentenced for stealing a handbag. I try to tempt him into highlighting someone in particular as being responsible for leaking the information of his stay in the UK, but all I get is: "The British told me they got information from Sri Lanka. But they didn't mention more. Lots of enemies are here. They like me but oppose the government. Someone from inside the government could have been". He hesitates and closes the discussion saying: "I know, but I can't tell".

Needless to say, Karuna's arrest led to quite some commotion, mainly in two ways: on the one hand, it exposed the Sri Lankan government's direct participation going all the way to the very heart of the regime; while on the other, it sparked international attempts at getting Karuna convicted for war crimes or crimes against humanity. Indeed, Lucia Withers from the Coalition to Stop Child Soldiers considered Karuna's possible prosecution as a potential "exemplary" case, while Human Rights Watch Jo Becker expressed that Karuna should be held accountable for his crimes committed, urging the UK government to pursue prosecution under UK law (Jeyaraj, 2007). Yet somehow, Karuna's detention neither destabilised the regime nor resulted in his conviction for crimes against humanity. For reasons that are unclear, human rights organisations failed to gather sufficient proof to hold Karuna for any crime other than illegally entering the country. Meanwhile, the fact that the diplomatic passport he had travelled with and the visa obtained were both authentic was inexplicably (though admittedly cunningly so) brushed away from public debate soon after the revelations were made. This was despite the fact that it was not just a case of forged documentation obtained by a man operating outside the law, but rather that of a democratically elected government of a sovereign state grossly violating international regulations. As DBS Jeyaraj (2007) once stated, "If anyone needed proof of connivance between the regime and TMVP this was it". In fact, Karuna's official statement to the metropolitan police explicitly stated that the Sri Lankan Defense

Secretary and brother to the President of Sri Lanka - Gotabaya Rajapakse - arranged everything for him. In turn, Gotabaya admitted having attempted to aid Karuna in the past after being approached by him about visiting his family, although he claimed to have abandoned the idea a long time ago (Samarasinghe, 2007).

Karuna's arrest unleashed even more revelations. On 15<sup>th</sup> June 2007, when the expulsion of the LTTE from the eastern Province was imminent, President Mahinda Rajapakse, Douglas Devananda (EPDP) and head of Asian Tribune K.T. Rajasingham (former SLFP organiser in Point Pedro and old friend of the president) met in Geneva in the Presidential Suite (room 1727) of the Intercontinental Hotel. As disclosed in an email sent by Rajasingham to Sunimal Fernando, they were devising a plan to dispose of Karuna (Samarasinghe, 2007). Rajasingham had clearly offered a media platform for Karuna's defection functioning as a vehicle for its legitimisation in the past, and he was also the one mediating between Karuna, the UN and HRW. Yet, now Rajasingham was involved in stoking the flames of the fratricidal war between Karuna and Pillayan.

Karuna's arrests became a milestone in TMVP's history as an instance of profound revelations; as a turning point in the inner power disputes facilitating the group's entrance into the political arena; as a personal rite of passage for Karuna (in the militant's minds, no revolutionary is truly one if not once imprisoned); and finally, as a gateway, putting Sri Lanka's Eastern Province dynamics on the global map.

#### 4.8. Elections and the Eastern Province Paramilitary Democracy

Back on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2006, the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka ruled that the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces established by the Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987 was "null and void without having any legal effect"<sup>187</sup>. This verdict meant the separation of the administrative functions of the two provinces that, conjointly with the expulsion of the LTTE from the Eastern Province by mid-2007, were the two critical features enabling the region for the forthcoming provincial and general elections.

---

<sup>187</sup> In *the Daily News*. 17<sup>th</sup> October 2006.

According to Pillayan, the announcement of the elections motivated his faction's capture of the Karuna camps. Hoping to avoid a military confrontation, they created a plan: "We captured 8 camps simultaneously at 2am. Unfortunately Theeliban, one of Karuna's leaders, committed suicide. He came from some other place and when he saw us he was in shock and took the cyanide capsule"<sup>188</sup>.

Meanwhile, Pillayan never lost contact with Padmini. In fact, he eventually sent Azad Moulana to Chennai to persuade her to return to Sri Lanka and contest in the upcoming elections. Padmini recalls: "Azad came and we had a long discussion. I said I needed some time. On 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008, I landed back in Sri Lanka"<sup>189</sup>.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008, TMVP was officially recognised as a political party by the Sri Lanka's Election Commission, after its nomination was accepted for the approaching polls<sup>190</sup>. Kumaraswamy Nandagopan (a.k.a. Ragu,) was subsequently nominated as the party president. Elections for nine local authorities within the Batticaloa District were held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008. TMVP contested independently for eight local bodies (*Pradesha Sabhas*) and as part of the government alliance (UPFA) for the Batticaloa Town Municipal Council. TMVP received the highest votes in all Pradesha Sabhas, securing a total of 61 seats around the district<sup>191</sup>. The UPFA obtained 11 seats in the contest for the Municipal Council of Batticaloa town, with Padmini achieving the highest preference vote (4722) and therefore appointed Mayor of Batticaloa Town.

Nevertheless, this overwhelming success has to be qualified. First, arguing that the prevailing conditions were not suitable for holding free and fair elections, two crucial political parties - UNP and TNA - decided not to contest (Paffrel, 2008). Second, the overt continuation of TMVP's armed actions and thus the potential use of their weapons for intimidation during the polls seriously called the transparency of the process into question. Nonetheless, from a merely instrumental perspective, TMVP's debut in the political sphere could not have gone better. Setting aside for a moment the conditions in which they were cast, TMVP obtained a total of 70,003 votes where

---

<sup>188</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. 2010.

<sup>189</sup> Personal Interview, Sivagheeta Prabhakaran [Padmini]. 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

<sup>190</sup> In Asiantribune. 24<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

<sup>191</sup> 10 seats in Eravurpattu; 6 in Korelaipattu; 10 in Korelaipattu North; 7 in Manmunai South & Ervuilpattu; 7 in Manmunnai; 6 in Manmunai West; 8 Manmunai South-West; and 7 in Poraitivu Pattu.

it contested independently. To such a number, one can at least add the preference votes of Padmini and Pradeep Master contesting for the Batticaloa Municipal Council for TMVP yet under the UPFA banner, reaching a total of at least 78,530 votes. To put this in perspective, consider for example that the TNA (the main Tamil political party) obtained a total of 126,398 in the entire Eastern Province in the general elections of 2010. Hence, back in 2008, TMVP seemed to seriously challenge TNA's monopoly over the eastern Tamils' vote.

Provincial Council elections were held a month later, on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2008, with TMVP contesting as part of the UPFA, together winning 20 of 37 seats (the 20 includes two bonus seats). UNP contested this time, but the TNA did not. Of those 20 seats, seven belonged to TMVP members, among them Pradeep Master (Edwin Silva Krishnantharajah), who renounced to his seat in the Municipal Council in order to contest for the Provincial Council, Jayam (Nagalingam Thiraviyam) and Pillayan (Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan), who would be sworn in as Chief Minister on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2008<sup>192</sup>. His appointment was controversial, not just given his LTTE and TMVP trajectory, but also because the ruling party had promised to give the Chief Ministerial post to candidate M.L.A.M. Hisbullah if more Muslims than Tamils were elected as representatives in the council (as was the case). However, under the circumstances, appointing a Muslim Chief Minister was hardly an option for the government. As pointed out in the Sunday Leader, this would have given the LTTE the chance to say that while [the Tamil] TMVP aided the government in recapturing the east, they in turn handed over the province to the Muslims<sup>193</sup>.

Notwithstanding the fraudulent and violent character of the elections, TMVP's debut in official politics could hardly offer better results for them, given that they secured the Chief ministerial position of the East and the province's most important mayoralty. As such, this entrance into the political sphere deepened the progressive erasure of the collective dream of Eelam; an erasure soon articulated with the government's policy framework of the "*the revival of the East*" structured around the promise of democracy and development.

---

<sup>192</sup> Three of whom later defected with Karuna to SLFP: Nawarathnaraja, Pushparajah, Selvarajah

<sup>193</sup> Sunday Leader. 18<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

With the rapid and simultaneous construction of TMVP as both a paramilitary force and political party, inhabitants of the East and scholars alike were reminded of the continuities between violence and politics, as well as the ambiguous but recurrent connection between violence and state-building. If the LTTE was a movement “dedicated to the construction of the new world of Tamil Eelam and the destruction of the illegitimate state of Sri Lanka” (Spencer, 2007:99), TMVP’s emergence killed the future state-to-be. Instead, a new imagined ‘lost paradise’ was to be retrieved amongst the bullets and ballots of democracy.

#### 4.9. Karuna’s Return, TMVP’s DDR and their Electoral Fiasco

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008, only a month and a half after Pillayan’s appointment as Chief Minister, Karuna was deported back to Sri Lanka<sup>194</sup>. A couple of days later, the Government chaired a meeting headed by Gotabaya, who summoned both Pillayan and Karuna’s men in an effort to juggle the factions’ tensions. According to Padmini, the government said that if they wanted any legal advice on how to change the leadership to Karuna, they could speak to the Election Commissioner. “Everyone said yes, yes and shook hands [but] after we came back to Batticaloa, Pillayan summoned a meeting and said ‘No way, we are not going to join hands with Karuna, we can’t do that. Ragu will remain the leader of the party; we can’t give that seat to Karuna, no way’”<sup>195</sup>.

##### 4.9.1. Karuna’s comeback and TMVP’s Disarmament

Karuna was appointed Member of Parliament on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2008, profiting from a seat left vacant when parliamentarian Wasantha Samarasinghe (JVP) left for a provincial post. The JVP (then part of the government coalition) claimed in vain that vacant seats were meant to be appointed to the same party.

Shortly after Karuna’s appointment, Ragu, the then TMVP president, was killed in the outskirts of Colombo. Although the media largely attributed the incident to the LTTE, Pillayan remained otherwise convinced. However, the alternative is left unnamed.

---

<sup>194</sup> Daily Mirror. 4<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

<sup>195</sup> Personal Interview, Sivagheeta Prabhakaran [Padmini]. 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

That incident proved to be a turning point for TMVP, as it became obvious that continuing as a movement with two factions was untenable. Indeed, almost five years to the day after his revolt (9<sup>th</sup> March 2009), Karuna quit the movement that he had initiated and joined the SLFP together with 2,000 supporters. He was appointed (non-cabinet) Minister for National Integration and Reconciliation: an ironic final *coup de grace* in Eelam's slow death.

The day before Karuna's official defection and foreseeing LTTE's military defeat, TMVP under Pillayan's leadership took part in an official disarmament ceremony at the Webber Stadium in Batticaloa. However, they only handed over 200 weapons to the security forces. This was a derisory number considering their fighting force, yet a start nonetheless. From a very pragmatic perspective, although ambiguous and frameless, the trajectory of TMVP may be perceived as a prolonged, intricate and violent process of demobilisation in an unorthodox (but not uncommon) order: splitting first, entering politics in alliance with the government later and, only after together defeating the remaining armed actor, partially disarming and demobilising. However, from a juridical and ethical perspective, the process exposed a critical void in terms of transitional justice mechanisms and restorative approaches.

TMVP actually approached the IOM to develop a reintegration scheme for its former combatants. The intention of the original IOM project was to design and implement a framework for the reintegration of 3,000 former TMVP combatants. Without questioning the IOM's efforts (although with the privilege of hindsight), previous chapters have revealed that this was already a faulty departing point based on an erroneous estimate of combatants. The error is actually threefold: a failure to initially distinguish between former LTTE combatants under Karuna's command at the time of the split (demobilised before or just after the Verugal battle hence never becoming officially part of TMVP); inaccuracy in TMVP's actual size; and/or the failure to distinguish between combatants and support networks, which is a basic premise of international standards of DDR programmes and international humanitarian law.

The project was meant to be structured as *Community Revitalization through the Information Counseling & Referral Services (ICRS)*, which was supposed to offer access to information, technical assistance, training, referrals to employment and small grants to the former combatants. The goal was to create capacity building and sustainable income generating opportunities. IOM believed that obtaining the necessary funds for assisting TMVP combatants in such a way would serve as

catalyst for an end to hostilities in the North and recognise TMVP's "contribution to Peace and stability".

However, the project seeking an initial 4 million USD managed to cover only 439 former combatants by 2011. Generally speaking, the international community was reticent to contribute at the time to such a process. Moreover, the 2008 world financial crisis severely affected the programme by among others, forcing a reversal of the initially offered job trainings for a large proportion of former combatants in South Korea. The project was also affected by a lack of transparency and clarity in the selection of beneficiaries, given that many among those in the initial listings turned out not to be TMVP combatants at all, as even Pillayan would eventually admit.

The programme's main problem was the absence of a policy framework and strategic state planning around it. First, the government had no intention to link the process to a parallel structure of Transitional justice, although admittedly this is a fairly common situation. Second, there was not a clear conditional linkage between demobilisation and disarmament and the possible obtained benefits. The resulting partial demobilisation thus became a perpetuation of armed action, not as the antithesis but rather the prelude of politics.

#### 4.9.2. Voted Miscalculation

The complications and ambiguities of the reintegration programme with the IOM did not impede TMVP's participation in the electoral contest. In fact, the results in their first race for local and provincial government reflected a promising launch of their political trajectory, although their electoral success was not to last long. On 7<sup>th</sup> March 2010, pending local authority elections were held in the East. TMVP contested in five, obtaining only three seats with a total of 3,973 votes<sup>196</sup>.

---

<sup>196</sup> Koralepattu West (TMVP came in 4<sup>th</sup> with 491 votes after UPFA, UNP and SLMC, no seat); Naveethanveli pradesha sabha (TMVP 3<sup>rd</sup> with 1769 votes after TNA and SLMC, above UPFA and UNP! Gaining 1 seat); Alaiyadivembu pradesha sabha (TMVP came in 4<sup>th</sup> with 859 votes. After TNA, UPFA and independent group (Ampara) 1 seat; Trincomalee urban council (with 327 votes TMVP came in 7<sup>th</sup> a massive defeat); Verugal pradesha sabha (TMVP came in third with 527 votes gaining 1 seat. Lost to TNA and UPFA, which probably means Karuna managed to mobilise more than Pillayan).

This proved to be only a prelude to the upcoming disappointment of the Parliamentary elections of 8<sup>th</sup> April 2010. While they had managed to capture well over 70,000 votes during the local authority elections of 2008, this time in the general elections (and thus national setting) TMVP received only 20,888 votes. Several factors contributed to this defeat, including the fact that TNA was now contesting. But surely the euphoria and misplaced confidence stemming from their first victories were also crucial, together with Karuna's departure taking a large portion of his patronage network with him. The latter also influenced the poor results indirectly by causing a general loss of credibility with his new defection and probably also by reducing TMVP's unveiled coercive capacity. In an optimistic reading, one could perhaps argue their electoral defeat may have been the result of gradually less tainted and shady practices of intimidation. However, my fieldwork also suggests that a decisive factor leading to their electoral failure in 2010 was actually their political inexperience, as illustrated by their campaigning strategies that I witnessed and discuss below.

#### 4.9.3. Ethnographic Excursion: A day in TMVP's Campaign

Whilst preparing another session to capture TMVP's routines, I was invited to conduct interviews in the Vavunativu–Unichai area while travelling with them during their electoral campaign. This was convenient for my efforts in gathering life histories, particularly because there Jeyaraj grew up and joined the LTTE, thus presenting an opportunity to revisit his memory landscapes. But I was also very much aware of the need to establish clear boundaries regarding my presence. It was important to negotiate their attitudes, but also for me to ensure that I would not succumb to the temptation of blindly following data collection opportunities without assessing their impact. Consequently, prior to agreeing, I categorically insisted that they could not refer to my presence as a political strategy of legitimisation. Furthermore, I also made it clear that I would maintain a prudent distance, most often remaining inside the vehicle and possibly outside people's view. In case people noticed me, they were to refer to me simply as an international observer not associated with TMVP in any way. I had to sacrifice the recording of both the wording of their campaign in their face-to-face interactions with the electorate, as well as the latter's vocal response. Instead, I was limited to the observation of body language, messages spoken aloud and the reflections and behaviour of the TMVP members back in the vehicle.

However, these restrictions prompted me to highlight the journey itself as a valuable ethnographic entry.

It was around 10.30am when we started the ride<sup>197</sup>. In the van were six TMVP members and one police officer. Of the six members, three had recently joined. Two had just graduated from St Michael's College and the more senior member (perhaps in his early thirties) used to work for the ICRC. Although friendly, he was also very cautious and did not want to reveal his exact position within TMVP. It was the first and only time that we met. Almost apologetically, he mentioned that he joined only 6 months ago, which I believe was his way of telling me he did not take part in any violent operations.

We went through Vavunativu and passed the bridge where a crucial battle was held by the LTTE, in which Jeyaraj took part. A few miles later, he showed me the place where he saw someone being shot for the first time. We continued towards Unichai, where we stopped for around 15 minutes. Some of them went to the houses, while Jeyaraj and I retold his life history. But they soon had to keep on moving, stopping at almost every house along the way to leave some pamphlets, give a short explanation and request them to "*vote for the boat*". Back in the car, one of them explained that they were also conveying another message: since this entire region is all formerly LTTE controlled territory, they emphasised that the tigers were not dead, but that in fact *they* were the rightful inheritors of their struggle; they were *The Tigers*, but now fighting for the Tamil people in politics.

In between stops, they played a cassette conveying TMVP's political message, an extract of which was presented in Chapter Three. Nonetheless, let me register here again a few additional lines, given that they were the soundtrack to this campaigning journey:

My dear brothers and sisters! The TMVP has gone into the political field alone this time in the parliamentary elections to be held on April 8<sup>th</sup> [...] What have Tamil people achieved on this soil in 60 years? We have become disheartened by many defeats, politically for 60 years and militarily for 30 [...] Dear relatives! Let each vote you cast be to the boat symbol which is the symbol of Tamils' self-respect. What have we accomplished in the eastern soil by having had 22 members of parliament from the National Alliance [TNA]? They stirred up people in the name of rights and pushed them all towards death. TMVP is standing with

---

<sup>197</sup> Most of this section is taken from my fieldwork notes, entrance 1st April 2010.

the people and amidst the people [...] Ten years from now, this eastern province will change into a place comparable to a foreign country. TMVP is journeying with you for this. Ours is a sacred journey [...] The Competition is between TMVP and TNA in Batticaloa District. Each vote given to the house symbol [TNA] will be detrimental to this country [...] Scholars, dear businessmen, young men and women, mothers, fathers, dear boys and girls, all of you have a duty to support TMVP. This is because TMVP is a party created for you. TMVP is making history in the eastern province. Let us, Tamils, be proud to be brave history makers. Through that bravery, the TMVP will win

After a few hours of driving around with the cassette continuously playing, they showed me the Unichai tank and found a spot to take a bath. Keeping my distance and resisting repeated invitations to join their splashing break, I suddenly saw them - often through the lens of my camera - again just as boys. Literature on conflict and specifically on child soldiering is replete with references to the lost innocence of children engaged in violent practices. However, what I saw that day was rather exemplary of the cohabitation of playful naiveté and deadly threat. We want to believe that the one excludes the other; but it doesn't, not even after years of violence or in the passage to adulthood and into politics. The multi-layered dimensions of experience allows a versatility in which oblivion is not even required for childish play, war memories and political engagement to operate at the same time within the same individual.

Electoral campaigning continued after the break, and at the end I was taken to Jeyaraj's old home, where I met his mother, grandmother, father and brothers, one of whom was very young. Explaining the age gap, Jeyaraj said to me: 'my parents thought I was going to die, so they created my replacement'.

Jeyaraj showed me the LTTE intelligence camp where he used to go and play when he was only 9. Then, somewhere under the shadow of a mango tree, we continued the interview, accompanied by Lawrence. Perhaps surprised by many of the revealed histories, the latter at some point explained that those involved in TMVP may know that history but only someone like me could write that story without getting into serious trouble. Time will tell if he was right. We all went back to the house as Jeyaraj's mother had prepared a late lunch. We returned through the Dambulla road and arrived on the main road again at Chenkalady. Jeyaraj drove and sang all the way back.

Just a few days after the elections, I spoke with Jeyaraj again. He said: “we had 7,000 rejected votes. Some people didn’t know how to cast the vote. TNA campaigned saying they would get Tamil Eelam... They told people Prabhakaran is abroad; don’t worry he will come back in a couple of years”<sup>198</sup>. I also spoke to Jeyam: “In order to show our identification with Tamils we contested independently. Our loss is the loss of the people. We put inappropriate people in the nomination list to contest in the election. Most of TMVP’s votes were to my wife; over 10,000”<sup>199</sup>. And again, Jeyaraj: “TNA is not doing anything here. They sit for five years in parliament, use their phones, put their headset, listen to music and dance; but no development, no work. We worked from the very beginning. We are doing 75% of the work in the east. With the 7,000 rejected votes we would have had a seat. This is people’s failure, not TMVP’s”<sup>200</sup>.

#### 4.10. Closure: TMVP Heroes’ Day

10<sup>th</sup> April 2011, one year after the Parliamentary elections. I leave my motorbike and hire a tuk-tuk instead. Taking the road back to Batticaloa in the dark could be tricky and travelling together with TMVP members to such a public display felt inappropriate. Besides, I had been in one of their white vans before and it turned out to be the most frightening experience. Not only due to the spectre of what they had done to others in such vehicles, although that awareness did haunt me; but rather because I feared not surviving the madness of their driving.

When I arrive at the venue, arrangements were still underway, allowing me to see the *mise en scène* of memorialisation. It is certainly a magnificent spot for an act of remembrance: the rock might not be *Sigiriya*<sup>201</sup> but it still imposes itself upon the surrounding landscape; a tombstone rising out of the plain shores of the Verugal river.

---

<sup>198</sup> Personal Interview, Jehanandan Jeyaraj. April 2010.

<sup>199</sup> Personal Interview, Jeyam. 2010

<sup>200</sup> Interview, Jeyaraj. 2010.

<sup>201</sup> Sigiriya (or Lion Rock) rises from the plains of the central Matale district and is now a UNESCO Heritage site.

Tall red and yellow flags mark the ceremonial space to the East side of the A15 road, a few miles North from Verugal town. Between the asphalt and the rock, the space is arranged as a parterre, with the exception of the southernmost corner. There, 207 sticks with a white cloth on top are lined up in a quasi-square symbolising the fallen heroes (clearly emulating LTTE practice). On the southern side of the top of the rock, there is a pedestal. To the North, seats are being arranged for the VIP's and speakers. I soon realise that TMVP members in charge of the organisation are behind the rock: a natural backstage. I look for a familiar face, but I fail to recognise anyone so I use their absence to shoot some pictures. I exchange smiles with curious policemen, TMVP members and their families. Some of them help me to climb to the top of the rock in a friendly yet silent and economic act of courtesy. Finally, I spot Jeyaraj and attempt to become his shadow, but I realise that I am burdening him as he is obviously busy arranging speeches and the music for the event.

A School band arrives at the site in their uniform and prepare for their performance (weeks later, as I visited a school in Vaharai to gather data on staff and students' knowledge of conflict, some of them recognised me. The initial awkwardness dissipated as I noticed that the shared moment actually relaxed the interaction, often rigidly ruled by deference). Meanwhile, on the front side, two young men soak the white clothes on the 207 sticks in petrol, whilst nine buses full of people arrive.

A crowd of between 300 to 400 people slowly seeks seating. I return backstage, where I am introduced to a man well versed in English. He turned out to be Ragu's elder brother (assassinated former president of TMVP). But the interview is suspended at around 4pm, when the two biggest personalities associated with this commemoration arrive: Jayam and Pillayan, the latter with his entire security entourage. The media is also present and a freelance journalist providing news for Virakesari, Rupavahini and Shakti asks me which international media outlet I work for. I hastily respond that I am a researcher and before he can ask further questions, I escape using the excuse of things being about to start. As I join the seated audience, one of TMVP's music CD's animates the venue. Three flags are hoisted: the Sri Lankan, the Eastern Province and TMVP's, the guiding trilogy of this research.

A master of ceremonies opens the event, soon followed by a performance by six young women in traditional dance outfit. Senior TMVP members sitting on top display

their white sarongs while a red/yellow ribbon hangs around their neck. Eventually, Pillayan speaks from the small pedestal provided, behind him a banner with a candle illuminating the words Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal, Verugal Battle and the 7<sup>th</sup> Heroes' day anniversary.

Today is a holy day when we remember our eminent heroes who paved the way for the rebirth and political distinctiveness of our community [...]

It was the genocide that was staged seven years from today in this place on this very same day that paved the way for the huge political rebirth of our community.[.] The Eastern Province was considered only as a machine producing human resources [...]. History will always remember that this decision that was taken seven years ago was not one that we took willingly but it was forced upon us as a necessity [...] In one night we were made traitors by the perverse domineering people abroad [...]

We hoped our justifiable aspirations would be sorted out amicably. But we were shattered when we were accused of aggression. This was like an unforgettable and unforgivable thunder-bolt. Our people who came forward to fight and sacrifice themselves for the liberation of our community were deceitfully killed here on this bank of River Verugal [...]

The order for this was not given by strangers but by people belonging to our same race. There'd been divisions before but they were all solved through discussion. All those cases happened in Jaffna and the Vanni jungles. However, since we are from the eastern province, they thought they could do anything and then justify their action [...]

Because of that, considering our people's basic rights, political aspirations and economic needs, we took the first step to achieve them on the path to the South [...] Today we have the power to bargain assertively and individually for our people's rights and development. We have not blended with the government [...] Democracy has been established here as a result of the sacrifices of our dear brave heroes [...] I take the liberty to call upon you, my relatives, to come and unite for the sake of our unity, rights and distinctiveness. Thank you. Vanakkam. Unity! Rights! Distinctiveness!<sup>202</sup>

As Pillayan ends his speech, a significant portion of the crowd suddenly stands up and walks towards the 207 sticks. On the rock, Pillayan makes his way towards a large torch waiting to be lit by him. The moment of collective mourning has arrived. The ritual's logic and aesthetics clearly emulate LTTE practice, which I take to be simultaneously an act of heritage and subversion: is there something more transgressive than using the commemorative practices of the *Enemy* in remembrance of its victims? A church upon a pagan altar.

---

<sup>202</sup> Pillayan's speech recorded by author (9<sup>th</sup> April 2011) and translated by research assistant N.Hamead.

After some travails, the large flame finally flickers in the announcing dusk and the 207 lower lights soon follow its lead. A woman's bawl fills the sky as the sun sets on the horizon. I find my spot in between the rock's summit and the ground, trying to capture in picture and video what happens above and below. I zoom into the faces, expressing a range from genuine grievance to mere obedience, when suddenly, while capturing her face, a woman collapses. What follows is a grotesque pursuit by all the present cameras to capture the image of the female embodiment of grief. I fight this morbid impulse and focus instead on the recorders' hunger for pain.

And then, just like that it's over. People swiftly return to the buses, leaving a taste of artificiality to the previously choreographed suffering. Not from the woman who collapsed earlier though; she recovers, sitting on a chair and still overwhelmed by haunting memories, although the cameras no longer care.

It might not have been the most sophisticated commemoration; in fact, far from matching LTTE's skills in "embedding its military struggle in semantic categories" (Fuglerud, 2011:77). But it is a landmark nonetheless. As Fuglerud highlighted for the case of the LTTE, TMVP now had an official symbolically encoded past with its respective heroes. It even has a ritual of reaffirmation. Identity is indeed built through the workings of memory.

The grieving woman in TMVP's commemoration subversively evokes Manuela's narrative, one of the voices of the other fallen in this ordeal. We retake her story here, taking us through multiple forms of victimisation and local forms of connivance of the state in some of TMVP's obscure actions. Her memories appear to epitomise the history of violence in the Eastern Province, decades of war compressed in her direct family tree. Retaking her story here is not fortuitous: it is an attempt at intertwining the memory and symbolisation of fallen fighters with the counter-memories of TMVP's victims.

As you may recall, Manuela escaped Inniyabarathi's camp on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007, running away on the brink of her execution after a miraculous interruption. In her flight, she separated from the boy who had been left in charge of her custody and found a way to get to the hospital. Given that she used to work as hospital staff, she was aided in fleeing the area by being put in an ambulance to Samanthurai. She got a lift to Batticaloa, from where she took the train to Trincomalee.

The following morning, Manuela went to the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission (SLMM), the Human Rights Commission and the ICRC. They recorded her account and put her in a convent. Unfortunately, they also informed the Kalmunai Police. She started working at the Trincomalee Hospital, but then the Special Task Force of the Sri Lankan Police came to her house in Kalmunai and threatened her daughter, demanding her to call her mother Manuela. The STF told her to go back to Kalmunai, but as an alternative she suggested (thinking of buying her daughter at least temporarily some safety) that they could meet her in Trincomalee Hospital. The following day they effectively showed up, but Manuela hid.

She eventually went to Valaichenai, where she again spoke with the ICRC. Manuela wandered from one relative's house to another until she finally decided to approach Pillayan (August 2008), who told her to request a transfer to the Batticaloa Hospital and move into a house next to his office. And so she did, from September onwards; although a month later, Inniyabarathi and his men came to her house in Kalmunai and took her sister and youngest son. They were blindfolded, tortured and told Manuela had to return. Instead of caving in to the pressure, she got hold of Karuna's number, called him and asked why they were looking for her. According to her, Karuna's reply was that she had got to know too much about his group and was speaking to foreigners, which was detrimental to his movement. 'So you either join us or be killed', he sentenced.

With the due accompaniment of an INGO, her family managed to avoid further harassments for a while. But then, in February 2009, both Manuela and her son were arrested and taken to the Batticaloa station. From there, they called the Kalmunai police to advise them whether or not to release her. Their response was negative and instead they accused Manuela of providing medical supplies to the LTTE. Torture began anew.

Eventually, both she and her son were taken to CID's headquarters, the infamous 4<sup>th</sup> floor in Colombo<sup>203</sup>. In April 2010, an order came (from a judge familiar with her case since Trincomalee) to refer the case to the Kalmunai courts. But then in December 2010, there was suddenly an order for her immediate release. She was apprehensive, suspecting that she was going to be killed. She went to the Human Rights Commission, where she was told they had found the bodies of those killed on

---

<sup>203</sup> Located on the 4th floor of the new Secretariat Building, Fort, Colombo.

the beach when she was also about to be executed, so if her case were to be transferred to the Kalmunai Courts she could have testified against Inniyabarathi. According to Manuela, that is why the HRC considered that the government had released her. Since then, she has been monitored and visited by the STF on at least eight occasions.

On 27<sup>th</sup> March 2011, the LLRC went to Kalmunai and held hearings. She went to provide details about her case but they did not want to let her in. She claims that only people with the intention of filing complaints against the LTTE were being allowed, but somehow she forced her way in and gave her testimony, also to the media. With pride, she says that people cheered and hugged her when she came out, as they all had similar cases and had been unable to speak out. On 29<sup>th</sup> March 2011, the LLRC called and offered her compensation, but she was not granted any particular security measure. Towards the end of our interview, she says to me: “if I get killed the story will be further told to me by her children”. At the time of putting her testimony on paper, I learn that President Rajapakse bestowed the second highest national honour, *the Deshamanya*, upon Dr. K Pushpa Kumar, otherwise known as Inniyabarathi<sup>204</sup>.

Manuela has applied for asylum. Five days after filing her application, TMVP's first Heroes' Day was celebrated. It remains to be seen for how long this ritual commemoration will be repeated, but so far it has managed to produce a second edition in 2012, describing the commemorated date as “The day that the Eastern sun refused to rise”. It was also expressed that the LTTE:

Planned to kill and destroy their brother-rebels who fought for the sake of their own movement, attained many historic victories and who ate and slept together with them. They accomplished their plans. They aimed their guns at the eastern tigers on April 10<sup>th</sup> in Verugal. They did not stop there but they also inflicted inexpressible tortures on women cadres, raped and killed them [...] Today, the eastern provincial council has been created and if the eastern province is seeing swift progress, it is because of the blood that the eastern rebel shed in Verugal. On this day, let us solemnly pledge to travel towards their dreams<sup>205</sup>.

---

<sup>204</sup> In *The Sunday Leader*. 4<sup>th</sup> December 2011. Check her case in Virakesari, 28<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

<sup>205</sup> Retrieved from [www.meenmagal.net](http://www.meenmagal.net), April 2012.

This second anniversary's commemoration served as a prelude to TMVP's 1<sup>st</sup> National Convention held in Kallady on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012<sup>206</sup>. Out of the conference came a four-point resolution stating that: (1) the Eastern Province should not be merged with the Northern Province; (2) the government should find a political solution incorporating all the powers devolved under the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Constitution; and (3) that TMVP opposes endeavours directed against the territorial integrity of 'our motherland', yet proposes that the Government should strengthen local mechanisms for the protection of Fundamental Rights and Democratic values. Finally, TMVP invites (4) "professionals, intellectuals, women, students, workers, members of oppressed societies, members of other political organisations as well as ex-militants and all right thinking people, to rally round and join TMVP, which works deviating from the traditional narrow political agenda, with a clear vision and mission to establish pluralistic political culture, while democratically protesting against oppression and dominance"<sup>207</sup>.

In hindsight, this convention may prove to have been the movements' requiem. TMVP is currently a small, leaking, motor-less political boat. They may not make it, yet in their formation they have dramatically shifted the undercurrents in Sri Lanka's political tempest. Theirs is not an example fitting regular typologies of transition from arms to politics. It reflects neither the transition of a victorious insurgency nor that of a defeated one. Nor is it a transition resulting from a negotiated settlement, or the simple clientelistic provision of posts by a government to a useful militia. TMVP made a transition through a defection, a transformation into a counterinsurgency and subsequently - allied with the government - it entered mainstream politics to later seek further political and programmatic independence.

Whereas some perceive TMVP's formation as an example of pure instrumental politics, to me it rather exemplifies what Spencer (2007:15) has called in a different context a politics of semiotic excess, transgression and occasional violence; although admittedly the notion of '*occasional*' should be called into question for the case at hand. TMVP's emergence and the removal of Eelam not only provided an idiom through which people could express the divisions that had long existed; it also presented the opportunity to remake the social order (Spencer, 2007). The removal

---

<sup>206</sup> To be distinguished from the first (semi clandestine national conference held in Colombo in October 2006.

<sup>207</sup> Retrieved from <http://tmvpfirstconvention.com/resolutions>.

of that imagined state, even in the context of continuous violence and impossible choices, opened a space for the people of the East to rethink themselves. However, this possible sense of empowerment may not have come separate from the equally strong sense of failure and return to the ever-present position of routine discrimination, surrounded by the everyday state of policing and the daily fears of violence<sup>208</sup>.

Despite adopting a critical view on TMVP's way of entering politics, I would consider their potential failure to be an even greater risk for democratisation in Sri Lanka's post-war era. At the time of writing, negotiations and talks are being held between the government and the TNA (Tamil National Alliance), seeking ways for deeper political solutions that could satisfy the Tamil community. However, I would argue that two steps should precede such efforts. First, without dismissing TMVP as a political actor, conditionalities must be placed for their continuity in politics, based upon acknowledgements of victimisation, memorialisation exercises and further disarmament, in order to disjoint political agency from violence. Second, the TNA and TMVP should at the very least attempt to create a common political platform before the former starts seeking significant results in discussions with the government. However, for that to happen, what Freud called 'the narcissism of minor differences' must be surmounted (Tilly, 2003; Ignatieff, 1999).

#### 4.11. Recapitulation

Moving from a social formation challenging the monopoly of violence to a political body demanded the explicit development of a laid out political project, at least a partial demilitarisation of their practices and an institutional memorialisation. For such a purpose, they drafted a political constitution and presented a basic set of regulations of the military wing. TMVP was at its height of military operations in 2006 and the first part of 2007, fulfilling a crucial role in bringing Sri Lanka's Eastern Province back into government control. Meanwhile, precisely while these operations were at their peak, political features were developed, on the one hand anticipating the forthcoming transition; on the other, providing a certain veneer of legitimacy to further enable their violent operations. This continuum between violence and politics

---

<sup>208</sup> Term borrowed from Spencer (2007:118), who argues that policing is an aspect of the everyday state.

evokes Charles Tilly's (2003:238) observation that collective violence emerges from claims and struggles for power, interweaving itself constantly with nonviolent politics.

At some point, this politico-military project required a restructure, towards which a crucial summit was held in Minneriya exactly three years after Karuna's split. However, the Minneriya meeting also responded to a more covert purpose: it was a strategic power play orchestrated by Karuna to try and regain the monopoly of leadership, jeopardised by Pillayan's ground operations and permanent contact with the troops. The summit was thus an expression of internal contestation, in fact leading to TMVP's own schism and highlighting the fluidity of loyalty. Nonetheless, under Pillayan, TMVP contested in municipal and provincial elections in early-2008, a process facilitated by Karuna's arrest in the UK. Their alliance with the government under the UPFA enabled TMVP's former general secretary to be appointed mayor of Batticaloa and Pillayan as the Provincial Chief Minister. However, after that overwhelming electoral success, TMVP's political relevance started to crumble. This notwithstanding, TMVP served as an unconventional process of demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration that actually coalesced into the prelude for the final battles of the civil war.

In April 2011, marking 7 years of the Good Friday Battle, TMVP held its first Heroes' Day. This commemoration became a benchmark in the symbolic codification of their past and a strong reaffirmation of their new identity. Finally, in what feels like an institutional requiem, TMVP held its first national convention in 2012. Despite supposedly being attended by more than 15,000 people, no one seemed to be listening anymore. The way in which the last battles were fought in the North, together with the increasing awareness of a return to pre-war politics (rather than the reinvention of national consciousness) and finally TMVP's failure to construct a regional but multiethnic political platform; are all factors that seem to have pushed TMVP out of the electoral race and slowly into oblivion.

## CHAPTER FIVE

---

### *The Social Reproduction of War*<sup>209</sup>

A principal and former teacher in eastern Sri Lanka once said to me that in order to leave the conflict behind it will require those born in 1985 -1987 to pass away. In his view, the key to overcoming social tension depended more on the disappearance of a generation than changes in the political, economic or social spheres. Similarly, many of the people that I encountered vehemently asserted that I was wasting my time looking into intergenerational transmission of conflict, because according to them the new generation knew nothing about its history. Alternatively, people would say conflict was not taught or transmitted but *experienced*. Could it be true that the only ones concerned with the history of conflict and its transmission were scholars, with their specialised discourse and limited audience; or armed actors, with their own doctrinal narratives? Could a high school student in, say, Valaichennai witness violence all around her, face the armed actors' propaganda and yet attend a history lesson at school following textbooks that blatantly ignored the social upheaval of recent decades (as if war were outside of history)? Could she then return home, watch the state-sponsored news on TV, discuss everyone's day with her parents and still be somehow completely agnostic of the courses of Sri Lanka's armed conflict? Incredulity regarding these suppositions pushed me towards an exploration of the connections between war and knowledge transfer.

The preceding chapters intertwined biographies with larger historical processes in the emergence of a new collective enterprise, TMVP. Narratives were articulated to render TMVP's consolidation, maintenance and transition, thereby explaining the vicissitudes of the Sri Lankan civil war. This chapter seeks to tackle the transmission of conflict beyond the confines of a specific actor, in a task that requires a different departure point. Rather than starting with intertwined personal narratives like prior chapters did, this section begins with abstract collective products (like education policies), moving downwards to reach personal narratives as the final destination. This implies that TMVP will be absent among the first sections but will reappear towards the end, particularly through some of its younger combatants' accounts.

---

<sup>209</sup> An earlier and shorter version of the material presented in this chapter has been published in *History & Anthropology*. See Sánchez Meertens, A. 2013.

The resulting structure and methodological strategy implemented involves tracing the movements of knowledge about conflict, navigating from the more institutional spaces of transmission towards the more informal or defiant ones. Accordingly, the first trace presented is the education policy's approach to conflict, together with its place in the official history and citizenship education textbooks. The second trace focuses on schools as dense settings of transmission, together with the memories and attitudes of principals and teachers regarding the teaching of a violent past. The third step centres upon high school students as the embodiment of a new generation and expected recipients of the transmitted knowledge. At this stage, the students' perspectives will be contrasted with some insights into the transmission process experienced by former combatants, specifically from TMVP, thus achieving a full circle and making explicit the connection with previous chapters.

## 5.1 Framing the methodological shift

Three factors support the need for this slightly different approach. First, even though TMVP condenses crucial aspects of war, it cannot exhaust the dynamics of armed conflict on its own; evidently, its emergence is embedded in a larger string of transmissional and transformative processes. If TMVP altered the reproduction of war, it becomes indispensable to look into the transmission mechanisms from which they emerged and reconfigured. In the introduction, we presented six conceptual dialogues to help address this, referring to the practices of signifying the world (semiosis) that become violent imaginaries in the context of war; in turn heavily supported by the representations of past violence. The reproduction of war is thus sustained through the incorporations of the conflict's descriptions into systems of knowledge. This chapter is a necessary inquiry into the formations of such systems, given that epistemology is part and parcel of all cultural processes (Nordstrom, 1997:27), while knowledge on how to promote war is a product of context and action (Richards, 1996:xxi).

Second, this shift from the inner occurrences of TMVP's formation outwards to the social reproduction of war facilitates conceptual linkages between armed actors' internal dynamics and civil society. Moreover, it also allows a linkage of macro-political readings of conflict with the myriad of private experiences of violence, treating small local interactions as neither isolated nor discrete; and where national forces are neither alien, nor external and superimposed. The State is reintroduced in

this chapter through one of its most powerful apparatuses - education - while avoiding the common trap of making an irreparable distinction between “official memory” and “memories of the people”. After all, as Jackie Feldman has argued, it is by placing personal and collective memories at the same discursive plain that history is instilled with emotion and the *Self* is nationalised (Argenti & Schramm, 2010:104).

Third, adding and connecting this chapter to the previous ones will offer the possibility to present the fluctuations of civil wars in terms of the articulation of *instrumental* and *epistemic* power; or in the words of Bruce Lincoln, as the interaction between force and discourse, “the chief means whereby social borders, hierarchies, institutional formations and habituated patterns of behaviour are both maintained and modified” (Lincoln, 1989:3). Hence, this last step presented here is crucial in consolidating the integrated theory on conflict dynamics announced in the introduction, which is based on connecting processes of transmission and transformation as pillars of social dynamics.

Indeed, despite the amount of literature on armed conflicts, I find insufficient scholarly discussions on issues pertaining to the modalities of its transmission, the teaching and acquisition of (historical) knowledge and praxis of war. Surely, there are academic debates on the role of memory in conflict, insurgent indoctrination and the link between history education and war, violence or reconciliation, to name just a few streams of investigation (i.e. Papadakis, 2008; Cole, 2007; Tawil & Harley, 2004; Jelin, 2002; Antze & Lambek, 1996). Crucial as they are, they also carry some fundamental lacunae that I will address throughout the following pages. For instance, while the nexus of education and conflict in Sri Lanka is extensively explored, the actual explicit transmission of war as a historical construct is generally left aside.

One of the issues that should become clear at the end of this chapter is that the history of conflict *is* transmitted in spite of its silencing<sup>210</sup>. In that sense, this endeavor aspires to illuminate how knowledge, culture, memory and social identities come into being in a variety of social sites (Giroux, 1994), through the relations between discourse and processes of teaching and learning, as well as the construction of socially situated meanings (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012:67).

---

<sup>210</sup> Expression used in a different context in Argenti, N & Schramm, K. 2010 p.58.

If we no longer understand the State as being separate from society or external to the local, then we should do the same with what has often been portrayed as the correspondent official, defiant and/or popular narratives. Officialising memory can no longer be about defining institutional and popular narratives as discrete, autonomous and fully distinguishable processes. What the following paragraphs will illustrate most vigorously is that the conflict's history and the (painful and dramatic) experiences are not only transmitted to the next generations, but also that the lack of institutional involvement misses the opportunity for the configuration of narratives that could - if included - contribute to a renewed national project.

Perhaps it is worth anticipating a simple yet powerful conclusion to this research: transformative socio-political processes (such as the emergence of TMVP, with its reinvented legitimising discourse of violence) also contribute to a war's perpetuation; while the social reproduction of war (like the intergenerational knowledge transfer subject of this chapter) also generates crucial societal transformations. Therefore, one must not simply look at continuity and change in the context of conflict; rather, it is pertinent to establish how continuity *contributes* to change and how change fosters permanence. In other words, I do not see transmission as the persistence of a particular body of things, practices or knowledge. Instead, I understand transmission as an interaction, wherein the only constant is modification. Transmission necessarily introduces difference, while transformation requires pre-configured modalities of interaction and meaning-making.

Furthermore, I have identified three crucial gaps in existing investigations. First, if and when the pedagogical practices on war are addressed, the multiple spaces of transmission of knowledge are neither empirically nor theoretically linked. A great deal of available literature on transmission comes from textbook and curricula research in post-conflict settings (Nozaki & Selden, 2009; Scott, 2009; Cole, 2007; Tawil et al, 2004; Papadakis, 2008; Jelin, 2002). Most acknowledge that textbooks and the official schooling system in general are by no means the exclusive spaces for learning about history or any other subject for that matter. Yet, almost none extend beyond such acknowledgment. As a result, at least in the context of armed conflict, the following question has largely remained unanswered: given the diverse ways and sites of knowing, how are they articulated and re-assembled by consumers into a manageable form, which they can use to attribute meaning to experience, guide their actions and allow moral evaluations? This chapter presents a nascent theory to answer such a riddle.

An additional gap refers to the fact that the (learning) experiences of combatants and of unarmed civilians are generally dealt with as isolated phenomena rather than connected social fields. Ethnographers in conflict-affected areas tend to reinforce this image of impermeable boundaries, first by choosing one side upon which to focus their research, and second by conceiving its inner social relations and knowledge production as somehow autonomous from one another (Lubkemann, 2008; Wood, 2003; Richards, 1996; Malkki, 1995). This is often paired with the choice of focusing on either the perpetrators' or their victim's experiences<sup>211</sup>. Surely, socialisation practices of armed recruits and civilians occur within distinguishable domains; but at least in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province they are by no means insulated spaces, with their experiences thus being co-constitutive of each other.

Finally, debates dealing with education and conflict are by-and-large detached from broader discussions on discourse and social change, remaining weak in articulating cultural reproduction to the understandings of the sustainability of conflict and its violence. For instance, from the sociology of education, literature floats towards either a sophisticated general theory of social reproduction rarely adapted or challenged in the specific context of violent conflict (i.e. Berstein, 2000; Bourdieu, 1990) or document-centred debates around curricula and educational structures (i.e. Cole, 2007) that are ambitious in seeking policy changes, yet typically weak in attempting broader theoretical contributions.

Meanwhile, from a conflict studies perspective, most approaches dealing explicitly with the sustainability of civil war tend to explain the longevity of war through its genetic factors. If they do recognise that subsequent dynamics of armed conflict may be disjoined from its origin, the elements aiding reproduction are overwhelmingly found in the context. Such approximations are largely centred on economic indicators that quite often result in what I see as a kind of truism: in order to sustain war - the argument goes - economic resources and private motivations are needed. Though important, these efforts seldom go beyond the rather obvious material resources and incentives that any collective enterprise requires.

---

<sup>211</sup> There are of course worthy exceptions to choosing either perpetrators or victims, like Robben, A (1995); but

On the other hand, anthropological literature has made enormous contributions to issues of transmission by capturing the ways in which people affected by violence find alternative vehicles to process violence without referring explicitly to it. The use of medical practices as a metaphoric space to re-own a past expressed as illness and the proliferation of ghosts stories as a way of remembering by proxy (Perera, 2000) are only some examples from Sri Lanka. Indeed, such ethnographically informed research has problematised violence, memory, the state and subjectivity itself, delving into the realm of the unconscious and its cryptic generational transfers, with the occasional help of psychoanalysis. However, I find that in the acknowledgement of that universe, anthropologists and other scholars dealing with conflict have now almost ritualistically forced themselves to look for covert meaning-making processes while neglecting the more overt transmissional traces that explicitly reference historical events. I want to return to those straightforward efforts in knowledge transfer without undermining the value of encoded forms of memory making. Beneath a superficial silence lingers a great deal of historical noise and polyphonic remembrance in Sri Lanka, hiding as it were, in plain sight.

This polyphony needs to be addressed, for much of any war's sustainability depends on decisions concerning which information is to be preserved, as well as the formats of its representation and reproduction. In other words, curation as the politics and technologies of memory is at the very core of the transmission of armed conflict. Simultaneously, as knowledge (of conflict, war and violence) is passed onto the next generation, new "trajectories of mutability"<sup>212</sup> emerge, rendering the curation process also as an agent of change.

In this chapter, transmission is analysed in phases wherein all generations are at least contemporaneous with its manifestations. I choose the notion of contemporaneity rather than affectation for the following reasons. When asked whether they had been directly affected by violence, many students and some teachers would say no; and then a few minutes later they related how their house was burnt, their brother shot, the entire family displaced, and so forth. Therefore, establishing what is meant by being directly affected by violence is not as straightforward as it may seem at first glance. Accordingly, given that some may conceive affectation as a visible impression inflicted by armed actors directly on their individual physical bodies, while others regard psychological imprints of witnessed

---

<sup>212</sup> A term coined by Rosalind Shaw in Argenti, N & Schramm, K. 2010 p.254

violence as direct affliction, it may be conceptually safer to talk about different generations contemporaneous with the systematic violence of civil war as opposed to 'affected by violence'.

## 5.2. Generations, Youth and Violence

A concern with the sustainability of conflict across time must inescapably address issues of intergenerational transmission, even more so when acknowledging that a political community is always intergenerational because generations share interests and given that building, maintaining and reforming institutions is inevitably an intergenerational task (Thompson, 2009). However, despite such a shared dependency and coresponsability, a rather common distrust and expressions of mutual disappointment prevail from one generation to the other. Furthermore, elders are often seen as inflexible while the youth is regularly accused of apathy, which in the context of war is ambiguous to say the least, given the always high levels of youth participation in political violence. Some analysts point to the fact that decades of violence itself - even if politically motivated - possibly contribute to the alleged apathy. For example, Hettige and Mayer (2002) argued that the generation that grew up in the midst of war in Sri Lanka display an apolitical tendency and disaffection partly due to the uncertainties of constantly shifting control between the armed forces and the LTTE. While that might be true, this political disengagement is uncritically transported to an epistemic dimension, assuming that such political apathy equals historical ignorance. This is challenged by the findings presented further ahead.

But, before we move on, how are we to understand such a slippery concept as that of a 'generation'? I would like to point out two useful guidelines (one institutional and another socio-historical) that helped me decide who I was talking about when referring to the different generations. First, given that the school was a crucial axis in my research, positions within that institution facilitate certain generational divisions. Roughly speaking, principals, teachers and students each correspond to a different age group with differentiated roles that serve as generational markers. Those generational boundaries can subsequently be exported to other settings, including armed actors where the age groups of commanders, sectional leaders and child recruits broadly correspond with the generational marks of the school.

Internal positioning and age group must be adjusted according to the second guideline. In prevalent accounts, Sri Lanka's civil war is divided in four phases: Eelam Wars (EW) I to IV, presented for the case of Eastern Sri Lanka in the introduction. As this classification marks qualitative shifts in the war produced by differentiated attitudes and experiences, its inclusion becomes pertinent in defining the multiple generations, transmission of knowledge and implicated transformations. In order to identify who belongs to which generation, we need to consider who's in the threshold between childhood and adulthood when the different Eelam Wars began.

A couple of additional adjustments are needed in terms of our purpose of matching the institutional with this socio-historical guideline. First, considering the smaller impact in the Eastern province of the watershed that separates Eelam War III from Eelam War II, and given the short temporal span of the latter, I have merged them together. Secondly, given the importance that I attribute to Karuna's split, I have brought forward the start of Eelam IV (generally placed at the point of formal renewal of hostilities in 2006) to 2004. With these adjustments in mind, the generational equivalence of both guidelines is essentially: G1= EW I; G2= EW II & III; and G3=EW IV. It is by articulating these two generational indicators that contemporaneity is imbued with sociological significance.

As we have seen in previous chapters, part of TMVP's uniqueness lies in an accelerated generational shift. Thus, if principals are generation 1 (G1), teachers generation 2 (G2) and students generation 3 (G3), then at the time of TMVP's foundation, Karuna would be G1, Pillayan G2 and the formerly recruited children by TMVP would be G3. However, within a few years, a member of G2 (Pillayan) challenged the authority of a generation 1 commander (Karuna), creating a defining in-house rupture. Notably, if the internal friction of the group is reflected in a generational dispute (G2 challenging G1), the entire enterprise of TMVP can be approached as a kind of generational challenge from one subset to another. The 2004 rebellion reflected a significant schism within Generation 1, as a defiance targeting the authority of LTTE's Prabhakaran (G1 $\alpha$ ), to whom Karuna (G1 $\beta$ ) referred as his 'Anna' (elder brother).

Those who began the armed struggle and led the project of Eelam (referred above as Generation 1 alpha) were in the youth category in the 1970s (Hettige & Mayer, 2002). They engaged in violence as a reaction to the failure of Tamil politicians in

assuring their community's aspirations. Meanwhile, those who I have called Generation 1 beta (G1 $\beta$ ) such as Karuna became engaged in violence most notably in reaction to Black July 1983. Subsequently, once the numbers of voluntary enrolment fell in the 1990s, the LTTE started targeting a younger age range. This new generation (G2) enlisted in the North, not so much due to a political awakening but simply because they were expected to die for the nation (Thiranagama, 2011:56). They no longer saw the LTTE as an emancipatory force like their elders, but rather as "a government in their lives providing normalised routes of power and recognition" (2011:63). However, as illustrated by several of the G2 interviewees such as Pillayan (who joined at the age of 15 in 1991), a difference arises between the North and the East. Because the armed conflict only became determinant in the eastern landscape after 1990 (Eelam War II), G2's participation in violence there resulted from a hybrid between remnants of political awakening and an increasing sense of duty. Accordingly it took the LTTE longer to establish itself as a normative force in that province. This hybridity may have meant a different balance of voluntary and forced recruitment for that period, compared to their northern peers. Once the LTTE's reception in the East switched from an emancipatory to a normative force, the conditions of possibility were actually created for something like TMVP to be plausible in the near future. In fact, the latter's emergence became the greatest massive public display of the new generation's disenchantment with the LTTE.

What stands out when considering the different generations is that - regardless of whether or not they support violence - it would appear that the spectre of recruitment defined them all, albeit in different nuances. Broadly speaking, the temptation of participating marked G1, the possibility of being recruited marked G2 (Thiranagama, 2011) and the fear of being conscripted marked G3. Some among the latter eventually became part of the armed movements, while many of course did not. Some are the former combatants that I spoke with, others the students that I interviewed. Both sorts of biographies are interlinked a few sections further ahead.

### 5.3. Education as Locus of Conflict and Violence in Sri Lanka

Exploring the transmission of knowledge about conflict requires the recognition of the pedagogic practice as a primary social context through which cultural production and reproduction occurs (Bernstein 2000). While such a pedagogical practice can by no means be reduced to educational institutions, they certainly constitute a fundamental

state apparatus through which a national identity aspires to be created, or - as will be shown - often also challenged. Accordingly, this exploration of the pedagogic practice of conflict and violence holds the educational field as the analytical gravitational centre but will also move beyond it.

Education is frequently cited in Sri Lanka as the cause of conflict, mostly focusing specifically on *access to education*. As de Silva argued, Sri Lankans have long made connections between changes in the education system and the worsening of ethnic tension (Rotberg, 1999:109). Some studies have cited informants claiming “discriminatory education policies were the single most important reason which led them to guerrilla activities” (Nissan in Sørensen, 2008:426). This is corroborated by my own data emerging from interviews with principals, teachers and former combatants, all of which underscored education policies motivating rebellion.

Other scholars highlight the mismatch between education and employment, or consider education as one of the casualties of war itself, destroying or limiting access to schools and diverting funds for education to war (Amarasuriya et al 2009; Winslow and Woost 2004; Roberts-Schweitzer et al 2006). Some discussions even include the content of education itself, particularly centred on history education, by far the most controversial of all subjects (Tawil and Harley 2004). Finally, on the few occasions when education is considered as a reproducer of conflict, the focus lies on the reproduction of structural inequalities, cultural biases and historical manipulation - all crucial indeed - but not on the phenomenon itself, the Sri Lankan war as a historical construct.

Before being expressed in ethnic terms, the fault lines of education leading to communal tensions followed religious divisions that transformed into linguistically based arguments and subsequently regional ones. Only after aligning all such elements, the fracture was ethnically framed<sup>213</sup>. Together with the 1956 ‘Sinhala Only Bill’ meant to establish Sinhala as the single official language of the country, the

---

<sup>213</sup> Crucial was the Sinhala Buddhist leaders’ pursuit of equal opportunities for their own group compared to those of other religious membership. Such task meant a battle against the Christian mission school system, eventually resulting in the takeover of almost all schools in 1961. However, the struggle also found linguistic expression in trying to replace English with Sinhala and Tamil as medium of instruction (de Silva in Roberts, 1999:106). Overall, in the early stages of post-independence Sri Lanka, Buddhists were able to present their movement as an attack on privilege and colonial vestiges (de Silva, 1998:109).

other crucial landmark in the trajectory of education leading to overt conflict was the 1971 'Standardisation' policy, which altered access to tertiary education (de Silva, 1999; Perera et al, 2004)<sup>214</sup>. Without a doubt, university admissions became a salient issue implemented to legitimise the use of violence by the youth in Jaffna (and in the South as well), being also at the core of the Tamil United Front leadership's decision to declare in favour of a separate Tamil state (de Silva, 1998:128).

Later on, in response to the socio-political crises in the course of the war, two sets of education reforms were implemented at the national level in 1981 and 1997; however, only the latter directly sought to address issues of social cohesion and national integration (Perera, 2004:397). In between those reforms was the Indo-Lanka accord of 1987, which called for devolution of powers to the provinces, including education. This was slowly implemented in most regions, with the exception of the Northern and Eastern Provinces (then fused together), due to the de facto LTTE control of the region.

Conflict as a topic made its first appearance in educational policy in the reforms of 1997, fifteen years after the major turning point in the civil war fought in the North and East (1983), and twenty-six years after the first People's Liberation Front - JVP - insurrection in the South (1971). Since then, conflict has become a central feature; but, paradoxically, in order to place it within the policy frameworks, it appears to have gone through a strict process of what one might call detachment. It is conflict in its most abstract, in its most distant, or conflict in its most private: apolitical, individualistic, ahistorical, identity-free<sup>215</sup>. In 2007, new curriculum reforms were

---

<sup>214</sup> Initially, it started as a media-wise standardisation meant to reduce sets of marks in all media (English, Tamil and Sinhala) to a uniform scale proportionate to the number sitting for examination in each medium. In practice, this resulted in the neutralisation of the superior performance of Tamils in science subjects (De Silva, 1999:116). In 1974, standardisation was combined with district quotas (allocation of places at university to districts according to the percentage of total population resident in district). This again affected Tamils because most of the students of that ethnic affiliation came from Jaffna district, which under quota became entitled to only 5.54% of the university places (de Silva, 1999:118).

<sup>215</sup> This is not to say that the 1997 reforms booked no advancement whatsoever. On the contrary, they did manage to include fundamental concepts into the curricula such as Human Rights, gender equality, environmental and civic consciousness (Ginige, 2002:74). However, even according to the NEC Report of 2003 and the New Education Act of 2009, the Sri Lankan education system failed to promote nation building through mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity (NEA, 2009:114). Arguably, such failure may have been connected to the construction of a concept deprived

introduced to the school system, and a New Education Act was presented in 2009, but is yet to have been adopted. In addition, several development agencies, NGOs and multilateral organisations advocated for a linkage between conflict prevention and education; however, even though their influence on policy is evident, ensuring that topics such as peace education become common practice, none of the aforementioned documents contain a clear call to dedicate part of the curricula to teaching the violent past.

#### 5.4. Conflict in Textbooks

The island's education system rests heavily upon the State, with around 95% of schools being public. In addition, official textbooks are distributed free of charge throughout the country, even among the relatively few existing private schools. Therefore, it is clear that such texts become crucial tools for the consolidation of national identity and symbolic control. The historical monopoly of textbook production has in effect made the content of textbooks that much more critical and contentious (Wickrema & Colenso 2003:3).

Dealing with a violent past in schools' history curricula has been a topic of important and often heated debate, most notably in countries such as Germany and Japan after World War II, as well as Israel, Spain, Guatemala, Northern Ireland or Cyprus, to name but a few. Elizabeth Cole argues that "History education, especially textbooks (...) can be construed as a part of the official acknowledgement of past injustices or can show the lack thereof" (2007:123).

Before dealing with their content, one of the first questions that demands attention concerns the producers: so, who writes the textbooks? While undertaking, fieldwork I intended to interview central education authorities near Colombo, including some of the writers of the official textbooks and people in charge of the curricular guidelines and production. Very soon it became clear, however, that pushing that agenda forward could severely jeopardise my research in the East. Polite yet hostile reactions to high-level officials during interviews deterred me from pursuing this line

---

from any reference to the daily realities of the Sri Lankan student. Studying conflict resolution while evading the violence around them might have had counterproductive repercussions after all.

too deeply, particularly when one of them inquired about my visa status. The message was clear. Surely there were ways around this impasse, including a simple yet time-consuming process of trust building. But I was unwilling to take the risk or reduce my time in Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts, with most of my fieldwork still ahead of me. Nevertheless, through indirect paths a few pertinent comments can and must be made regarding textbook authorship.

First, in the *New Education Act* of 2009, people involved in educational policy making were themselves willing to express that textbook writers are often inexperienced and that the criteria for their selection are generally lacking (NEA, 2009:103). Secondly, one could further venture into issues of ethnic and regional representation based on the names and location of the members of the panel of writers registered in the textbook copyrights themselves. Indeed, it would seem that the silent reproduction of conflict is not relegated exclusively to the form and content of narratives, but also to authorship: out of the 31 writers of the four citizenship textbooks (grades 9, 10 and 11, published in 2006, 2007 and 2009), only one writer had a Tamil name, and none were based in an educational institution in the North or East. The only one coming from a place other than the South was a Muslim from Puttalam (North-West of Sri Lanka). Similarly, from the three history textbooks (grade 9, 10, 11, published in 2006 and 2007), two of the 17 writers included in the panel list had a Tamil name, but could very well be the translators. While definitive conclusions cannot be drawn from this, it remains indicative nonetheless, more so because once in the East many interviewed principals and teachers claimed precisely that history books were about the Sinhala people written by Sinhalese and only involving Tamils or Muslims in the translations.

Two subjects with their respective textbooks need to be explored in some detail: History and Citizenship Education.

#### 5.4.1. History Textbooks

The official Sri Lankan history textbooks in current use deal with issues occurring up to 1979. Notably, Sri Lankan independence was obtained in 1948, meaning that around half of post-independence history is not included. Additionally, despite such exclusion, several critical incidents of violence had already occurred by 1979: anti-Tamil riots had taken place, the first armed insurrection in the South had already

occurred and militant Tamil movements had emerged in the North, including the LTTE. None of this is to be found in the history textbooks. However, the lack of explicit mention of armed conflict and violence does not imply that there an attempt to shape ideas about the *Other* and the nature of the conflictive relationships is absent. Let me present just a few features from four different textbooks to illustrate the way in which history education becomes critical in reproducing armed conflict, without speaking of it.

One such feature is found in the history book from grade 7, wherein the word *Tamil* is only registered six times (the word Muslim is not mentioned once), each time referring to that community in terms of either traitors or invaders. Additionally, the imbalance is evident when the cultural production of Sinhalese and Tamils are discussed towards the end, as it dedicates pages to the texts in Sinhala language before finally adding: “There were books written in Tamil too” (Education Publication Department [EPD], 2007.133).

**Figure 5.1 the six appearances of Tamils in the Grade 7 History Textbook**

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| Entry 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•“The assistance given to the south Indian invaders against Sinhala kings, by the Tamil soldiers who had settled down in Sri Lanka [...]” (59)</li> </ul>  |
| Entry 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•“During the reign of King Valagamba, seven Tamils including Pulahattha invaded the Anuradhapura Kingdom. Two of them returned to India with Somadevi and the Bowl Relic” (72)</li> </ul>  |
| Entry 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•“During King Mittasena’s reign, 6 Tamils named (...) seized the Throne and ruled in succession for 27 years” (72).</li> </ul>   |
| Entry 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•“The chiefs of the Vanni who favoured Bosath Wijayabahu of Damdadeniya, rose against the king. In addition he had to face the Tamil invasions of Kalingarayar and Chodagangadeva” (121)</li> </ul>  |
| Entry 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Sendamain (...) He is considered to be a Tamil king who received the support of the Pandyan. Accordingly Buvanekabahu I had to be prepared for any possible attack from the North (122).</li> </ul>   |
| Entry 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•“A number of books were written on Buddhism. Among them are the Pansiya Panas Jathakaya, Sinhala Bodhi Vamsaya, [...] (p.129) The oldest book on Sinhala grammar, Sidath Sangarava [...]... (131). Kurunegala is also a period which displayed a development of Sinhalese prose (132). There were books written in Tamil too (133)</li> </ul> |

Meanwhile, the word Tamil only appears in the Grade 9 history textbook to say that Hinduism is the religion of the Tamils, while Muslims are only mentioned in the context of the disputes of commercial routes between them and the Portuguese. Similarly, aside from when referring to a particular Tamil architect and a Tamil trader, the word Tamil appears only in the following passage within the Grade 10 standard textbook: “by this time the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna gradually expanded toward the South and they had appointed Tamil tax collectors (p54). To face the challenge, Alagakkonara built a fortress in Kotte and chased away the Tamil tax collectors (55).

The fact remains that in the school history textbooks there isn't any specific mention of post-independence inter-ethnic violence linked to -and explanatory of- the ulterior wars. Thus, if we are to understand the educational system as the fundamental locus in which a country's official history is sanctioned, then it can be stated that armed conflict is categorically absent in the authorised national narrative of Sri Lanka, despite its civil war extending over around half of its post-independence existence. One has to go to the citizenship education textbooks to find some meagre references to the civil war.

#### 5.4.2. Citizenship Education Textbooks

Four Citizenship Education Textbooks were used for analysis, all in English medium, and almost all printed before the end of the civil war<sup>216</sup>. Noticeably, references to the armed conflict were made in the grade 9 textbook, which was part of the multiple book option of 2007, yet no reference is made to the conflict in the new standard one. Indeed, the former mentions the Sri Lankan armed conflict in the last chapter entitled *Current Problems*, stating: “At present you as a Sri Lankan experience [sic] the tragic result of an ethnic conflict” (Karunaratne 2007:59). This is followed by an assignment asking the student to imagine a conflict experienced, seen or heard of. The student is subsequently required to arrange that conflict according to the actors, causes and consequences. Then, in a second activity, students are asked to select three cases from a list of armed conflicts around the world (among which is ‘Ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka’) and find out the reasons for them (Karunaratne, 2007:60). So, although it avoids a specific narrative, this book does open a path for students to

---

<sup>216</sup> Possible inconsistencies among English, Tamil and Sinhala written textbooks on these particular subjects will be matter of future research, but most educators claim that this is no longer occurs.

engage with the history of the conflict. This is however one of the few books that came out as part of the multiple book option, which was not implemented by any of the schools visited in Colombo or Eastern Sri Lanka.

Meanwhile, while discussing ways of resolving conflicts, the following is stated in the last chapter of the standard Grade 10 Citizenship Education and Governance textbook (used by most national, provincial and private schools): “It will not be possible to find a solution to this conflict, so long as the Sinhalese community clings on to the concept of unitary government and the (...) LTTE (...) clings on the idea of a separate state” (Educational Publication Department [EPD] 2006b:92).

Moreover, a few paragraphs further:

Most conflict resolution processes in the world (...) have failed (...). The best example for this is the Indo-Lanka accord of 1987 (...). In this context, the main party to the conflict, namely the LTTE is seen running away from the Indo –Lanka peace Accord gradually, rendering the conflict even more serious (EPD 2006b: 93).

This last quoted paragraph is all that was officially transmitted through textbooks to the students up to their Ordinary Level concerning the history of conflict. After grade 11, students can follow different streams towards their Advanced level exams. Among the options for the grade 12 and 13 students is the subject of Political Science. While the Sri Lankan armed conflict is not officially part of the syllabus of that subject either, in practice – as shown by this research later on - many teachers do explore ways to transmit at least certain features of war and violence.

### 5.4.3. LTTE’s Textbook Defiance

Throughout the years of war, the LTTE built its own parallel state institutions, including a Department of Education (Sørensen, 2008:426). In fact, they introduced what Lal Perera called a “localised version of the country’s history” (UNESCO, 2004:395), where *localised* seems a euphemism for *defiant*. LTTE texts long served as a supplement to official narratives; but in 2004, during the peace process, the LTTE actually published its own textbook “correcting history”. They distributed the book, even in the Jaffna peninsula, which was government-controlled at the time. In its foreword - as quoted by Sambandan (2004) - it stated:

The history textbooks by the Sri Lankan government that are taught in the schools are not based on true history, but have exaggerated the Sinhalese community, concealed the greatness of the Tamils and has been twisted in a

manner to demean the Tamils [...] By teaching Tamil translations of Sinhala works, written by and for the Sinhalese, the Tamil students are taught Sinhalese history, which says that this Sinhala-Buddhist country is only for them (Sambandan, 2004).

Once the news that the LTTE were trying to distribute their textbooks beyond the Vanni was out, the media called for swift action to expose their distortions and impede the “invasion of young minds by the LTTE. The latter on their turn argued the Sinhala leadership ridiculed Tamils’ historical role by implying theirs was an illegal, occupying and enslaved nation, causing Tamil students to lose their "self-confidence" (Sambandan 2004). This critique is indeed similar to that of many scholars (maybe less radical), including my own. The problem is, however, that the ways in which the LTTE went about their version of history did not correct such a demeaning approach, but simply inverted the poles.

When the newspaper *The Daily Mirror* approached the Ministry of Education for a reaction regarding the LTTE’s textbooks, a spokesperson said that the government sent all required textbooks for this year to the schools in the North-East, and given that all government examinations will be based on those provided by the Ministry, “teachers should select the Ministry books” (Daily Mirror, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2004). Perhaps not the strongest of arguments, yet one with consequences: it is not only what you teach, but also and often foremost what you evaluate, that matters.

#### 5.4.4. Post-Exams Options

After presenting Ordinary Level and Advanced Level exams, a reduced number of students may even consider pursuing a study in Political Science at the level of tertiary education and follow a programme at university. At this level, the University Grants Commission - supported among others by the Dutch government - designed a *Social Harmony Component* (2004), which included Peace and Conflict studies. Indeed, the department of Political Science at the Eastern University (Batticaloa) offered several courses on conflict and one seminar on the Sri Lankan Ethnic Conflict, even though it was frequently suspended.

In addition, a 12 months postgraduate course was set up in Colombo and Kilinochchi with the support of Bradford University, simultaneously offering the same subjects. It is worth noting that during its initial introductory workshop, students were asked to identify great leaders in the field of peace and human rights. A number of students

cited the LTTE leader Prabhakaran, arguing he was fighting for Tamil rights so they could live in peace. As the scholars in charge of the programme highlight, such a response points to the persuasive power of propaganda to inculcate popular compliance around a narrow interpretation of the armed struggle (Harris & Lewer, 2008:133).

Despite being critical spaces of transmission, the universities are also already a highly privileged and selective domain in which those who actually decide to engage in the troubled past, do so because of prior triggers and personal choices. In this sense, the way in which the history of conflict is portrayed in universities falls somewhere between an officially sanctioned history and a more private, not necessarily state sponsored, reading of it. Analysing the content of such courses, although fruitful in many ways, may be less telling about its connections to state building processes and the official sanctioning of the past. However, as is already apparent from previous chapters dealing with the emergence of TMVP, what is crucial is the relevance not of the course content but rather the university itself as a crucial locus of transmission and *mise en scène* of conflict and violence.

## 5.5. Schools as Condensed Spaces of Conflict Transmission

In order to establish the full chain of transmission, it clearly does not suffice to look at education policy and textbook content. The next step in tracing the social reproduction of armed conflict is to consider the ways in which schools are implicated in the process. In all modern societies, school is a crucial device for writing and rewriting national consciousness (Bernstein, 2000: xxiii).

A few educators that I interviewed in Sri Lanka problematised teaching the history of conflict, arguing that schools were often the one space where students could find refuge from the material and symbolic impositions of war. Sympathetic as it may sound, all evidence seems to actually contradict this image of schools as peaceful sanctuaries. One may even question whether schools should function as such, even if they could. By contrast, my intuition is that they must work as sites of physical shelter as well as discursive engagement.

Ethnographic hours spent during class sessions (grades 10, 11 and 13 in Vaharai, and Valaichennai and Trincomalee) seem to suggest that the closest these activities come to dealing with the conflict's past is by going through the constitutional history of the country. As the armed confrontations are not part of the curriculum or syllabus, they hardly emerge as topic in the classrooms. This notwithstanding, as an interviewed principal in the Eastern Province recalled, reflecting on his years as a student, teachers would actually explain the reasons for the armed struggle, albeit in the afternoons while students had to perform small tasks such as painting the school fence. This principal reminded me that the school and knowledge transfer nexus is not temporarily or spatially limited to classrooms. Indeed, conflict may have hardly ever been part of the syllabi, but within the school limits, every generation experienced some form of extracurricular transmission of the civil war<sup>217</sup>.

In addition, the trips to and from school were spaces/moments of danger and vulnerability throughout the war in north-eastern Sri Lanka, whereby students were exposed to surrounding violence and, above all, forced recruitment. Because the LTTE was known to watch for eligible children as they travelled to school, some teenagers stopped attending altogether, while the children of some of the better-off families were sent to boarding schools in government-controlled areas (Boyden, 2007:19). Going to school was then an instance of potential exclusion of citizenship, as well as a daily material encounter with the state, as expressed by Spencer (2007:101-102).

My study focused on 11 schools (6 National and 5 Provincial) located in the three different districts of the Eastern Province (Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara)<sup>218</sup>. One of them was closed for several weeks in 2004 when the principal was kidnapped by the LTTE for allegedly supporting TMVP. In this sense, the inability to go to school also became a source of knowledge about the conflict for staff and students alike. Shelling had damaged another of the visited schools, which was eloquent enough in its own right. Moreover, in yet another, a little girl was taken from the school premises, raped and killed (with many pointing towards TMVP members as responsible for this). The one-minute silence that students and school staff still hold

---

<sup>217</sup> Personal Interviews codes EP005, EP006 and EP009, December 2009.

<sup>218</sup> In 2010, the Ministry of Education recorded 340 National Schools & 9345 Provincial Island-wide, of which 30 were National schools and 973 Provincial (total 1,003 in the Eastern Province). See <http://www.moe.gov.lk>

in her memory is a further example of a silent transmission of knowledge – and emotions - of conflict.

Schools were also a favoured venue for many of the militant movements to hold meetings and “educate” the people about the conflict. Several Tamil principals recall attending many of those meetings when they were students themselves. Schools were in this manner the theatre of formal institutional knowledge transmission by day, and the stage for subversive knowledge by night. These seemingly clashing trends would coalesce all along the years of war as the LTTE regularly went to schools demanding the principals to gather the students in the assembly room to show them an LTTE “promotional” video, featuring several of their military operations and historical readings of war.

Former LTTE combatant and later head of TMVP -Pillayan - recalls how it was in school that he obtained the knowledge required to find and join the armed movement; how he would a few years later set up meetings in schools as part of his work within the political wing of the organisation; and how he would intercept new recruits coming from schools in his area of operations<sup>219</sup>. Indeed, principals had to witness how several of their students were forcibly taken to attend LTTE meetings in their camps. However, the problem was not always about students being taken away; for instance, one principal remembers how “one time a student came to an extracurricular course wearing the cyanide capsule around his neck and a grenade in his hand with the [sole] intention of showing off”<sup>220</sup>. War paraphernalia thus also became status symbols within the contours of the schools.

In many cases, schools located outside the army’s control were regularly the setting for roundups and beatings by the government soldiers that came looking for LTTE members, weapons or retaliation. A student interviewed by Trawick in 1998 recalls: “They came to school, closed the window and seized us and beat us. They fired their rifles. We were very afraid and we threw down our books and ran away. They also beat two teachers” (2002:379-380). But besides being the scene of direct violence, the symbolic front of war often also found its battlefields in schools. One principal recalls, for example, how he had to face a formal inquiry by the LTTE for having

---

<sup>219</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. December 2009.

<sup>220</sup> LTTE combatants were given a cyanide capsule to commit suicide before being questioned. Interview code EP005. 11<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

hoisted the National flag in school; conversely he would be sanctioned by the State if he did not<sup>221</sup>. A mirrored illustration is the memo received by principals ordering them to celebrate the recent Government's victory, not only by hoisting the flag but also by inviting members of the security forces as special guests to the schools. Finally, another example of schools being dynamic sites of symbolic contestation was epitomised by the instruction of the Eastern Province Education Secretary to revert the names of schools that had been renamed after LTTE leaders during their control. Moreover, he also ordered officials to destroy statues and memorials dedicated to LTTE 'martyrs' erected in many schools particularly in the Sampur (Trincomalee) area (Amarajeewa, 2009). Clearly then, the state performs its rites of order and control (Spencer, 2007:116) in schools and yet the same space is used to execute defiant subversive rituals (precisely because it is the same space).

In this respect, the ambivalent character of schools in the periphery becomes salient: they are at once a crucial device for the reproduction of an authorised national narrative (even if this is silence) and a site of contestation, where challenging and dominating (iconographic) practices coexist. These are most clearly embodied by the educators themselves, with their ambiguous role and sometimes-conflicting narratives and sentiments. Accordingly, reworking Parsons' observations in the context of armed conflict, it would appear that not only are schools liminal spaces between home and society, childhood and adulthood, but also liminal agents between State reproduction and its subversion.

## 5.6. Educators' Voices in and about Conflict

I interviewed 35 educators in Eastern Sri Lanka, 22 of whom are Tamil, 9 Muslim and 4 Sinhalese; also representing the four main religious affiliations in the province: Islam (9), Hinduism (14), Buddhism (4) and Christianity (8). As pointed out earlier, several people posed three recurrent counterarguments to the research question during the initial stages of fieldwork, namely: (a) "The history of conflict is not taught"; (b) "The new generation doesn't know anything about the history of conflict"; and (c) "The history of conflict is not learned but experienced". I argue that these counterarguments can be falsified by exploring the perspectives of the institutional transmitters of knowledge (Teachers and Principals) and their receivers - students -

---

<sup>221</sup> Personal Interview EP007. February 2010.

on the conflict's origin, their personal experiences with violence and their conflict-knowledge's acquisition process. As the following paragraphs will show, the richness of their narratives and experiences are in stark contrast with the silence of textbooks.

A salient feature to emerge from this research is the striking difference in disposition between principals and teachers to discuss issues pertaining to the conflict. Notably, principals (all former teachers) typically would not find any inconvenience in presenting their knowledge, stories and opinions, while many teachers were at least initially reluctant. Nearly all interviewed principals said to have experienced violence directly and elaborated extensively on it, while many teachers refused to even answer that question. Similarly, when talking about the ways in which they learned about conflict, teachers provided general answers such as "from family", "the media" or "from daily life", whereas principals instead incorporated their life experiences into their replies. In fact, as we shall see in the following paragraphs, several alternative spaces of transmission and images of conflict emerged from their memories.

The difference in reaction between teachers and principals is partly explained by the hierarchical differentiation, limiting teachers' sense of freedom, and by the protective character of principals' authority and social visibility. In addition, there is a generational gap between principals and teachers, implicating that the latter were already trained among the economy of silences in war. Finally, a fact that certainly influenced the differentiated disposition is associated with the membership of several interviewed principals to the clergy, giving them an altogether separate status. While the sample is too small, it is unlikely to be a coincidence that the more vociferous principals (male and female!) were high-ranking members of the Catholic Church.

After meandering through the educators' biographies, I commonly asked them about the origin of conflict as a way of establishing their own relations of causality. The most common answers were unsurprisingly *education policy*, followed by *language and communication problems*; regularly highlighting the standardisation of university admission and the Sinhala Only Act as turning points. To a lesser extent, educators mentioned the denial of basic rights for Tamils and discrimination in job opportunities. These answers are in tune with the scholarly discourses on the causes and were also commonly part of the insurgent's indoctrination narratives<sup>222</sup>. In this sense, it is

---

<sup>222</sup> On the other hand, the few Sinhalese educators with whom I manage to discuss this topic categorised the problem as the emergence of terrorism.

possible to assert that the interviews reflect a certain collective – although not monolithic - discourse on the causes of conflict among educators.

Several educators (particularly those trained in Jaffna) emphasised that their knowledge about the dynamics of violence was learned or at least nurtured by rumours that reached them. As Feldman posits, rumours consolidated their authority from the everyday “ecology of fear”, while often speaking of “unfinished historical experiences” (Das, 2000:6-67). Conversely, as Spencer’s analysis suggests, rumours operated in Sri Lanka as attempts at restoring a moral order in times when information was censored (Das, 2000:123).

Educators I interviewed also gave special emphasis to the Radio as source of information on the emerging violent conflict. The mobilisation force of this medium is known from other cases of deadly conflict around the globe, most notably *Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines* in Rwanda. Although radio broadcasts cannot be simplistically held responsible for triggering violence, in Sri Lanka as in Rwanda they did frequently produce certain historical accounts, framed public choices and “reinforced messages that many individuals received during face-to-face mobilization” (Straus, 2007:611). In Jaffna, the Catholic *Radio Veritas* transmitting from the Philippines (run by the Asian Catholic Bishops' Conference) became quite popular among locals, as well as the interviewed eastern principals and the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora later. In 1999, they were accused of linking up with LTTE’s station *Voice of the Tigers* to spread their propaganda globally by an Army officer quoted anonymously in *The Island* newspaper (31<sup>st</sup> May 1999); however, such allegations were categorically denied by the Sri Lankan bishops' National Centre for Social Communications.

Eastern educators claimed both rumours as radiobroadcasts would be regularly and explicitly re-evaluated within the university premises when they were students themselves. There, transmission mostly occurred outside formal classes, in seminars and group discussions usually organised by the militant movements themselves<sup>223</sup>. One must not forget that organisations sparking up from within universities in Sri Lanka and abroad (specifically in London) played a fundamental role in the onset of organised armed actors; most notably the Tamil Youth League, the Tamil Students League and the General Union of Eelam Students, eventually leading to the armed

---

<sup>223</sup> Personal Interviews EP001, EP002, EP003. October/November, 2009

Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS), the basic platform for other groups such as EPRLF, EPDP and the LTTE.

Furthermore, the earliest memories of some principals vividly illustrate the emergent symbolisation of conflict from the 1950s onwards. One principal of a school in the Eastern Province - but raised in Jaffna - became aware of the then nascent violent conflict through the lack of bread in her house. Given that Sinhalese typically ran most bakeries in Jaffna, once the communal tensions erupted many abandoned the peninsula, which resulted in the shortage of bread, sparking the interviewee's first awareness of conflict. For another teacher, the critical spaces for conflict knowledge acquisition were instead political rallies. With a hint of a nostalgic smile, he recalls that Tamil politicians were very eloquent speakers. In fact, he argues that one of the strongest weapons of mobilisation and recruitment those days was the beauty and fluency of Amirthalingam's interventions, together with his wife's songs praising Tamil culture<sup>224</sup>. However, some of the speeches of Sinhala politicians served the same purpose in reverse. While we talked, the former teacher made an effort to recollect some of the most famous sentences and finally he remembers: "we will peel the skin of Tamils, make drums with it and then beat them hard"<sup>225</sup>. Sometimes it is how others describe you that stays with you over time; a powerful and painful imprint, even if he dismisses it today with a smile.

For another educator, the first image of violence came when he witnessed the eruption of violence during the elections of 1977. A year earlier, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) had been formed as a reconfiguration of the previous Federal Party and the Tamil Congress. The TULF ran for the elections on the platform of full independence for the Tamil-speaking areas of Sri Lanka for the first time in the political contest (Nissan & Stirrat, in Spencer, 1990:37). The UNP won the 1977 elections and the TULF became the leading official opposition. Soon after, rumours (again!) spread claiming that Sinhalese had been killed in Jaffna. As a result, riots broke out in mixed areas, including Anuradhapura, where the principal was living at the time. There, a train from Jaffna headed to Colombo was stopped halfway and Tamil passengers were slaughtered (Nissan & Stirrat, in Spencer,

---

<sup>224</sup> Appapillay Amirthalingam succeeded Chelvanayakam in the leadership of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) with which he became the leader of the opposition after the 1977 elections. He fled to Madras (Chennai) as a result of the 1983 riots and returned to Sri Lanka after the signature of the Indo-Lanka accord in 1987. He was killed in 1989 by the LTTE.

<sup>225</sup> Personal Interview code ET004. December 2009.

1990:37). Violence proliferated in the surroundings and the interviewed principal's brother was injured while his family property was burnt. They were forcibly displaced and settled again as 'refugees' in the East<sup>226</sup>, together with many Indian Tamils from the tea estates, only to be victimised again in 1981 when the burning of the Jaffna Library (seen as a deliberate attack on Tamil learning and culture) provoked a new wave of violence (Nissan & Stirrat in Spencer, 1990:38). As this principal and others recalled, Tamils from other areas seeking refuge emerged as key sources of information and socialisation of violence (more so after the incidents of Black July 1983), given that they brought a perspective beyond local disputes<sup>227</sup>. Therefore, refugees operate in many instances as 'mobile relay towers', extending the wordings of violence and articulating multi-sited local experiences.

For one Muslim principal of a provincial school in Muttur (Trincomalee District), 1983 was the year in which he realised that there was a conflict: he was 17, sitting in the only TV hall in town, when he suddenly heard a blast. The following day, he went to the location of the explosion to find the shoe of one of the six soldiers who had perished in a landmine detonation. It was then that he realised a war was going on; the shoe becoming the symbol of that awareness<sup>228</sup>. Meanwhile, a current principal of a school in Alankerny recalls that he was about to take his A level examinations when the Black July riots erupted. As a result, the tests were postponed. From then onwards, exam or class suspensions developed in this manner as a way of learning about conflict for many students. In his turn, around a week after the 1983 blast in Jaffna, a former teacher of a Trincomalee college was taken in front of his students by the army for questioning. He was soon released because he was recognised by some members of the security forces as a known athlete. For these educators, as for Malathi in Thiranagama's ethnography (2011) and countless other families, Black July was both a public and private event.

A few years earlier in a town nearby, a thirteen-year-old boy (decades later appointed school principal) became aware of the armed conflict when one of his teachers came injured to school. It was his teacher's injury that first taught him about violence, although on that occasion it had erupted as a result of communal tensions

---

<sup>226</sup> Personal Interview code EP003. November 2009.

<sup>227</sup> Personal Interviews codes EP002, EP003. 25<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

<sup>228</sup> Personal Interview code EP005. 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

between Muslims and Tamils. That tension, the principal claims, emerged as a result of the armed struggle anyway. Soon after learning visually about violence through his teacher's injury, armed actors went to his home with propaganda while promoting an unusual type of war economy: "three pots of curd were given to the family in exchange for three members going to military training"<sup>229</sup>.

In Iralkuli, a village with heavy LTTE presence back at the height of war, a former principal recalls how his first realisation of conflict occurred during his son's birthday on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1985. He failed to buy him a present because shops were closed after a dead body was displayed in a junction of town. Since then - the teacher relates -, a nearby catholic church "became a refugee camp at least once a year" being a sacred space of survival, as well as a site of knowledge transmission on the conflict<sup>230</sup>. In addition, perhaps counter-intuitively, knowledge about the particular and detailed local dynamics of war often came from sources living abroad who warned their relatives to flee or hide when communal riots or a military siege was on the way. On several occasions, a telephone call from a European country warned a former teacher and principal of the eminent danger of communal unrest or LTTE attacks. Certainly after 1983, the Tamil Diaspora became an important site itself of transmission of knowledge, not only to the outside world and about the global dimensions of the Sri Lankan war, but also about the concrete movements of the conflict at the local level and for the local population.

One Kinniya principal's awareness of social upheaval began when his family hid Tamil friends seeking refuge from Trincomalee town in 1983. However, he learned about the specific Eastern Province dynamics of war in 1990 when he went together with another 15 teachers for training near Akkaraipattu. It was not at the training but rather on the bus en route that he acquired the knowledge, as people murmured about the massacres occurring those days in Kalmunai (on the path to Akkaraipattu). Indeed, after The LTTE abducted and executed more than 600 police officers on 11<sup>th</sup> June, a series of massacres followed in Kalmunai, resulting in the largest slaughter witnessed in a single town on the island in such a short time (UTHR(J), 2001). The principal subsequently came to experience violence directly in that same journey when they stopped for lunch: "Tigers approached us, called us Jihadists, locked us

---

<sup>229</sup> Personal Interview code EP006. 11<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>230</sup> Personal Interview code ET019. 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

up and told us they were going to teach us a lesson”<sup>231</sup>. Fortunately, one of the abducted teachers happened to know one of the Tiger leaders and all of them were released hours later.

Finally, educators illustrate how funerals also developed into yet another key site of transmission: “soldiers don’t come to funerals, no? So people talked freely” explained one, while another recounted how almost an entire school went to a student’s funeral, during which many learned the context wherein to place her death. Similarly, masses, *poojas*, and Jumma prayers grew to be key rituals for the socialisation of episodes of violence and the history behind them. One such example comes from a couple of Muslim principals who remember learning about the LTTE’s first execution in town through discussions in a mosque<sup>232</sup>. Another example is illustrated by a Hindu priest (*Poosari*) from Kalkudah (Batticaloa district) who I interviewed in 2011. During *poojas*, but especially during Hindu festivals, he preached about how to solve conflicts and handle children’s arrest or abductions. Furthermore, he would field all the questions that the community had regarding conflict, explained the reasons for it and presented ways to solve it. He claims that the history of wars have always been important in Hindu narratives, so he connected ancestral chronicles (from the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*) with LTTE’s struggle to explain their fight as well as its corruption<sup>233</sup>.

Like schools, temples of all denominations were also direct sites of violence, with the Kattankudy *Meer Jumma*, *Husseinia*, *Majid-Jul-Noor* and *Fowzie* Mosques being the most notorious of all, with the slaughter of more than 140 Muslims participating in *isha* prayers. Moreover, the 1998 bombing of the Temple of the Tooth (*Sri Dalada Maligawa*) in Kandy, or the recurrent incidents in Kovils in the war-torn North and East illustrate how temples transformed into literal battlegrounds. The interviewed *poosari* recalls, for example, how he was injured in the crossfire between LTTE members hiding in the Kovil premises and the security forces. He also remembers how, during the clashes within TMVP between Karuna and Pillayan supporters, they repeatedly sought members from the opposing faction during *poojas*, killing them in the nearby area (Kalkudah was part of TMVP’s strongholds). The *poosari* says that

---

<sup>231</sup> Personal Interview code EP005, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>232</sup> Personal Interview codes EP003 and EP005. 29<sup>th</sup> November and 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

<sup>233</sup> Personal Interview, Pusbaraja, Kalkudah, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

he was often forced to stop his *poojas* to replace them with funeral ceremonies for the assassinated TMVP members<sup>234</sup>.

I would like to bring this section to a close by reproducing a question that I posed to both principals and teachers: do you consider that the history of conflict should be compulsorily taught in school? Among teachers, only two answered *yes*; conversely, just two principals thought it was better *not* to teach it, given that it would create more resentment. Another said that it should be taught but he considered it impossible unless Tamils “get their independence”<sup>235</sup>. All others believed that it should be taught to avoid repeating the conflict’s history. This means that among the 35 interviewed educators (principals and teachers together), 51% considered conflict should *not* be taught and 49% felt it should. I posed the same question to 208 school students and a small group of former child soldiers in the eastern province. Their responses were significantly different from those of educators, as presented in the next section, where I will delve into the next generation’s acquired knowledge, views and sense-making processes in and about conflict.

## 5.7. The Youth’s Consumption of Conflict Knowledge

The often-reluctant disposition of teachers (G2) regarding the discussion of knowledge and perspectives on conflict can be contrasted with the generally assertive attitude and eager replies among students and even former child combatants (G3). With the purpose of capturing their ways of knowing conflict and violence, interviews and questionnaires were held and presented to 208 school students mainly from grade 10 and 11, as well as a small but selective group of former Tamil (child) combatants. The interviewed and surveyed students are Sinhala (30), Muslim (34) and Tamil (138), 45% are female and 55% male, studying in schools in Trincomalee, Vaharai, Valaichennai, Batticaloa, Kalmunai and Akkaraipattu. 48% subscribed to Hinduism, 17% to Catholicism, 16% to Islam and 13% to Buddhism.

---

<sup>234</sup> Personal Interview, Pusbaraja, Kalkudah, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

<sup>235</sup> Personal Interview code EP002. Trincomalee, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

The questionnaires included 26 open questions dealing with media consumption, personal context, information and opinions on conflict and war. The results were preceded and complemented with participant observation in some classes and informal interviews in and outside schools. 11 schools provided the setting for this part of my research, found in the 6 aforementioned towns, which are located across the three districts of the Eastern Province. As the numbers suggest, two-thirds of the discussants referred to themselves as Tamil. I purposefully sought to maintain this majority in order to facilitate the linkage of this part of the investigation with the section on TMVP's emergence, thereby cutting through the boundaries between armed actors and civil society<sup>236</sup>.

The first section of my interviews and questionnaires focused on students' claimed sources of conflict-related knowledge. It is important to establish this because the dominant approach on teaching and learning a violent past are based on predetermined sites and derive their findings from the texts intended to be transmitted. Therefore, they relate to content, intention and production, yet do not really test its transmissional effect. Even if it points to exactly the same spaces, this shift is methodologically sounder for the purposes of discussing the transmission, legitimisation and mobilisation of conflict; provided we acknowledge that claimed sources do not exhaust the universe of actual transmission spaces.

### 5.7.1. Spaces and Sources of Conflict knowledge: Media and Family

Although it feels predictable that *media* and *family* were the top answers in terms of sources of conflict knowledge among students, there are some worthy annotations to be made. For one, newspapers (130) came on top among the different media, above TV (109), radio (56) and the internet (49). This may be treated as crucial indicator for future policy making in that newspapers (and among Tamils, one in particular – Virakesari) could become crucial partners in the implementation of renewed forms of approaching the conflicting past.<sup>237</sup>

---

<sup>236</sup> This is not to say that only the Tamil population allows cutting across civil society and armed actors; it simply points to the fact that TMVP, central to this book, are overwhelmingly Tamil. Interesting connections could be explored in the future expanding the analysis to the way in which conflict is taught within the military forces (overwhelmingly Sinhalese) for example. It may also be suggestive to capture narratives on conflict emerging from former Muslim members of the home guards.

<sup>237</sup> Here the findings of the *National Level Attitude Survey on National Cohesion* carried out a few years back (2008) by NEREC are pertinent to confirm that media consumption varies among the

Principals and teachers' replies presented in the previous chapter commonly highlighted radio as a crucial site of knowledge about conflict. In this segment, the increasingly determinant presence of visual sources has been established among the new generation. Yet, not all was only visually transferred to the new generation; in fact, many pupils attribute the birth of their consciousness of war to hearing gunshots, bombings, landmine detonations and outcries. The sounds of war are thus also a site of transmission for the new generation<sup>238</sup>.

After *Media* as a whole, *Family* was indicated as the second most common source of conflict knowledge, although its role has been historically shifting following a kind of pendular function. Owing to the traditionally restrictive role of the households, the militant groups particularly in the North construed themselves as an alternative and more open space for socio-historical exchange. However, when the armed groups invaded the entire political spectrum and tolerated hardly any dissidence, homes and family networks re-emerged as sites of debate and explicit knowledge transfer (Thiranagama, 2011:226). Meanwhile, a conservative gender and generational discourse championed by the LTTE recaptured public debate and was meant to guarantee order and obedience among civilians (Alison, 2004); something that Joke Schrijvers perceived as a reaction to the rapid social changes of war (1999: 312).

The family has certainly been a critical site for transmission in Eastern Sri Lanka. However, once discussed further with students, it appears that this source mainly served to relate incidents of violence meant to convey the history of a feeling, the history of their suffering. As such, much of the family transmission went unsaid, with memories being shared instead through "unexplained photographs and observed tears", as Thiranagama (2011:98) observed for the North. Nonetheless, even if following a wordless grammar of the conflicts' past, such transmitted suffering also has a salient significance in the relations between memory and history (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003: 103). Notably however, students quite regularly pointed not to a direct face-to-face knowledge acquisition but rather to overheard conversations in the household among family members or parents and their friends: eavesdropping as transmission.

---

different ethnic groups. National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC), University of Colombo.

<sup>238</sup> For instance, one student recalls: "when I was 12 years old I clearly heard the SL Army firing multi-barrel missiles from the Weber stadium" Interview and questionnaire code ES103-T.

### 5.7.2. Spaces and Sources of Conflict knowledge: Teachers

Teachers – the embodiments of institutional transmission - constituted only 8% of the responses referring to student's sources of knowledge about conflict. Many of those mentioning teachers as a source were grade 12 and 13 students who followed Political Science as one of their subjects, particularly from one school (Akkaraipattu), where their teacher seemed willing to discuss the conflict more systematically than any other. Other students also learned issues related to conflict from their instructors, albeit using an acquisition technique already implemented by many in the household: "When I was 9 years old I heard about it from overhearing a discussion among teachers", one student related<sup>239</sup>.

I personally attended political science classes by another teacher in Valaichennai, hoping to capture instances of direct transmission of conflict knowledge. While I witnessed no concrete approach to the history of war or violence, the experience did offer me the confirmation of a special rapport between the teacher and his students; a trust that made plausible their (privately expressed) claims of sustaining chats that ventured into sensitive matters such as some of the students' support for the LTTE struggle. After gaining a little more trust myself, I attempted to explore whether the Karuna split or TMVP's formation were also discussed in class, but the teacher swiftly said no, making it clear to me that this was not something we could converse about. He did say that Karuna came to explain his split to students at the university premises while he was doing his degree in the Eastern University in 2004. He also insisted the principal of the school (where he teaches and I was conducting research) was kidnapped by the Karuna faction in 2006. When he disappeared, students and fellow teachers shut down the school in protest (something they repeated when fellow students were abducted). However, days later, the principal returned and denied that any kidnapping had taken place.

### 5.7.3. Armed Actors, Politicians and Victims

It is noteworthy that the LTTE were only once mentioned as a source of knowledge (by a Tamil student). *Soldiers*, on the other hand, were cited six times; five of which were by Sinhalese students and one time by a Muslim. Yet, we know that armed actors – Tamil militant groups as well as the Sri Lankan Army - visited many of the

---

<sup>239</sup> Questionnaire code ES148-T

schools, even in recent years. A former TMVP child soldier remembers how the LTTE went to his school during special dates such as Heroes' Day. According to him, they used the opportunity to give the students the background of their struggle and encouraged them to join. However, students surprisingly never mentioned the LTTE videos, given that based upon educators' accounts we know that all pupils were most likely to have watched them during some of the movements' school visits.

Meanwhile, *Politicians* were considered only four times - all by Tamils -, which is incongruent with other indirect replies clearly indicating that politicians influence students' perspectives (discussed later on). These inconsistencies highlight the importance of including distortions or mismatches between formal categories and ground realities as part of the analysis. For example, given the LTTE's "one combatant per family policy", categories such as family and armed actors are not always distinguishable spaces in eastern Sri Lanka, allowing knowledge about the conflict to circulate from one domain into the other. Therefore, one should realise that when a student says that he learns about the conflict's history from family members, this might (and does) occasionally overlap with armed actors. Similarly, the proportionally frequent mention of soldiers by Sinhalese students prompted me to dive into their parents occupations. Indeed, among the parents of the 30 Sinhalese students I interviewed and surveyed were two police officers, four Navy civil workers and three Army officers<sup>240</sup>.

It is significant that some students explicitly referred to victims of violent incidents or internally displaced people as important sources of conflict knowledge, even if proportionally far less often than the media, the family or teachers. Finally, it is worth noting that when asked how they learned about conflict, two students actually mentioned memorials as source of knowledge, while a third specifically referred to damaged houses and ruins of war as cognition sites. Surely, even if not mentioned, for many others the architectures of war also functioned as transmissional sites of conflict.

I also gathered evidence of peer-to-peer transmission in which one common theme was their preoccupation with the way in which the war affected their education and

---

<sup>240</sup> Noticeable also three drivers, three fishermen and three working for the electricity board, all of which may provide an idea of the Sinhalese demographics in Trincomalee according to occupation.

future prospects<sup>241</sup>. Others pointed out that they were displaced each time fighting took place, so “when we returned to school we discussed about this”. Some simply said that due to fellow pupils being direct victims, “we shared their misery”. One Tamil student said that he talked with his friends and classmates about how “Sinhalese with low marks got high jobs while on our side those who got high marks are without jobs. We talked about this when we go home after school”<sup>242</sup>. Finally, one female Muslim student from Kalmunai told me that she spoke with classmates about the history of conflict, and specifically during a “drama [theatre play] related to peace in our class”<sup>243</sup>.

For the development of the concept of semantic alliance, this section provides as input the confirmation that there is no single source but rather a multiplicity of sites claimed by the new generations. Moreover, the sites are not mutually exclusive; they are added, mixed and to a certain extent they also overlap. If this is the case, a defined self-contained master narrative as the thread of transmission is no longer conceivable; nor is the opposite idea of radical non-transmission suggested informally by so many.

#### 5.7.4. Perspectives on the Genesis and Arguments of War

The practice of describing conflict is politically significant and constitutive of relations of power (Jabri 1996). Through such descriptions, violence is woven into narrative, symbolic and societal forms (Das 2007:86-87). Bearing this in mind, I attempted to establish students’ expressions of causality, their attribution of responsibility of conflict and the transfer mechanisms implemented by them.

##### **When**

More than 30 different answers were given by students to the question *When did the conflict start?* They ranged from “*from the time Kings ruled Sri Lanka*” all the way to “*2007*”. One student even said the conflict began with tensions between Aryans and Dravidians, reflecting a popular view of the conflict stretching back thousands of years and framed in proto socio-linguistic categories. Within such a narrative, the Sinhalese would descend from North Indian Aryans with *Prince Vijaya* as their

---

<sup>241</sup> E.g. Questionnaire codes ES003-S, ES004-S, ES013-S.

<sup>242</sup> Interview and Questionnaire codes ES135-T; ES007-T.

<sup>243</sup> Interview and Questionnaire ES124-T.

mythical common ancestor, while Tamils would be of South Indian Dravidian descent (Spencer, 1990). This dichotomy based on 19<sup>th</sup> century historiographies found further expression in a mythical power contest known by all Sri Lankans: King Dutugumunu vs. King Elara, personifications of the Sinhalese and Tamil communities. Today, explicit attempts are made to link current President Rajapakse with King Dutugumunu. While the president himself evokes the ancient warrior king, perhaps a more remarkable example is a statement of the Ministry of Defense, echoing H.L.D. Mahindapala's praising of Rajapakse for having "repeated all over again the history of Dutugumunu" (Grant, 2012:193).

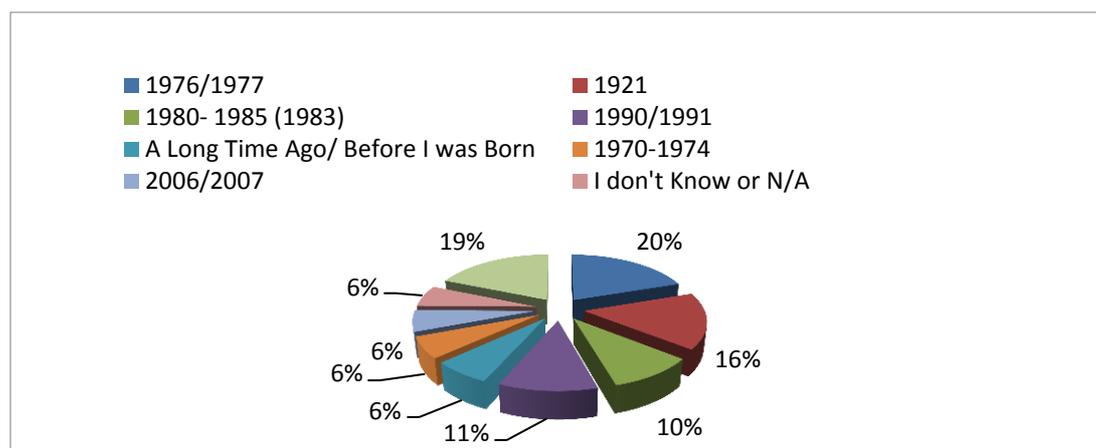
Among the students I talked with, the highest single answer on when the conflict started was 1976/77 (20%). In second place came 1921 (16%), ahead of 1990/1991 (11%) and 1980-1985 (9%). Contrary to the popular assumption of the youth being apathetic and oblivious of history, 94% of the respondents claimed to know when the conflict erupted, out of which at the very least 52% of the answers could easily be justified in terms of the history of conflict according to accepted accounts (1921, 1970-74, 1976/77 and 1980-1985).

I expressly opted for an open notion of conflict that could encompass both armed confrontations as well as a more general social upheaval, thereby allowing replies that could point to the eruption of violence as such, or to perceived preconditions. This proved to be a rewarding choice. The most common answer (1976/1977) indeed pointed to the emergence of armed actors in the Northern province (the LTTE was founded in 1976), while the second most commonly indicated starting point in fact refers to a political landmark prior even to Sri Lanka's independence. 1921 was the year in which the Legislative Council of Ceylon elections were held after the first Manning Reforms. The latter installed territorial representation rather than the formerly ethnically grounded system through which Tamils upheld their political participation and safeguarded their rights. Many scholars mark this as a significant point in which the polarisation among the Sinhalese and Tamil political communities took shape, particularly within the elites (de Silva, 2005[1981]). Moreover, apparently so do many high-school students; however, the majority of those who pointed to 1921 as the origin of conflict were students undertaking their advanced level (grade 13) in political science. They are largely the same students who considered teachers as a source of knowledge in the first place. It seems then that when educators play a role in conflict knowledge transmission, they carry a more authoritative voice than the

media after all, particularly in terms of the consolidation of a specific mnemonic theme.

Furthermore, the third most common reply pointing to the genesis of conflict (1980-1985) captures the lustrum in which scattered violence transformed into a full-scale civil war, with the highest number corresponding to the most prominent turning point known as Black July 1983. The top three replies concerning when conflict started reflect then conceptions of conflict's genesis respectively understood as armed action, as the result of electoral politics and a straightforward war. Interestingly, the fourth most common reply, signalling 1990/1991 as the starting point for conflict, provides instead a regional interpretation of the chronological frame of conflict. Those are critical years for the Eastern province and could in fact be conceived as the watershed inserting civil war into the eastern landscape. This is true for Tamils, and notably also for the Muslim population. 140 worshippers were namely killed in two Mosque massacres in the Eastern province by the LTTE in 1990, while between 70,000 and 80,000 were evicted from the North, most ending in Puttalam (North western province) as well as the East (McGilvray, 1997; Bazeer in Black August, UTHR Report No.5 1990). 250 Tamil males were killed a month before in Kalmunai (Ampara district), allegedly by the security forces in retaliation for the LTTE's execution of over 600 policemen who had previously surrendered (UTHR Report No4, 1990). Therefore, 1990 is to the Eastern Province what 1983 meant for the entire island. Among Muslims, these incidents are in fact referred to as Black August.

**Figure 5.2 When did the Conflict start according to you? (Students)**



Source: author's questionnaire data.

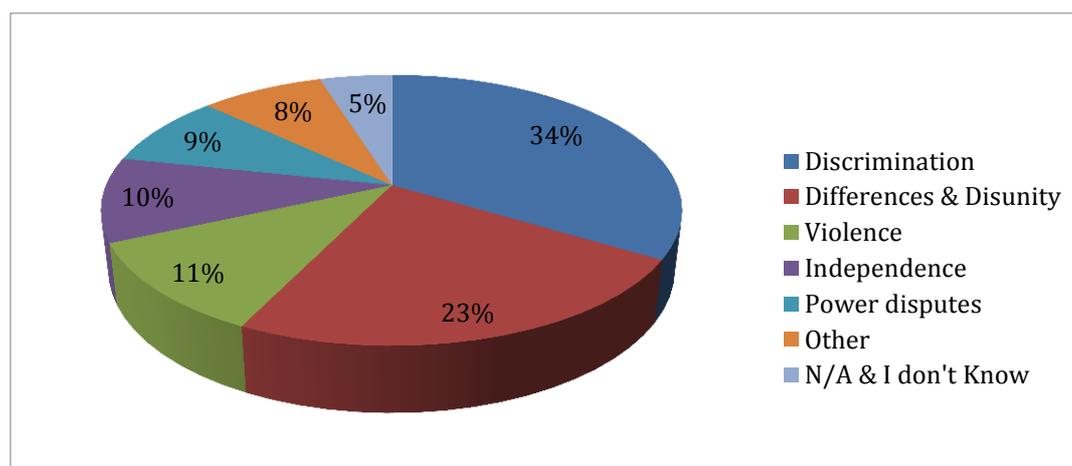
Overall, with such results the validity of the counterargument claiming that the new generation does not know the history of conflict is considerably called into question.

However, what this does reveal is that the more-or-less cohesive collective discourse on conflict retrievable among educators appears to dilute or diversify in the knowledge transfer to a new generation. Rather than the result of ignorance, this may be related to the fact that the outbreak of (armed) conflict is always a disputable matter, even so for those who already grew up in the midst of it. When a historical instance that you register as having a triggering effect happens within one's own life span, you may fix that rupture. By contrast, when the breaking point is prior to your life cycle, such a historical instance is far more open for hermeneutical contestation.

### Why

Another question providing an entry into the framing structures of the new generation's conceptualisation of conflict is *why did the conflict start?* While replies were easier to categorise post facto, they reveal a diversity that is worth exploring. The highest marking answers fall under the broad notion of *discrimination*, corresponding to 34% of the replies. Almost all former combatants would also point to this factor, albeit with a specific semantic mutation: rather than using a language of rights, abuses or indeed discrimination, their preferred term was *slavery*, a word quite regularly implemented by principals as well. *Differences and Disunity* (23%) – the second largest category - was conceived by students in terms of ethnicity and religion. Meanwhile, I included terms such as terrorism, ethnic riots and the lack of peace within the third largest category – *Violence*.

**Figure 5.3 Why did the Conflict start?**



Source: author's questionnaire data

Given that *discrimination* was the most common answer among G3 (students and former child combatants), G2 (teachers and second rank leaders) and G1 (principals and leaders), it is plausible to state that it constitutes what I call a *hegemonic signifier*

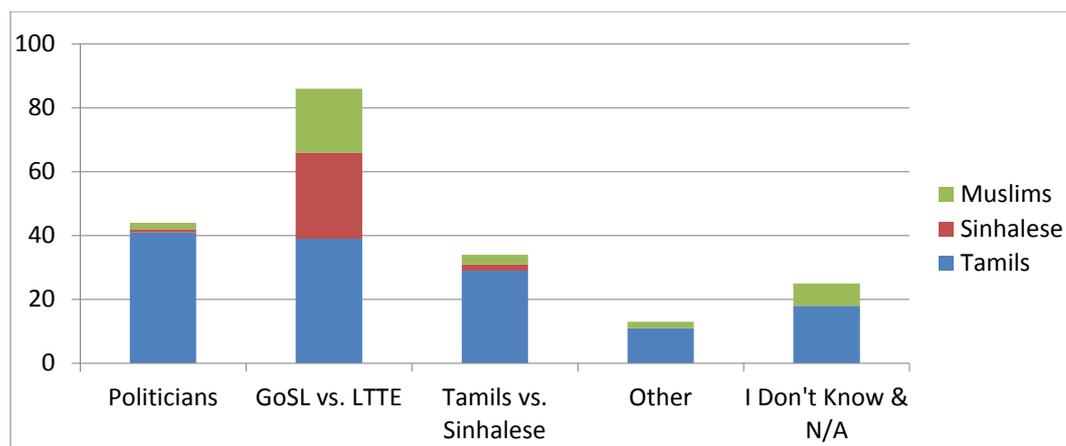
within the network of semantic alliances that sustains war. However, when considering only Sinhalese students, discrimination was not the top answer. This is significant given that it confirms a differentiated socialisation of violence and its past. Rather than discrimination, Sinhalese students most commonly signalled *disunity* as the cause of conflict, followed by the intention to divide or rule the country (which included answers such as independence, desire of Eelam and ruling by the LTTE).

### **Who**

As a question providing suggestive insights into students' characterisation of the armed conflict, I also asked who they considered the main actors to be. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the *Sri Lankan Government (GoSL) vs. LTTE* came out on top, although this requires qualification: 66% (20) of the Sinhalese students actually only mentioned the LTTE, although these replies were included in this category. Among Tamil students, nine mentioned only one of the two sides, including references to the *President* or *Prabhakaran*.

Interestingly, taking all the students together, *Politicians* came second, although it was in fact the number one answer among Tamils. What at first glance appear to be routine replies are actually quite significant insights into the new generation's way of knowing and imagining conflict. This is the case because the two most common answers avoid the otherwise popular totalising process whereby some among a group are equated with entire communities (a sociological *totum pro parte*), which is a key engine in perpetuating violence worldwide. Naming the government and the LTTE as the main actors, contrariwise, pointed to a characterisation of conflict in terms of a clash of organisational and power structures. Similarly, by giving politicians top position, respondents were indirectly granting discourse a primary role in conflict, interpreting its existence in terms of persuasive practices, discussed below. In neither of the above cases did students resort to preconceived biosocial identities or discriminatory material practices to typify actors and implicitly explain conflict through such a lens. As such, in my opinion those two top answers border on a paradigm shift that plenty of commentators and even social scientists still struggle to make. It is stunning how regularly the Sri Lankan civil war is still portrayed in the media and other spaces as a fight between Tamils and Sinhalese. I would go as far as to insinuate there is likely to be a correlation between this generational epistemic shift and the possibility of TMVP's emergence that so dramatically (be it unwillingly) questioned the dominant primordialist sustenance behind violence.

**Figure 1.4 Who do you consider were (are) the main actors of Conflict?**



Source: author's questionnaire data

### 5.7.5. Personal and Socialised Memories of Violence

In order to reinsert this exploration into the ways of knowing conflict within the students' and combatants experiential realities, I turned to their memories. For such a purpose, it was important to establish how many of the interviewed and surveyed pupils claimed to be affected by violence. Its relevance stems not so much from the possibility of establishing some kind of thermometer of grief; but rather from the fact that there is a kind of knowing that works through suffering, significantly marking the linkage between violence and subjectivity (Das et al. 2000:221).

92 of them said to have been affected (44%), while 109 said that they were not (53%). This is a high number in itself, but it would be even more so were it not for the diverse conceptions of what being directly affected means, as stated at the beginning of this section. A similar ambiguity is found in the replies given to Margaret Trawick (2002) by students who denied having been personally affected by violence, yet they soon clarified that all Tamils had suffered the consequences of war. In any case, violence and the personal experiences surrounding it undoubtedly play a vital pedagogical role in the students' conceptualisation of conflict; something already demonstrated when many among them perceived violence itself as a cause of the struggle.

### 5.7.6. Episodic Memory Registers

To contrast personal memories of violence and the inter-subjective memory of conflict, I asked on the one hand about specific incidents that students remembered,

and on the other about their knowledge of an event of particular symbolic density occurring before the respondents were born. 77% of the 208 students remembered a specific incident of violence occurring in their life span. This is a considerably higher number than those claiming to be affected by violence, which points to a crucial transmissional vehicle beyond the direct experience of affectation. The single most common incident mentioned by students was the killing of five students on the Trincomalee beach (31 times), followed by the market/clock-tower bomb (29) in the same town.

Discussing the killing of the five Tamil students specifically will illustrate why it left such a decisive imprint in the students' memory. Tensions among the warring parties -officially still in a ceasefire - had been rising after the presidential elections of November 2005, in which current President Mahinda Rajapakse was elected. Anxiety had already risen in Trincomalee since the installation of the Buddha statue between the central bus stand and the market earlier that year, which had led to extra deployments of security personnel in town. Then, on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2006, five Tamil students were hanging around the beach when a grenade was thrown from a passing three-wheeler at around 7.15pm, exploding only metres away from the students. Almost immediately, a military truck appeared, and instead of chasing the three-wheeler, the occupants surrounded the Tamil youths, forcing them to kneel down. Two were shot behind the ear, one in the back of the head and the others in the chest and abdomen while they made an attempt to escape. According to some reports, the boys were allegedly executed by a joined operation between the Army, Police, Navy and Special Task Force in front of several witnesses (Gaasbeek, 2010; UTHR 2006). The fact that this violent act was explicitly performed in front of a large audience underscores that it was meant to be a pedagogic device: to instil fear by staging the consequences of dissent; to reiterate their power and the audience's impotence; and to induce mass silence.

All of the slayed Tamil youngsters were born in 1985, completed their A levels in 2004/5 and were alumni of Sri Koneswara Hindu College, apart from one who studied at St. Joseph's College (both schools were part of this research). Despite a series of attempts at covering up the security forces' involvement, the public outcry managed to induce the arrest of 12 Special Task Force officers, although they were acquitted soon after. In September 2006, a Presidential Commission of Inquiry was set up to investigate serious allegations of Human Rights violations, considering 15 concrete cases, including the Trincomalee executions; but that too resulted in

impunity as the Commission of Inquiry was disbanded in 2009 and was unable to complete its mandate (Amnesty International, 2009).

The second most commonly remembered incident refers to the April 2006 bomb explosion in the Trincomalee market, which triggered subsequent rounds of riots in which Tamil shops were burnt and around 25 people were killed (Gaasbeek, 2010). The location and type of incident facilitated this instance of violence to be cross-communally remembered by the younger generation. The indiscriminate targeting, the unknown perpetrators and the inter-communal space that the market represents all contributed to a more de-ethnicised memory work. Notably, many among the 30 Sinhalese students recalled the market bombing in Trincomalee, yet not a single one referred to the killing of five students on the beach, the most mentioned incident among their fellow Trincomalee Tamil students. Thus, after previously acknowledging that there are differentiated media consumption and transmission sources, this result points to an additional *selective ethnicised remembrance*.

The discussion above nevertheless shows how both autobiographical and historical memory are charged with emotional meaning, having the direct experience of a few creating local and private knowledge nevertheless emotionally shared by entire groups in the Eastern Province. Five Tamil students were killed in Trincomalee in January 2006; however, many more seem to recall those events as if they had been there. Indeed, Young once suggested that “the biographically and historically generated pain may never be entirely separable” (Cappelletto 2003:256).

### 5.7.7. Semantic Memory

While 77% of the respondents remembered a particular incident of violence, only 41% among the students claimed any knowledge about Black July 1983. In spite of the disquieting gap, the responses show a significant level of awareness of the conflict having started before their observed reality<sup>244</sup>. More importantly, a significant difference is observable according to the community to which the students belong, given that only 18% of Muslims, 33% among the Sinhalese, but 46% of the Tamil students claimed any knowledge regarding July 1983<sup>245</sup>. Finally, a salient feature

---

<sup>244</sup> Have you heard of incidents related to conflict happening in July 1983? Yes: 81; No: 109; N/A: 9. Author's questionnaire data.

<sup>245</sup> Yes: 10 Sinhalese (33%); Tamils: 63 (46%); Muslims: 6 (18%). No: 16 Sinhalese (53%); Tamils: 63 (46%); Muslims 23 (68%). N/A: 4 Sinhalese (13%); Tamils 12 (9%); Muslims: 5 (15%). Author's questionnaire data.

here is that knowledge claims about 1983 differ widely from school to school. All of the 12 students (100%) questioned from Sri Ramakrishna College in Akkaraipattu claimed to know about the 1983 riots, as did 15 out of 18 (83%) from Valaichennai Hindu College. Whereas knowledge amongst the former may have come from large numbers of people from Colombo seeking refuge in the area, in the latter it may have come from a specific outspoken teacher.

Black July reflects a further crucial symbolic reference connecting the Tamil Diaspora (between them and with Sri Lanka). Crucial tools for that purpose include YouTube videos dealing with that critical event. One such interesting case is the collection of 35 videos posted under the title “Remember 1983” uploaded by *Vikalpa*<sup>246</sup>, including testimonies of public figures and footage of the *Forum for life Vigil to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Black July*. However, their reach is limited compared to other visual registers. The two most viewed videos were actually: 1) *Prabhakaran speaking about Black July* (20,369 views), uploaded by username *eelammaravar* (Canada) overtly reproducing an LTTE production; and 2) *British Tamils Hold Midnight Vigil to Commemorate Black July 1983 -Tamil Holocaust* (9,469), uploaded by *lovetamilееleam*. However, even put together they fail to reach similar ratings as videos dealing with *Maveerar Naal* (Heroes’ Day), the 2011 version of which obtained more than 42,000 views to date. Interestingly, in most such videos the English translation provided for that day is “Tamil National Remembrance Day”.

Before mentioning transmission sites that went unnamed, I would like to close this section by recalling the question that I also posed to educators. I asked the 208 high school students in the Eastern Province whether or not the history of conflict should be taught in school, to which they replied as follows: 147 pupils (71%) felt that the history of conflict should be taught in school, while 47 (22%) were against it. I was happy to see that my own presuppositions were corrected by the findings, as I assumed the percentage supporting teaching the history of conflict would be the highest among Tamil students. However, although a far smaller number were asked the question, the Sinhalese students actually came out on top with 73% favourability<sup>247</sup>.

---

<sup>246</sup> A Citizen Journalism Initiative in Sri Lanka anchored to the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA), exploring issues related to human rights, democracy, governance and peace.

<sup>247</sup> Yes: 22 Sinhalese, 98 Tamils, 23 Muslims. No: 7 Sinhalese, 32 Tamils, 7 Muslims. N/A: 1 Sinhalese, 8 Tamils and 4 Muslim. Author’s survey data.

### 5.7.7 Unnamed Transmission Sites

Ultimately, every scene of social interaction is potentially a site of transmission of knowledge. The abundance of transmission loci mentioned by students regarding conflict cannot hide, however, that there are significant voids in the new generation's acquired knowledge about its history. This is explained by the lack of institutional attempts at construing a multi-voiced narrative of the conflict history, the imposition of silence by the different armed actors, as well as the pervasive effect of a protracted war in a generation born in it. Yet, the referred spaces as well as some unclaimed transmission sites do constitute important engines in the youth's epistemological fabrications. An additional look into some spaces of conflict transmission beyond those acknowledged by educators, students and former combatants is due.

A transmission locus that went unnamed is tuition class. I am convinced that this has been a site of knowledge transfer of conflict, given its prominence in the new generation's daily routines. Although the provision of education is meant to be free in Sri Lanka, socioeconomic realities have led to a vicious dependence cycle in which students hoping to obtain their high school diploma have little alternative other than resorting to private tuition classes. The precarious teacher salaries have pushed educators to offer private classes on the side in order to make a decent living, which allegedly often entails many of them expressly reducing their performance in school in order to attract more paying students after hours. Paradoxically then, much public education happens within the private walls of tuition classes. Based on eastern teachers' suggestion of extracurricular transmission, my suspicion is that once free from institutional constraints and granted a more intimate space of exchange with students, it is possible many teachers favoured such moments to convey details, opinions and feelings about the conflicting past.

There is another cultural site very specific to Eastern Sri Lanka in which issues pertaining to conflict are addressed, yet encoded within a particular religious activity. I refer to the oracle-telling performances in the local Amman temples so cunningly captured by Patricia Lawrence (1998, 2000). As the author posits, Amman oracles' performances "embody, interpret and acknowledge the injury of war", they facilitate a testimonial agency challenging political silencing and promote a kind of redemptive remembering (Lawrence, 2000:179-189). The oracles, with their cognitive grasp that transcended human registers, enlarged the body of knowledge of conflict and

provided information that no book, teacher or newspaper could ever capture. Like the ghost stories discussed by Sasanka Perera for Southern Sri Lanka (in Das, 2001) – or storytelling in general for that matter -, oracles created an opening for private experiences of violence to enter the sphere of collective memory. In my second-hand reading of the experiences of oracle-telling, I see attendance to such performances as the momentary creation of a space in-between personal and collective remembering; a moment between (human) narrative re-empowerment and a liberating surrender to a divine destiny. As the oracle actively connects stories emanating from multiple discursive domains (bringing together narratives from spatially and temporarily distant places), Amman oracles - like refugees or child combatants - become social embodiments of this dense interaction of meaning production that I call semantic alliances.

On 12<sup>th</sup> December 2009, I witnessed the formation of another ambiguous and problematic space of conflict transmission whilst attending an event celebrating Human Rights Day in Trincomalee town. Video footage was projected to an audience of local community members - most notably displaced Tamil families with their children -, international aid workers and local and international human rights advocates. It was full of explicit scenes of mutilation, dead bodies, crying children and bleeding people. What I found even more remarkable was that two very young girls simultaneously stood in front and started to perform a dance representing their personal experience of the bombings being displayed behind them. One of the girls could not cope with it and, after the organisers tried to persuade her, she was finally left to sit down. The other girl continued, portraying in a rather compelling fashion the instances in which she sat next to her mother's dead body, mutilated by shelling. The event became a space to (re)expose the audience to the most gruesome features of war and for direct victims to dramatically relive it. Surely this exercise was meant to be cathartic, while conveying the plight of war victims (and to perhaps persuade funders to give more money) in the most compelling way possible. I ignore how the performing girls were coached and counselled for such an emotionally charged if not traumatic re-enactment. I wonder if there could ever be enough counselling for such a young child to aestheticise her suffering in such a way. But moral objections aside, the fact is that events such as the one described here are recurrent sites of conflict-knowledge transmission, regardless of how grisly we may find them to be.

When discussing the linkages between transmission, art and conflict in Eastern Sri Lanka, inexorably Batticaloa's *Butterfly Peace Garden* must be mentioned. Children

who have consumed propaganda, witnessed violence, lost relatives and were well aware of the fate of their peers coopted by war, went to the Butterfly Peace Garden to befriend each other and give meaning to the war around them (De Mel, 2007). In there, dreaming and play are deployed as tools of healing traumas of violence and loss; tales of war are created, translated and retold as imaginative acts, some of which have been printed in the Tamil journal *Katridiya* (The Wind), which is distributed in local schools (de Mel, 2007:159). The Garden is thus both a private site of memory and a public transmissional effort through children's narrativisation of violence. Once more, I read the ritualised action of the Butterfly Peace Garden, with its elaborations of allegories of war, as an actual example of the execution of innovative semantic alliances, here perhaps more than in any other space geared towards inducing change and relief.

Last but not certainly not least, I would like to mention art (including literature and cinema) as a space of transmission and transformation of conflict knowledge. I will not enter into a revision of the wide-ranging efforts made in these fields to relate in some form issues pertaining to conflict or Sri Lanka's civil war in particular. I only want to highlight here that Sri Lanka - as I also recognise from the Colombian context - witnessed a literary, plastic, audiovisual and embodied reaction to the advent of systematic violence. They produced counter-narratives, and quite often also reproduced semantic constructions that built up towards what de Mel calls the militarisation of Sri Lanka.

A noticeable absence in this chapter is the missing entries from educators and students on TMVP's emergence. The explanation is as simple as it is telling (even if it was also disappointing for the purposes of this research): speaking of TMVP was still taboo during the time of my fieldwork; it was too fresh, too difficult to evaluate and too compromising with TMVP being so present in local dynamics and embedded in regional power structures. The opposite was surprisingly much more accessible: approaching and asking former TMVP combatants about their experiences and views on conflict.

#### 5.7.8. Former Combatants' Sources and knowledge on Conflict

After exploring transmission sites and practices beyond the specific contours of armed actors, it is now time to re-enter TMVP's world by returning via those social agents that are both part of the new generation discussed above as well as members of the armed organisation central in this dissertation: former TMVP (child)

combatants. Some among the interviewed were initially recruited by the LTTE (before, during or in the immediate aftermath of the split), rendering their experience one of almost radical liminality, not only trapped in the space between being a victim and a perpetrator, between being a child and an adult, between being civil society and armed actor, but also between being made part of violence as insurgent and as counterinsurgent.

As illustrated by the following exchange, many former child combatants were recruited at such an early age that formal schooling barely had an imprint on them. And yet, attending school - in this case a specific school - already became a transmission practice of its own and a coping strategy in the midst of war. While I was staying in a vocational centre among several former combatants, a recently arrived young man (Marcos) sat down with me and shared his life experience. From the very beginning, his narrative surprised me:

M- I studied only till grade 2 at the 'Sinhala Maha Vidyalayam'.

A- Wait, you studied in Sinhala medium? [he's a Tamil]

M- Yes my mother said that if I didn't learn Sinhala we wouldn't survive"

A- Why did you leave school?

M- I left after my father was killed by the Navy. I started helping fishermen on the beach.

For Marcos, both starting and leaving school were already pedagogies of war paced by the deaths of his direct kin. He entered and left a Sinhala medium school as a survival tactic; but his departure was also the preparatory setting for 'revenge as a way of living'. Both of his brothers joined the LTTE to avenge their father's death: one was killed during the renowned *Elephant Pass* battle; the other, after having deserted the movement, was shot dead by the LTTE themselves upon his return. A narrative to historically frame these experiences of violence came to Marcos through political science classes offered by the LTTE while he was still too young to fight. That is how he learned about 1983, "about how politicians are always wrong and our people are always suffering". Marcos confesses he was not really interested though: he just wanted to carry arms<sup>248</sup>. As already captured in earlier chapters, the fact that he studied in Sinhala medium not only helped him to survive, it also enabled the

---

<sup>248</sup> Personal Interview code EC004. 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010. Aided in the translation by Fr. Sahayanthan.

execution of other forms of violent practices, as he became one of TMVP's agents operating with Sri Lanka's military intelligence after Karuna's split.

Some former child combatants do have recollections of conflict knowledge acquired through teachers before their recruitment. For one of them, the history instructor was the main source of his knowledge on Black July, with lessons that were complemented by posters commemorating that event's anniversary mainly distributed by militant groups<sup>249</sup>. For others growing up in LTTE-controlled areas, the acquisition was different because instructors would in fact only teach the history of the movement (*iyakkatin varaalaru*) and the broader historical context of their struggle in class. Fidel, another former combatant was too young for that though. He left school because the LTTE had stopped by his house and asked his parents to hand over one child. He escaped to Valaichenai yet was nonetheless abducted by the LTTE in a refugee camp where Fidel was collecting a food ration in 2005. However, he subsequently managed to escape in 2007 and out of fear for reprisals decided to join Karuna's TMVP<sup>250</sup>.

For those who were enrolled under the LTTE regime, the fundamental site of acquisition of the conflict's history was the armed movement itself, through a course in Political Science received during his recruitment. However, interviews with some of the older former child soldiers reveal that attributing the monopoly of transmission to the armed actor may in itself represented a product of indoctrination. As an illustration, for Pillayan the LTTE was his "one-and-only" source of the conflict's history; yet during our conversations he inadvertently mentioned that his uncle was a member of one of the first armed movements in the region (TELO), as too were the girls who used to help him with his homework before he took up arms<sup>251</sup>. His uncle and tutors often came with propaganda or discussed historical incidents, and thus it is likely that they constituted important sources of knowledge for young Pillayan. Accordingly, this case in fact constitutes a mirrored example of the overlapping fields of family and armed movements in the transmission of conflict.

---

<sup>249</sup> Personal Interview code EC007. 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

<sup>250</sup> Personal Interview Code EC005. 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

<sup>251</sup> Personal Interview, Sivanasathurai Chandrakanthan [Pillayan]. 10<sup>th</sup> December 2009.

Ex-combatants' accounts seem to suggest that instead of why did the conflict start, the relevant question within the LTTE became why is there a need for Tamil Eelam. The answers here again pointed to the education and language policies of the Sinhala-dominated government, the repeated aggressions against Tamils and the need to preserve their own culture in a demarcated homeland<sup>252</sup>. The point is that through a subtle shift in the underlying question, a historical statement was transformed into an indoctrinating narrative with a straightforward justification for violence and framed in accordance with a military objective.

Former child soldiers born (as the students) after 1983 who were initially recruited by the LTTE learned about that year's incidents in remembrance sessions organised by the armed group. During those sessions, emphasis was placed on the martyrs of the movement and the indiscriminate killing of Tamils as a justification for Tamil Eelam<sup>253</sup>. Memories of Black July, commemorated annually by the armed group through parades, indeed framed the LTTE's armed struggle all along (McDowell, 2012). The truly symbolically powerful celebration, however, was not carried out in the name of Black July victims, but rather in the annual ritual remembrance of their martyrs known as *Maveerar Naal* (Heroes' Day). This was the central symbolic performance to legitimise the Eelam project and mobilise Tamils, aided by fusing internal memories of the fallen with memories of civilian deaths (Roberts, 2005). This legitimising function of *Black July* and *Maveerar Naal* within the LTTE was seemingly replaced in TMVP's early years by a more urgent justification of the split, highlighting the "tyranny" of LTTE leader Prabhakaran in contrast with the alleged "benevolence" of TMVP's head, Karuna<sup>254</sup>.

Child recruits are themselves embodied transgressions of the normative divide between violent victimisation and perpetration. In fact, children in general were pivotal in the relations between civilians and both the LTTE and TMVP. Their experiential ambiguity may in fact symbolise the conflictual nature of these civil-military relations. The interviews revealed that many of those once child soldiers were transmitters themselves, narrating their own experiences as they came home, or more systematically, providing information in terms of propaganda and

---

<sup>252</sup> Personal Interview code EC004. 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

<sup>253</sup> Personal Interviews. December 2009-April 2010.

<sup>254</sup> Personal Interview codes EC004 and EC005. 30<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

indoctrinating new recruits. Through their conscription, children were literally and metaphorically transported to other spaces and ways of knowing the world. I recorded accounts of abductions that illustrate not only the dreadful experience itself, but also the transit through which those children shifted from an institutional to a defiant discursive and material domain.

For instance, Emiliano was going to the barber to get a haircut when a white van suddenly pulled up. His friends started running, but he froze. He was blindfolded and taken to an army camp, he says. After five days, he was sent to Welikande area to a TMVP camp, from where he eventually escaped. However, he got lost, and found himself forced to return. After a few months training, he was deployed as a bodyguard of some of the camps leaders, frequently travelling to Colombo to meet Karuna. But one day they had a car accident in which the driver died and the camp leader was rushed into hospital. Ernesto managed to flee and left a message to his family, who subsequently contacted an organisation offering protection.

Meanwhile, Ernesto took tuition classes and a computer course in Kiran. But when he and his nephew got to Kiran on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2006, something was different<sup>255</sup>: the Sri Lankan Army was moving around asking for the National Identity Cards (NIC). He soon noticed that a couple of Tamil youngsters were looking at them and then left abruptly. When Ernesto got to the computer centre he recognised those two persons again from their clothing. This time, they had their heads covered, they had company and were armed. Without much fuss, Ernesto was put in one van (there were three) together with another six boys (all about 15-16 years old) and five members of TMVP. "All along the army was simply watching the incident; we were not stopped in any of the checkpoints along the way [...]"

A tune was played in the van: "it was from Tamil cinema," Ernesto recalls. It was a sad song. Then, one of the TMVP members said to him: "Sorry thambi (younger brother), we're playing a gloomy song [because] from now on you are with us". They arrived in Karuppala camp (Tivuchenai area), where TMVP wrote down the abductees' names, took their wallets and NICs: "you see the system was that if they caught a boy without NIC at the police or SLA checkpoints in the area, they would send him back to the TMVP camps". Ernesto could see around 25 TMVP soldiers at the entrance and another 50 behind in some huts. A total of 180 TMVP members

---

<sup>255</sup> Ernesto's interview was facilitated and translated by M. Sanoon.

were in that camp. His camp fell under the command of Sinnathambi, but Mangalan Master's camp was just 100 metres away.

The next day at 7am, they got tea and at 8.30am Dhal and Pittu for breakfast. They could eat as much as they wanted and, with an ironic laugh, Ernesto says that it was a bit like the life of a king: "they guided us to the toilet, they gave us food; they escorted us to take a bath". After lunch, they were allowed to watch a movie - from Hollywood, Bollywood or from Tamil Cinema - but in any case always about war, violence and fighting. Soon he started receiving courses in political and historical issues. They would explain why TMVP split from the LTTE and would highlight Karuna's achievements, the need to work for the eastern province and the larger historical struggle, which they portrayed as the history of "Tamil slavery in the hands of Sinhalese". They also specifically spoke about northern discrimination towards the East and about Prabhakaran's intentions to kill Karuna. Ernesto never met the latter, but he did meet Pillayan on several occasions, as he often handed over uniforms and interacted with fighters. Instead, Karuna was conducting all the battle planning with the Sri Lankan army a few miles away in Minneriya, Ernesto argued. A few months later, he was sent to battle in Panichenkerni, his experience of which was presented earlier in Chapter Five.

He remained within TMVP back in Welikanda area for another three months, receiving additional training in guerrilla warfare tactics and claymore mines; a training provided by TMVP leaders who in turn received training from the Sri Lankan army in Maduru Oya, Ernesto claims. Then, in December 2006, he escaped together with another boy. They both had been appointed sentinels for that night, one before the other. They walked for around an hour and then took the bus. However, there was an army checkpoint in Mannapitiya and as we know the boys did not have their national identity cards, which were held instead by the military intelligence officers who took them back to TMVP's camp. Upon return, the two boys were severely tortured. But months later, Ernesto stubbornly gave it another go and, having learnt from his previous attempt, he walked past the checkpoint through the bushes. He then took a lift from a tractor driven by a Muslim, and once in Ottamavadi he contacted his mother. His family eventually found a way to send him to Qatar for a while.

I also asked the former child combatants whether the history of conflict should be taught in schools. They all thought it should, although many were quite sceptical. For instance, Ernesto said to me: "the government can now make whatever decision they

want. Besides, they are the ones printing the history school books, so they will present the history of the conflict according to their best interest”<sup>256</sup>.

During one of my days with Pillayan and other members of TMVP, I also met 13 students from the Eastern University, all originally from Valaichenai, and had come to talk with the then Chief Minister (Pillayan). I used the opportunity to discuss with them issues pertaining to the transmission of conflict. They all said they that were neither exposed to any transfer at the university nor previously at their respective schools. However, one of them pointed out that he attended a seminar organised by TMVP on the history of conflict and thus ventured to suggest the following three reasons for its eruption: the selfishness of the South, Wrong Tamil Leadership and “Jaffna’s Big Brother mentality”.

Recruitment and enrolment happens articulating discourse and force following sometimes reversed orders: when enrolment is voluntary, persuasion precedes force; whereas when members are abducted, force precedes persuasion, although the latter is necessary to secure compliance. However, when private interest is the initial driver for joining the movement, discourse and force are deployed simultaneously to (at least try to) transform personal interest into loyalty. Transmission takes place in all instances, albeit with varying degrees of success in the consolidation of a new identity formation and sense of belonging.

## 5.8. Retracing Transmission: a recapitulation

From early on, education has been considered a cause, locus and medium of conflict in Sri Lanka. And yet several violent decades passed before conflict as a topic entered the sphere of education policy from within. When it did, it was in its most sanitised version, dissociated from what was happening in the communities; separated from the country’s electoral history and isolated from the trajectories of identity politics. To date, history textbooks have not only avoided discussing the armed conflicts that claimed the death of thousands of Sri Lankans, but have in fact neglected nearly half of the country’s post-independence history.

---

<sup>256</sup> Personal Interview and questionnaire code ES007-T.

However, regardless of such textual silences, throughout the years of civil war schools configured themselves as part of the architecture of conflict and violence; power and resistance; conflict teaching and acquisition; voice and quietness. Furthermore, educators became ambivalent agents and simultaneously haulers of State silence, while complicitous in the reproduction of the insurgent's discourses. But regardless of the ambiguity, the uncovered sites and encounters confirm the conflict and its past was and is extensively transmitted (even if only partially) to and by educators in Eastern Sri Lanka.

Diverse readings and structuring symbols, or in other words particular ways of knowing conflict and violence, have been made manifest as indispensable elements in the conflict's sustainability and alterations. Whether these epistemologies resulted in actual participation in violent practices depended on persuasion and force, as well as whether the disruptive discourses were monopolised and transformed into a prescriptive text calling forth a following committed to violence. Ultimately, however, it depended on whether the discourse and its performance elicited "those sentiments out of which new social formations can be constructed" (Lincoln, 1989:8).

Such coalescence emerged from the interactive construction of a network of semantic alliances. In such web shoes, hoisted flags and the lack of bread became interconnected symbolic references transmitted to conceptualise, imagine and experience the Sri Lankan Armed conflict as a relatively coherent construct. However, this coherence never translated into a single well-defined metanarrative, as shown by the ethnicised media consumption patterns or the ethnicised remembrance the discussions on memories of violence revealed.

The exploration of the intergenerational responses to the question of why conflict began, together with the registers of personal memories within as outside the armed actors, put forward four signifiers constituting the two basic semantic alliances of the Sri Lankan war: discrimination, rising out of the discursive domains of civil society, was articulated with the need of a separate Tamil Homeland, rising from the discursive domain of the armed actors; in addition, Black July memories from Tamil civil society were symbolically exchanged with *Maveerar* commemorations coming out of the LTTE. Together, they configured the main thread in the web of semantic alliances sustaining conflict in Sri Lanka and were thus also the direct target of TMVP's intervention.

The experiences of former child combatants constitute a point of convergence between the broader discussion on the social reproduction of war and the discussion on TMVP's emergence. Furthermore, their narratives presented in this chapter revealed the continuities between social fields, which, despite having distinct characteristics, are by no means isolated from one another. Overall, TMVP's emergence exemplifies - among others, through the forced conscriptions described earlier - continuity in the use of violence, and is thus a phenomenon participating in the reproduction of war. Nonetheless, such perpetuation came with military, political and semantic interventions that also fostered change, which was not executed in a sociohistorical vacuum. The transmission of conflict in which knowledge and practice was passed on through generations depended on an exchange between individual and collective actors such as those captured by the educators and students' responses; symbolic and material transactions that nurtured a minimum of coherence for collective armed action to be sustained for over three decades. Due to their inherently unstable nature, the same transactions were always refashioned and adjusted according to people's need for meaning and their instrumental interests. Therefore, this transmissional process provided a constant flow of potential disjunctions capitalised by TMVP to survive and access political power, as well as transforming the dynamics of the civil war.

Ideally, this chapter would have concluded with a presentation of educators and students' narratives on TMVP's emergence and transition; unfortunately, this has proven impossible for several reasons. First, because the events occurring between 2004 and 2010 were still being digested, and consequently opinions, analysis and meaning were still in the making. Secondly, because TMVP members still held positions of power in local and regional government, rendering it extremely delicate for public servants to discuss that group's participation in their transit from war to politics. This notwithstanding, relevant narratives would have undoubtedly surfaced with some perseverance; but, due to methodological and ethical considerations, I opted not to pursue this. Given that I also visited TMVP offices before (or soon after) visiting schools, insisting on recording pupils and teacher's appreciations on that group's formation considerably increased their vulnerability. This shows that while investigating and connecting armed groups and civil society dynamics is crucial, not all aspects can be addressed simultaneously. Hopefully, when the time is ripe, this may be a valuable epilogue to this research.



## **ANALYTICAL CONCLUSIONS**

---

### **TMVP & THE TRANSMISSION OF CONFLICT:**

Karuna's refusal to comply with the demands of the LTTE's northern leadership in 2004 paved the way for a dramatic change of course in Sri Lanka's civil war, which could not have coalesced without transforming his individual decision into a collective project through TMVP's formation. Undoubtedly, the material implications of this collective defection were crucial, given that the LTTE lost about 40% of its manpower from one moment to the next, as well as almost half the territory under their control. But also because the defection meant the biggest intelligence breach ever faced by the LTTE; because TMVP turned into the largest and most overt challenger of its hitherto highly cohesive and hierarchical structure; and finally, because the dissidence not only accused the LTTE of exactly that which they allegedly were fighting against (discrimination), but because they connected such allegations to regional identity and a considerable army of combatants.

The dissidence underwent a new identity formation in order to consolidate its structure and internal cohesion. It was through its own socialisation processes and the configuration of new material and semantic alliances that TMVP altered the reproduction of war in Sri Lanka. Because such critical transformations could only be fully grasped in connection with what made the war sustainable in the first place, this dissertation's challenge was to address how these transformations are linked to transmission mechanisms. Towards such a purpose, all chapters contributed to a chronological documentation of TMVP's emergence, consolidation and transition into politics; to an assessment of its internal diversity; to an analytical reading of the joint processes of identity formation and the social reproduction of conflict and violence; and to a series of conceptual dialogues placing TMVP's emergence within the theoretical debates, particularly in the fields of conflict analysis and anthropology.

#### ***Semantic Alliances in Conflict Sustainability & Transformation***

As highlighted in the introduction, conflict analysis must address the set of opportunities exploitable by entrepreneurs of violence to mobilise; it needs to investigate the required organisational structures in order to sustain violence; and it has to capture the framing process through which violence is understood by

participants and communicated to adherents, opponents and third parties (King 2007:117). The 2002-2008 peace process between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE was indeed a crucial contextual opportunity exploitable by an entrepreneur of violence - like Karuna - to mobilise people for an alternate collective project. The peace process enabled his revolt by prompting combatants to think twice about their engagement in previous violence, consequently reassessing the validity of their particular political allegiances. Chapter One captured the participants' struggle in trying to transform Karuna's choice into some sort of regional emancipation. However, the process bears witness to the ambiguities in the leader's motivations and the diversity of reasons for others to follow him.

Furthermore, this book addressed 'the industrial organisation of rebellion' (Weinstein, 2007), referring in this case to a rebellion within a rebellion. This institutionalisation of the revolt (hence the development of what King calls the organisational structures needed to sustain violence) required the establishment of new alliances; the setup of a basic military infrastructure; and a seemingly simple - yet proven crucial - baptising of the new collective formation (addressed in Chapters Two and Three). In fact, the discourses formed around the organisation's name served as the framing process through which they communicated their struggle to adherents, opponents and third parties. These enforcing structures engineered the dissidence's feasibility and exposed how the legitimisation of new forms of violence was knitted into elaborated cultural products. TMVP's industrial organisation was neither perfect nor complete, but it was in any case good enough for them to survive, enter mainstream politics and gain access to state power.

As a result, TMVP contested municipal and provincial elections in 2008, although their electoral success soon evaporated. This notwithstanding, their transition into politics, discussed in Chapter Four, served as a meager process of demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration that actually coalesced into the prelude for the final battles of Sri Lanka's civil war. Moreover, once they had settled in the political arena and no longer needed their arms, TMVP held its own Heroes' Day in April 2011; a milestone in the symbolic codification of their past. Whether this has been strong enough to guarantee TMVP's permanence in the political sphere remains to be seen, but it nonetheless reflects the importance attributed by the leadership to the development of such symbolic actions to strengthen their inner belonging and consolidate their political capital.

As suggested in the introduction, the process described above did not occur in a vacuum; rather, it was embedded in larger systems of knowledge (Jabri, 1996) that sustained the civil war for decades. Thus, broadening the scope of analysis, Chapter Five looked at the institutional, local and defiant channels through which conflict knowledge was intergenerationally transmitted. People – combatants and noncombatants - consolidated their own text on Sri Lanka’s convulsing past, despite being confronted with a myriad of experiences, sources, data and accounts. However, the meaning-making process (semiosis) did not stop there, for, if so, we would have no more than individually-held collages of a conflict’s history. Therefore, unstable discursive crystallisations indispensable for sustained collective action emerged from the interactive construction of a semantic network through which the Sri Lankan armed conflict was imagined and experienced. Nevertheless, the resulting configuration was -and will always be - provisional, as manifested by the transformations enforced with TMVP’s emergence.

Despite what people in conflict-ridden areas often claim, witnessing and experiencing violence cannot cover the full spectrum of one’s understandings of war on its own; indeed, socialising mechanisms are at least equally necessary in order to make sense of conflict. This dissertation’s exploration of such socialisation focused on the sources and sites of knowledge transfer exposing - among others - that both remembrance and media consumption have followed ethnically differentiated patterns in eastern Sri Lanka. This may not come as a shocking conclusion, but it does bring forward the problematic consequences of the state’s refusal to institutionalise nuanced and inclusive narratives of the past. Instead, Sri Lanka’s educational policy on armed conflict has been that of clinically removing war from national history, while dangerously assimilating contentious politics with cultural diversity.

Using grounded data to expose that the different generations do not claim a single source but rather have a multiplicity of sites in which they acquire and co-produce knowledge on conflict, as well as the systematic discussion on how this operates to transmit conflict, are both equally important findings of this research. Statements similar to the former had thus far been made in the literature dealing with teaching the violent past as a caveat (i.e. Cole, 2007; Podeh, 2000; Bekerman & Zembylas, 2012): whatever stream of knowledge transfer those authors focus upon, we are told that it is certainly not the only one. However, the problem was that this acknowledgement never seemed to translate into a practical and theoretical linkage

of all those multiple sites. It is in redressing this perpetually postponed task that the significance of the chapter on the social reproduction of war resides.

Moreover, such investigation into the consumption and co-production of knowledge confirms Lubkemann's statement that conflict and violence are "continuously implicated in the negotiation of social reproduction (2008:23). But the reverse also proved to be true: social reproduction is constantly implicated in the organisation of violent enterprises (like TMVP), which are both in need of and operate as pedagogic devices imposing particular behaviours and narratives upon society. In fact, acknowledging this reinforces the continuity and complementarity of all the chapters in this academic composition.

I structured this book as a twisting narrative helix linking personal trajectories within larger sociopolitical processes in Sri Lanka. I examined how TMVP came about as a collective defection and eventually transformed into a political party. In the latter part of this endeavour, I tracked the ever-changing epistemologies of conflict. Trailing these phenomena allowed me to integrate identity formation (TMVP) and the reproduction of war (knowledge transfer) to account for the two conceptual pillars behind the explanations of the dynamics of conflict: *transmission and transformation*. Moreover, such an effort was aided by placing TMVP's formation and the ways of knowing conflict in Eastern Sri Lanka in a constant series of conceptual dialogues, which operate as the theoretical underpinnings of the decisive notion of semantic alliances.

The first conceptual reference revolved around Fairclough's semiosis, which has proven useful to show how the emergence, reproduction and transformation of a social phenomenon required dialectic relations between meaning and materiality (Fairclough, 2007). Every chapter in this book testifies to the veracity of that statement in relation to TMVP. I have shown that without the manpower and the economic and political support of the government, Karuna's defection would not have been feasible. However, in order to transform the defection into an operational dissidence capable of destabilising the LTTE, Karuna's split also had to make sense; namely, it had to make sense collectively. Material provisions are effectively of very little service if the enterprise cannot persuade people to participate as well as morally, politically and economically investing in the new project. The material assets at Karuna's disposal could not sustain the revolt on their own; instead, the latter had

to be linked to identity, territory and power unbalances. In other words, every action had to be endowed with social meaning.

In the context of civil wars, this semiotic process further required the construction of what Schroeder and Schmidt termed as violent imaginaries (conceptual dialogue 2): symbolic constellations bestowing violence and conflict with a particular cultural and historical content. In this violent grammar, the first instrumentalised symbolic reference was the historically construed difference between eastern and northern Tamils; while the second was the revisit of the LTTE power abuses specifically attributed to Prabhakaran and Pottu Amman in the eastern province. Yet, in order to fully develop those references into violent imaginaries it was necessary to deploy a more specialised set of cultural technologies, including TMVP's music, videos, posters and newspaper articles, discussed in Chapter Three.

Violent imaginaries are indeed necessary to carry out violent practices. At the same time, the transit from one to the other is not a mechanical causal chain stemming from structural conditions. Ultimately, it is in fact human agency that connects discourse with force. In this sense, it was not discrimination as such that led to the revolt; not even the unfair representation of easterners within the LTTE's leadership positions, or the alleged arrogance of northern Tamils towards the east. Rather, it was the agency (individual first and then collective) of mobilising people towards the need for a reinvented violence that made the transit from violent imaginaries to violent practices possible.

In the context of violence (moving to the third conceptual dialogue), involved actors seek the fixation of boundaries between social formations (whether ethnic, regional or otherwise). Nonetheless, commentators (journalists and scholars alike) fairly commonly adopt those very same fixed boundaries to render explanations of the conflict or social dynamics, easily resulting in the actual reproduction of the schemes that are in fact responsible for violence in the first place. I co-opted Norbert Elias' notion of figurations advanced by Schlichte in the context of armed action in order to avoid precisely that. Understanding TMVP as a figuration proved useful because the term itself highlights the inherent elasticity of social boundaries and incorporates the continuous battles for consent and contestation in such social formations. Understood as a figuration, any armed actor formulates its own violent imaginaries in its quest for the consolidation of loyalty and the management of dissent. However, the notion of figuration also suggests that these violent imaginaries are not fabricated

in a straightforward manner. On the contrary, they are one more space of negotiation and contestation of meanings. The contradictions, confusion, internal schisms, motivational variation and shifting levels of support are all testament of TMVP as a figuration.

The fourth conceptual dialogue enabled discussing transmission of conflict beyond a simple recalling history. Transmission processes are themselves about finding ways of understanding conflict, as well as often making others understand it in the same way as you. Consequently, it is not simply about archiving and handing over information, but rather convincing others of the connections made, as well as frequently about using the ways of knowing conflict to explain other (or all) aspects of the social world.

This struggle for intergenerational meaning fixation does not just happen from the state towards its citizens or from a powerful armed actor to the communities that it seeks to control. Attempts at fixating meaning are performed at all levels, including the peer to peer actions of storytelling, which, as already adverted, are all about the transformation of private meanings into public ones. In fact, the interviews with educators, students and former combatants in this research presented such transformations taking place throughout the civil war's history. Moreover, the interviews themselves also constituted instances of private meanings being transformed into shared and public ones. Their narratives and our conversational exchanges accentuated the fact that addressing *how* people remember, *what* they remember and *where* they remember is not a revision of how things were, but a discussion on how knowledge configurations have made the perpetuation of armed conflict, its alteration and the continuation of social life all a possibility.

The strategy adopted to contribute to the debates on ethnicity and nationalism (conceptual dialogue 5) involved focusing on defection and group fragmentation's impact on the shifts and outcomes of war. Such attention to identity formation through its weaknesses and instability exposed the fragile linkage between collective identity and collective action (Staniland, 2012); the epitome of which lies the fact that Karuna eventually defected his own collective project. Indeed, many take this as an indicator of the deceptive argumentation to legitimise his initial defection from the LTTE. While this may be true, it still was that very argumentation that rendered his revolt sustainable, to the point of transforming an army of his defecting followers into a political entity capable of operating independent of him - the mastermind of that

new identity formation. Thus, even if one were to concede that Karuna's dissidence was nothing but a selfish act of survival and corruption, the requirements, the actual capacity and specific tools for collective mobilisation made it something else. The point I am making is that a discussion focused on why the defection happened ultimately explains very little, given that it is not the defection or the reasons for defection that determine its impact on civil war dynamics; rather, it is how actors go about to make it a feasible undertaking that matters. That is precisely what the previous chapters were all about.

Finally, we must return to the sixth conceptual dialogue (associated with Kalyvas' work), which in many ways links all previous dialogues and served to launch the new notion of semantic alliances. However, in order to advance this idea a more fine-grained discussion is mandatory, revealing in clear steps how those semantic alliances operate and simultaneously inform Sri Lanka's civil war, as well as the sustainability and alterations of conflict in general.

## Conflict Sustained

What allows conflict knowledge to be transmitted are not master narratives but interactive symbolic networks by means of which actors constantly create, borrow, edit and relocate meanings. TMVP's emergence was made possible by such flexible arrangements, through its very formation attempting a radical restructuring of the material and symbolic operations that had sustained conflict for several decades.

Drawing from the outcomes of this research, it can be stated that there is no single source but rather a multiplicity of sites claimed by the different generations in acquiring the necessary knowledge for armed conflict to prevail; the required knowledge for people to cope with it; and eventually, for social actors to transform it. Moreover, the sites for such knowledge acquisition are not mutually exclusive or isolated, but intertwined with sometimes complementing, sometimes contrasting contents. This being so, a defined self-contained master narrative as the thread of transmission is no longer conceivable. Only condensed symbolic recipients seem to triumph, such as abstract notions of homeland and discrimination, or historically engrained critical events such as Black July, the meanings of which are nevertheless constantly modified. This implies that transmission is far less one-directional and recipients far less passive than generally assumed; and yet, people are not subsumed into a kind of war-knowledge schizophrenia. Somehow, the products of

the cognitive market are organised, even if loosely and temporarily so, through a process of 'meaning management' that administers variation.

The analysis of such variation has two fundamental axes: one concerns the variation of knowledge and practices across time, while the other deals with variation of interpretations within a contemporaneous society. One explains permanence and change; the other coherence and diversity. The two axes are manifested through both the discussed social reproduction of war as well as in TMVP's formation. Chapter Five specifically captured permanence and change through the generations codified as G1 to G3, and subsequently the coherence and diversity within G3. Variation was then explained in terms of the sites and sources of knowledge, whilst connected to specific developments in the conflict's trajectory affecting people's understandings of it.

Throughout the decades of violence, individuals from the different generations transformed experiences into personal narratives of suffering. Such suffering was often transmitted within the family spheres, not necessarily in narrative form but in any case through socio-symbolic mechanisms that engrossed the broader emotional discourse about the war. It generally was not the history of the armed conflict that was transferred among family members, but rather a collection of moments of pain. Many individual narratives of suffering were, however, absorbed by armed actors; and in return for those private narratives legitimising their fight, they provided a discourse of collective grief. At the same time, different media platforms coopted and recontextualised those discourses and presented them in terms of power relations and interests. Then, the emerging media discourses, together with the narratives produced by itinerant agents (such as refugees), de-localised the experiences. These actors connected several interpretations of war produced in different settings, thereby nationalising the thus far locally-lived conflicts and tensions. In the meantime, schools quite regularly operated as nodal points where family, media and armed actors' narratives were evaluated and linked to the institutional knowledge transfers or silences.

To maintain conflict as operational, different contemporaneous sources of conflict knowledge (for example and armed organisation and a school) were interlinked. For its legitimisation, a collective armed actor such as the LTTE required individual experiences stemming from civil society. Thus, armed actors ascribing to Generation 1 exchanged narratives with principals also belonging to this age group; but most importantly, semantic exchanges occurred between LTTE combatants from G1 and

students belonging to the generation catalogued here as G3. Vice versa, meanings of conflict were exchanged between principals (G1) and former child-combatants as well as within the subversive structure of the armed organisation and the institutional structure of pedagogic practice.

In this sense, conflict was indeed sustained by instrumental alliances between local and supralocal actors as Kalyvas would suggest; but also through semiosis, a meaning-making process whereby violent imaginaries were created in a constant symbolic exchange that crosscut the boundaries between civil society and armed actors. In fact, the possibilities of Kalyvas' instrumental alliances are defined by the semantic exchanges that actors manage to establish. However, the contours of transmission processes become even clearer if we focus on how conflict is transformed based on the instrumental and discursive interventions implicated in TMVP's emergence, presented below in 12 steps within four stages.

## Conflict Transformed

### *Stage One*

In the transit from being LTTE insurgents to becoming a political party (via their defection), TMVP's first challenge was to imagine a difference construed in a way that it could justify a new form and target of violence. People had to talk themselves into committing to this transgression, potentially leading to military confrontations against members with whom they had long shared a primary identification. Karuna had to convince himself and then others of the legitimacy, need, capacity and timing of this endeavour. Chapter One showed this first step, wherein history was reframed and past violence linked to the possibility of a current defiance.

In order to make his defection a collective enterprise, Karuna highlighted a difference between fighters of the North and East. He then politicised the difference by suggesting that eastern fighters did not have actual access to power within the outfit. Subsequently, Karuna demarcated the spaces in which his revolt could be institutionalised. Finally, he (with others) connected the internal issues of the LTTE with a broader distinction between northern and eastern Tamils in general, thus transforming the context of his defection into a social problem (Brass, 1996).

The premise for LTTE's struggle was based on connecting discrimination to the need to establish an independent homeland through military means. This articulation was in fact the result of a symbolic exchange between members of Tamil civil society and the leadership of the militant movement: collections of personal narratives of suffering were traded in exchange for the promise of a Utopia. The former gave the movement legitimacy, while the latter gave the community an alternative future. But when Karuna stated his defection, he destabilised this hegemonic semantic order upon which the struggle was based (Discrimination/Homeland). In order to transcend any personal reading of his defection and the possible subsequent selfish explanations of the split, he manufactured a new symbolic exchange between narratives of discrimination suffered by eastern Tamils and the urgency to fight the menacing dystopia of the LTTE rule. The insurgency's core argument for resorting to violence was thereby reverted: they were now accused of what they claimed to be fighting against.

Putting this schematically:

1. The hegemonic Semantic alliance of the LTTE's struggle connected state discrimination with the need for a Tamil Homeland.
2. Karuna and TMVP's intervention implied the reimagining of discrimination, equating inequalities between the LTTE's northern combatants versus the LTTE's eastern combatants; with inequalities between northern Tamils versus eastern Tamils.
3. Tamil Eelam was presented as fallacy and a threat under LTTE rule.
4. The emerging semantic alliance construed to sustain Karuna's revolt then became narratives of the LTTE discrimination linked with TMVP's revelation of LTTE's Homeland as Dystopia.

## *Stage 2*

In a second step, the symbolic boundaries envisioned by Karuna had to obtain its geographical expression. After questioning the legitimacy of the LTTE's Tamil Eelam, Karuna subsequently split the latter's geographical space: by introducing the notion of *South Eelam* the previously sacred unity of the homeland was bereft of its symbolic force. However, an exercise of positive identity formation was required to consolidate this new social space.

For that purpose, the defectors developed the mechanisms by which the fragile new belonging could become sustainable, starting with a naming process. They renamed the other, the history of the struggle and of course themselves. Through this exercise, a series of socio-political choices were made that defined their future. Among those choices was the altogether abandonment of the project of Eelam, but also the reinstatement of the tiger reference. TMVP resolved to keep the tiger image, but not without shifting back its connotation to Tamilness, thereby taking it away from the LTTE's exclusive domain. Through this semantic readjustment, they could convey certain continuity (remaining loyal to their community's past) and yet also claim that they embodied some sort of necessary change. Finally, the notion of liberation - which in the LTTE's narratives meant freedom from state oppression - was made to mean liberation from Prabhakaran's tyranny under TMVP's new conflict grammar.

Thus:

5. Tamil Eelam was first split into two (South Eelam/ North Eelam) and subsequently altogether deleted as a collective project.
6. The Tiger symbol shifted from being associated with the LTTE to being reinstated as a symbol of Tamilness in general.
7. Instead of Liberation from state oppression, TMVP sought liberation from Prabhakaran's rule.

Together, these crucial discursive operations lead to a shift from emphasising a homeland to emphasising a people, which paved the way for another series of both instrumental and semantic alliances.

### *Stage 3*

Throughout the consolidation of the split, instrumental alliances were created in terms of resources, intelligence and socio-political support networks. But a myriad of smaller semantic alliances were also formed. They were partly performed to strengthen the instrumental liaisons, and partly to simply make sense out of an altered reality. For instance, the fact that liberation was no longer connected to a homeland facilitated an alliance with the government forces (in instrumental and semantic terms); linking the LTTE's failure to represent eastern Tamils, with the Eastern Province being an integral part of Sri Lanka as a unitary state.

Simultaneously, the LTTE's failure to represent eastern Tamils was connected to the claims made by a myriad of other smaller Tamil militant groups vis-à-vis the LTTE's intolerance towards political dissent. Therefore, regional misrepresentation was articulated to political misrepresentation, enabling instrumental alliances between divergent Tamil militant groups and TMVP.

In the meantime, individual young fighters within TMVP performed semantic exchanges among themselves. This was achieved by trading and sharing among each other their own experiences of internal discrimination within the previous armed outfit (the LTTE), or through the exposure to regionally engrained stigmatisation. However, research revealed that this was not a straightforward process, but was marked instead by high levels of confusion and indecision. Robust cultural technologies of legitimisation such as the videos, songs and articles discussed in Chapter Three were deployed precisely to tackle such internal ambivalence. Through them, the parameters of another set of semantic alliances was forged between the TMVP leadership and their own combatants, collecting the latter's assortment of new discriminatory experiences in exchange for the provision by the movement of culturally mediated frameworks for understanding the defection and dissidence. A salient example of the latter is the framing of the LTTE's indoctrination as poison, thereby capturing the LTTE's betrayal towards the younger generation, who according to TMVP's leadership should now fight back.

Finally, semantic alliances were struck between the nascent defection and global discourse producers, through which TMVP extracted the jargon of a war on terror and collected examples around the globe of tyrannical leaders to equate Prabhakaran with them. In return, TMVP provided the input of Karuna's rebellion for global partners to solidify claims against the LTTE, by extension strengthening the worldwide antiterrorism doctrines and campaigns.

Thus:

8. The LTTE's non-representativeness of eastern Tamils was allied with the discourse of the Eastern Province as legitimate part of a unitary Sri Lanka. This is a semantic alliance between TMVP and the Sri Lankan Government.

9. The LTTE's faulty ethnic representation was aligned with the LTTE's political travesty. This is a semantic alliance between TMVP and other Tamil militant movements.
10. Individual narratives of regional/internal discrimination were twined with a portrayal of the LTTE's betrayal of the youth, which in turn was coupled to TMVP's project as a reawakening.
11. The Global discourses on the war on terror were exchanged with TMVP's self-promotion as an antiterrorist liberation front.

#### *Stage 4*

As presented in Chapter Four, additional efforts in encoding (violent) social practices and establishing morale were required to move from a social grouping challenging the monopoly of violence to a political identity seeking representational rights over a community. Such a transit demanded the demilitarisation of their practices and the explicit development of a laid-out political project. Put otherwise, TMVP needed to refashion their existence and ruling into a political necessity, overcoming the long-term delegitimising effect of the violence that they themselves exerted. Perhaps the most interesting feature to highlight here comes from one of their latest ritualised practices. As suggested in Chapters Four and Five, a critical semantic alliance operational during LTTE's struggle was between Black July memories (surfacing from civil society), which were symbolically exchanged with heroes commemorations (coming out of the armed group). This alliance together with the previously mentioned (Discrimination/Tamil Homeland) configured the main thread in the web of semantic alliances sustaining the Sri Lankan conflict. This is precisely why TMVP's Heroes Day is a critical intervention: it was in fact a symbolic reversal whereby - using the LTTE's emblematic grammar - the same signifier stemming from the northern Tigers (heroes commemoration) was now linked instead to the LTTE's discrimination towards their very own.

12. Thus, TMVP's discursive and defiant ritual intervention was to move from Black July narratives of suffering intertwined with the LTTE's Heroes commemoration to Heroes Commemoration linked to the LTTE's own production of discrimination and suffering.

Hence, TMVP's formation and its impact on Sri Lanka, as well as the larger process of knowledge transfer sustaining and transforming conflict, are best understood

through the production, alterations and maintenance of semantic alliances: a concept that may well serve to explain other types of collective enterprises there and around the world. With the development of the notion of semantic alliances, it becomes easier to account for the process through which symbolic control (as well as symbolic resistance) is realised, upholding the conflict by transforming power relations into discourse and discourse into power relations (Bernstein 2000).

The material opportunities for radical transformations did not create the socio-political shift on their own. The private interest that Karuna may have had, as well as the discrimination experienced by many in the east, could not be operationalised as a collective project without the establishment of semantic alliances mutually reinforcing the different actors' goals, beyond private interest. Such symbolic exchanges were established not so much to hide away personal drives (although they can certainly also serve that purpose), but above all to attribute collective sense to their actions, both for others and for themselves.

## Final Remarks

Building up from the moments immediately preceding the critical turning point, I have tracked the choices and strategies that transformed an individual defection into a collective one, converted such defection into dissidence and rendered that dissidence a political project. I have emphasised the importance of looking at TMVP as a critical military, political and social phenomenon. As an anthropologist, I further strived to render the ways in which violence was implicated in the process of remaking the local world (Lawrence, 2000:200). However defectuous or incomplete, TMVP implicated an exercise of world-making through meaning productions searching for a collective belonging. True, without economic resources, force and even greed and revenge, there could be no revolt, nor could any armed group subsist for that matter. But their dynamics cannot be captured without exploring the paths pursued towards meaning-making. Semantic creations and destructions are just as vital for their subsistence; furthermore, they are unavoidable in any attempt to register and analyse their genesis, sustainability and transformations.

Investigating TMVP also contributed to the discussions revolving around the sociology of armed groups, most significantly by offering a detailed account of the symbolic work and socialisation mechanisms activated for their survival. The case equally added to the debates by showing how confusion, uncertainty, doubt and

narrative contradiction are not factors to be brushed away in their analysis. On the contrary, this tense field of inner contestation, divergent accounts and mixed sentiments are constitutive features of TMVP's formation; indeed, they are very likely features of any nascent collective arrangement. In fact, if TMVP is a reminder of the intra-group diversity of the Tamil community, it would be in contravention of the argument to treat that movement itself as a monolithic entity. Hence, by presenting their emergence through the multiple narratives and accounts expressing sometimes confused and contradicting emotions, plurality emerged as the key factor in explaining social dynamism.

TMVP's emergence has served as an ideal entry point into the politics of identity in the context of armed conflict; into the semantic operations linking past violence and present practice serving the sustainability of war; into the maintenance of people's commitment to it; but also into the possibilities for its alteration. Yet, a trail of new forms of victimisation was left behind throughout TMVP's transition. Capturing such narratives was not only a political act of inclusion and acknowledgement, but also the recognition that TMVP's exertion of violence was a constitutive part of their identity formation and consolidation. With the rapid and simultaneous construction of TMVP as a paramilitary force and a political party, inhabitants of the East and scholars elsewhere were reminded of the continuities between violence and politics. TMVP's process encapsulated the paradox that through the exaltation of regionalism they dismantled LTTE's ethno-nationalism; but at the same time they reinstated the government's pursuit of construing Sri Lanka as an integrated political unity. Regionalism became a critical tool of statebuilding in this unexpected and problematic way.

Finally, I have insisted that a war can only last over three decades and involve members of different generations through a process of knowledge transmission. Understanding a conflict's dynamics requires an exhaustive analysis of how that transmission occurs and simultaneously how critical transformations may stem from it. TMVP was a product of that transmission, and yet it also radically altered its trajectory and structure. In fact, it has been shown how TMVP's emergence changed Sri Lanka's civil war, although this was achieved by involving a new generation in violence and creating a new universe of suffering. At the same time (and most likely because of the above), TMVP's lack of outreach initiatives as well as the general disengagement by policymakers and Tamil politicians has obstructed the advancement of a more profound transformative and stable reconfiguration of

citizenship in the country. While TMVP's interventions were fundamental in making the dissidence sustainable and capable of leading to the war's end, the subsequent success in defeating the LTTE actually worked against them. TMVP's instrumental and semantic alliances lost currency because of their violent excesses; because all of their interventions were appropriated by the Sri Lankan government; because TMVP failed to transform their discourse of regional discrimination into a new multi-ethnic eastern identity; and because TMVP's potential constituency fell under the spell of a certain nostalgia in the face of the LTTE's absence, disenchanted with the return to a pre-war state of affairs.

While TMVP revealed the contingent and construed character of the war's presuppositions, it also allowed a return to a situation not that far from what sparked the armed conflict in the first place. With the civil war's end not translating into a categorical reinvention of the social contract in Sri Lanka, TMVP's implied reengineering of meanings seems to be gradually evaporating from public consciousness. Yet, in spite of such failures and lack of public support, their emergence still shaped Sri Lanka's history. Therefore, I believe that long-term reconciliation, whatever the different political actors imagine this to be, must work through the issues embodied by TMVP's emergence and its transition into politics.

## Annex 1. Interviewed Main Protagonists of TMVP's Emergence

|   |  |
|---|--|
|    |    |
| <p>Source: <a href="http://www.aljazeera.com/">www.aljazeera.com/</a> <a href="http://www.news.bbc.co.uk">www.news.bbc.co.uk</a></p>  | <p>Source: author's photographs</p>  |
| <p><b>Alias:</b> Colonel <u><b>Karuna</b></u> Amman</p> <p><b>Meaning:</b><br/>Kindness. But he selected it in honour of his uncle</p> <p><b>Name:</b><br/>Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan</p> <p><b>Position TMVP:</b><br/>Former leader (1<sup>st</sup> in rank in 2007)</p> <p><b>Previous position LTTE:</b><br/>Military Commander</p> <p><b>In Government:</b><br/>Minister for National Integration &amp; Reconciliation<br/>Deputy Minister of Resettlement</p> <p><b>Born:</b><br/>Kiran, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1966 (Tamil).</p> | <p><b>Alias:</b> <u><b>Pillayan</b></u></p> <p><b>Meaning:</b><br/>Boy. But he argues from Pillaiyar[Ganesh] God removal of obstacles</p> <p><b>Name:</b><br/>Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan</p> <p><b>Position in TMVP:</b><br/>Leader, former deputy. (2<sup>nd</sup> in rank 2007)</p> <p><b>Previous position LTTE:</b><br/>in charge of resource centre in Batticaloa (uniforms, weapons, food</p> <p><b>In Government:</b><br/>Chief Minister for the Eastern Province<br/>Special advisor to the President</p> <p><b>Born:</b><br/>Pethalai, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1975 (Tamil)</p> |



Source: author's photograph

**Alias:** Jayam

**Name:** Nahalingam Thiraviyam

**Position TMVP:**

Military Commander (3<sup>rd</sup> in Rank 2007)

**Previous Position LTTE:**

Second in charge of Vaharai Battalion

**In Government:**

Eastern Provincial Council Member for TMVP

**Born:**

Pethalai, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1972

(Tamil)



Courtesy of TMVP

**Alias:** Theeban. Lateeb (Latiff), Suranga, Ganesh, Raj, Vidushan

**Name:** Jehanandan Jeyaraj

**Position TMVP:**

Data management (4<sup>th</sup> in rank 2007)

**Previous Position LTTE:**

Karuna's Personal bodyguard

**In Government:**

Vice chairman Vavunaitivu Pradesha Sabha

**Born:** Kaluwanchakudy, 10<sup>th</sup> January 1984 (Tamil)



Courtesy of S. Prabhakaran (personal files)

**Alias:** Padmini

**Name:**

Sivagheeta Prabhakaran

**Position TMVP:**



Source: author's photograph

**Alias:** Azad Moulana

**Name:**

Mohamed Mihlar Mohamed Hanzeer

**Position TMVP:**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Secretary General (political wing)</p> <p><b>In Government:</b><br/>Mayor of Batticaloa</p> <p><b>Born:</b><br/>Batticaloa town, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1982<br/>(Tamil)</p>   | <p>Spokesperson</p> <p><b>In Government:</b><br/>Private Secretary to the Chief Minister</p> <p><b>Born:</b><br/>Maruthamunai, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1983<br/>(Muslim)</p>  |
|  <p>Source: author's photograph</p> <p><b>Alias:</b> None</p> <p><b>Name:</b> <u><i>Ali Zahir Moulana</i></u></p> <p><b>Position TMVP:</b><br/>None, but crucial taking Karuna to Colombo</p> <p><b>Position LTTE:</b><br/>None, but served as middlemen between government and LTTE</p> <p><b>In Government:</b><br/>Former Member of Parliament for UNP<br/>Contested Elections under SLFP in 2010 but was not elected</p> <p><b>Born:</b><br/>Eravur, 25th June 1956<br/>(Muslim)</p> |  <p><b>Alias:</b> <u><i>UNCLE KRISHNA</i></u></p> <p><b>Name:</b><br/>Krishna Suppiah</p> <p><b>Position TMVP:</b><br/>TMVP Propaganda abroad<br/>Co-designer of Party Constitution</p> <p><b>Previous in LTTE</b><br/>Left in 1980 to join PLOTE (till 2002)</p> <p><b>In Government</b><br/>None. in the UK since 1972.</p> <p><b>Born</b><br/>Jaffna, 1947</p> |



Source: www.srilankans.com

**Alias:** Ragu (scheduled but not interviewed for he was killed just before)

**Name:** Kumaraswamy Nandagopan

**Position TMVP**

President of the Political Party

**Position LTTE:**

None.

**In Government**

None. Killed near Colombo in 2008

**Born:**

1976



**Alias:** None

**Name:** Rajadurai Manoharan

**Position TMVP**

None; but was Legal advisor to Karuna & contributed to Party Constitution

**Position LTTE**

None. Anti LTTE from start; TULF member

In Government:

None. Solicitor in UK since 1985.

Annex 2. Additional TMVP members and protagonists in  
the Sri Lankan armed conflict

| <b>TMVP</b>                        |                                  |   |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>ALIAS</b>                       | <b>NAME</b>                      | <b>POSITIONS</b>  |
| Sinnathambi                        | Not documented                   | Military wing leader  |
| Mangalan Master                    | Not documented                   | At some point third in command in charge of camps; briefly named TMVP leader                            |
| Inniyabarathi                      | K Pushpa Kumar                   | Trusted man of Karuna; currently Ampara District Coordinator for President Rajapakse.                   |
| Reggie                             | Vinayagamoorthy Sivanesathurai.  | Karuna's elder brother. Former commander of LTTE 46 Base in Batticaloa. Deputy leader of the 2004 split |
| <b>LTTE</b>                        |                                  |   |
| Prabhakaran<br>(or Thambi or Anna) | Velupillai Prabhakaran           | Leader  |
| Tamilchelvan                       | Suppiah Paramu<br>Thamilselvan   | Political Head  |
| Pottu Amman                        | Shanmugalingam<br>Sivashankar    | Intelligence Chief  |
| Mahathaya                          | Gopalaswamy<br>Mahendrarajah     | Deputy leader of the LTTE in the late 80's killed for treason   |
| Paduman                            | Sivasubramaniam<br>Varathanathan | Former LTTE Trincomalee Commander   |
| <b>GOVERNMENT</b>                  |                                  |   |
| Mahinda Rajapakse                  |                                  | President of Sri Lanka  |
| Gotabaya Rajapakse                 |                                  | Secretary of defence<br>(president's brother)   |



|   |  |
|---|--|
|   |  |
| 2a. ePq;fs; ,d;lh;nel;<br>cgNahf;fpwPh;fsh?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mk; <input type="checkbox"/> ,y;iy                              |
| 2b. Mk; vd;why;> jw;fhy<br>epfo;Tfs; my;yJ rpwP<br>yq;fh;tpd; mz;ika tuyhW<br>gw;wp jfty; jUk; ,izaj;jsq;fis<br>ePq;fs; juprpf;fpwPh;fsh? | <input type="checkbox"/> Mk;, ngaUld;<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> ,y;iy              |
| 3a. ePq;fs; nghJ<br>Ehyfj;jpw;F<br>nry;fpwPh;fsh?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mk; <input type="checkbox"/> ,y;iy                              |
| 3b. Mk; vd;why;, ve;j<br>tifahd Ehy;fis my;yJ<br>rQ;rpiffis ePq;fs; ,uty;<br>thq;FfpwPh;fs;?  |  |
| 4. tPl;by; tuyhw;W Ehy;fs;<br>cq;fsp;lk; cz;lh?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Mk; <input type="checkbox"/> ,y;iy<br><br>Mk; vd;why;, vit?     |
| 5. <u>ePq;fs; thndhyp</u><br><u>Nfl;fpd;wPh;fsh?</u>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Mk;, epiyaq;fspd; ngaUld;<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> ,y;iy |
| 6. jw;fhy epfo;Tfs; my;yJ<br>mz;ika tuyhW gw;wp<br>mwptjw;F NtW vq;fpUe;J<br>ePq;fs; jfty;<br>ngWfpwPh;fs;?                               |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>7. cq;fSf;F kpf; gpbj;jkhd<br/>tuyhw;Wf; fhyg; gpupT<br/>vJ? Vd?;</p>   |  |
| <p>8. gpw ,df; FO;fspy;<br/>cq;fSf;F ez;gh;fs;<br/>,Uf;fpd;whh;fsh?</p>  | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mk;, xU rpyh;      <input type="checkbox"/> Mk;, gyh;<br/><br/><input type="checkbox"/> ,y;iy<br/><br/>Mk; vd;why;, ve;jf; FO(f;fs;),y; ,Ue;J?</p> |
| <p><b>Kuz;ghL gw;wp cq;fs; fUj;Jfs;</b></p>  |  |
| <p>9. rpwP yq;fh tuyhw;wpd;<br/>fle;j 33 Mz;Lfs;&gt; MAj<br/>Nkhjyhy; ghjpf;fg;<br/>gl;bUf;fpd;wd. ,e;j Kuz;ghL<br/>gw;wp cq;fSf;F vd;d<br/>njupAk;?</p> |  |
| <p>10. cq;fspd; fUj;Jg;gb<br/>vg;NghJ ,e;j Kuz;ghL<br/>Muk;gpj;jJ?</p>   |  |
| <p>11. cq;fspd; fUj;Jg;gb Vd;<br/>,e;j Kuz;ghL Muk;gpj;jJ?</p>   |  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>12. ,e;j Kuz;ghl;bd;<br/>gpujhdkhd fjhghj;jpuq;fshf<br/>ahh; ,Ue;jhh;fs; ?<br/>(,Uf;fpwhh;fs;?)</p>  |   |
| <p>13. ,e;j Kuz;ghL gw;wp<br/>ePq;fs; vg;gb mwpe;J<br/>nfhz;Bh;fs;? mijg; gw;wp<br/>ePq;fs; vg;gb jfty;<br/>ngWfpwPh;fs;?</p>   |   |
| <p>14. xU Kuz;ghL ,Ue;jjhf<br/>ePq;fs; vg;NghJ Kjd;<br/>Kjypy; czh;e;J nfhz;Bh;fs;?</p> <p><i>cjhuzk; : ehd; 7 tajhf ,Ue;j NghJ&gt;<br/>..... ehd;<br/>fz;Nld;/Nfs;tpg;gl;Nld;.</i></p> |   |
| <p>15. ,e;j gpur;rpids; gw;wp<br/>cq;fs; FLk;gj;Jld; ePq;fs;<br/>fijj;jPh;;;fsh?</p>  | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mk;                      <input type="checkbox"/> ,y;iy</p> <p>Mk; vd;why;, vd;d ePq;fs;<br/>fye;JiuahbdPh;fs;? ahUld;?</p> |
| <p>16. ,e;j Kuz;ghL gw;wp<br/>ePq;fs; cq;fs; tFg;G rfhf;fs;<br/>my;yJ ez;gh;fSld;<br/>fye;JiuahLfpwPh;fsh?<br/>mt;thnwd;why;&gt; vg;gb?</p>   |   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>17. Nghupdhy; cq;fs;<br/>tho;f;if<br/>ghjpf;fg;gl;bUf;fpwjh?<br/>vt;thW?</p>   |  |
| <p>18. Nrhjidr; rhtbfspd; Clhf<br/>ePq;fs; Vd; Nghf<br/>Ntz;bapUe;jJ vd;W<br/>vg;NghjhtJ ahuplkhtJ<br/>Nfl;bUf;fpwPh;fsh?<br/>mt;thnwd;why;&gt; ePq;fs;<br/>ahuplk; Nfl;Bh;fs; ? vd;d<br/>tpil fpilj;jJ?</p>                  |  |
| <p>19. ,q;F&gt; ,e;j efuj;jpy;<br/>,lk;ngw;w Fwpg;gpl;l<br/>td;Kiwr; rk;gtq;fs; VjhfpYk;<br/>cq;fSf;F<br/>QhgfkpUf;fpd;wjh? Mk;<br/>vd;why;, mit vit?</p>   |  |
| <p>20. [_iy 1983 y; ,lk;ngw;w<br/>Nkhjy; njhlh;ghd epfo;Tfs;<br/>gw;wp ePq;fs;<br/>Nfs;tpg;gl;bUf;fpwPh;fsh?<br/>mijg; gw;wp cq;fSf;F vd;d<br/>njupAk;?</p>   |  |
| <p>21. 2002f;Fk; 2008f;Fk;<br/>,ilg;gl;l fhyg;gFjpapy;&gt; xU<br/>Nghh; epWj;j xg;ge;jKk;<br/>xU rkhjhd eltbf;ifAk;<br/>,Ue;jd. mit ,Wjpapy;<br/>Njhy;tp fz;ld. Vd; mit<br/>Njhy;tp fz;ld vd ePq;fs;<br/>epidf;fpwPh;fs;?</p> |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>22. ,e;j Kuz;ghL gw;wp<br/>ePq;fs; VjhtJ tpsq;fpf;<br/>nfhs;s Ntz;LkhapUe;jhy;&gt;<br/>ahuplk; ePq;fs; Nfl;gPh;fs;<br/>my;yJ mjw;fhd tpilia vq;F<br/>NjLtPh;fs;?<br/><b>Fwpg;G:</b> jaTnra;J egh;fspd;<br/>ngah;fis Fwpg;gpl Ntz;lhk;.</p> |  |
| <p>23. ,e;j Kuz;ghL gw;wpa<br/>tuyhW ghlrhiyapy;<br/>fw;gpf;fg;gl Ntz;Lk; vd<br/>ePq;fs; fUJfpd;wPh;fsh?<br/>Vd;/ Vd; ,y;iy?</p>  |  |
| <p>24. rkPgj;jpa Mz;Lfspy;<br/>cq;fsJ r%fj;jpd; epiyik<br/>Kd;Ndw;wkile;jpUf;fpwJ vd<br/>ePq;fs; czh;fpwPh;fsh?</p>   |  |
| <p>25. vjph;fhyj;ij ePq;fs;<br/>vt;thW fhz;fpwPh;fs;?</p>   |  |
| <p>26. vjph;fhyj;jpy; td;Kiw<br/>VjhfpYk; eilngwhky;<br/>jtph;g;gjw;F&gt; cq;fs;<br/>mgpg;gpuhag;gb rpwe;j<br/>topKiw vd;d?</p>   |  |
| <p><b>ed;wp!</b></p>  |  |

## Annex 4. Questionnaire English

|   |   |       |   |              |  |
|---|---|-------|---|--------------|--|
| Date  |   | Place |   | Code         | (don't fill)   |
| <b>General Information</b>  |   |       |   |              |  |
| School  |   |       |   | Ethnic Group | <input type="checkbox"/> Tamil                                     |
| Grade   | Age   |       | <input type="checkbox"/> Male           |              | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim                                    |
|   |   |       | <input type="checkbox"/> Female         |              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sinhala                                   |
| Religion  | <input type="checkbox"/> Hinduism <input type="checkbox"/> Islam<br><input type="checkbox"/> Buddhism <input type="checkbox"/> Catholicism<br><input type="checkbox"/> Protestantism <input type="checkbox"/> Other, Namely |       |   |              | <input type="checkbox"/> Burgher<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| Home Town   |   |       |   |              |  |
| Parents' Occupation   |   |       |   |              |  |
| How many brothers/Sisters?  |   |       |   |              |  |
| <b>Sources of Information</b>   |   |       |   |              |  |
| <small>(Do you need additional space to answer? Please write on the back side putting the question number up front)</small> |   |       |   |              |  |
| 1a. Do you read Newspapers?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Once Week   |       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Sometimes |              |  |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Daily   |       | <input type="checkbox"/> No             |              |  |
| 1b. If Yes, which one(s)  |   |       |   |              |  |
| 2a. Do you use Internet?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes  |       | <input type="checkbox"/> No             |              |  |
| 2b. If Yes, do you visit websites with information about current events or Sri Lankan recent history?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Namely  |       |   |              |  |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> No   |       |   |              |  |
| 3a. Do you visit the Public   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes  |       | <input type="checkbox"/> No             |              |  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Library?   |  |
| 3b. If Yes, What kind of books or Magazines do you borrow?   |  |
| 4. Do you have history books at home?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No<br>If Yes, Which ones?  |
| 5. Do you listen to the radio?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, namely to:<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> No  |
| 6. What other sources of information do you have to learn about current events or recent history?                |  |
| 7. Which is your favourite historical period? Why?   |  |
| 8. Do you have friends from other ethnic groups?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a few <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, many <input type="checkbox"/> No<br>If yes, from which group(s)? |
| <b>Your views of Conflict</b>  |  |
| 9. The last 33 years of Sri Lankan history were affected by armed conflict. What do you know about the conflict? |  |
| 10. When did the conflict start according to you?  |  |
| 11. Why did the conflict start according to you?   |  |



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>violence here in town? If yes, Which ones?</p>  |  |
| <p>20. Have you heard of incidents related to conflict happening in July 1983? What do you know about that?</p>  |  |
| <p>21. Between 2002 and 2008 there was a Cease Fire Agreement and a Peace Process that ultimately failed. Why do you think it failed?</p>                                    |  |
| <p>22. If you want to understand something about the conflict, who do you ask or where do you look for an answer?<br/><b>Note:</b> please don't mention names of people.</p> |  |
| <p>23. Do you consider that the history of conflict should be taught in school? Why/ why not?</p>  |  |
| <p>24. Do you feel the situation of your community has improved in recent years?</p>   |  |
| <p>25. How do you see the future?</p>  |  |
| <p>26. What is in your opinion the best way to avoid any future violence?</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Thank You!</b></p>   |  |

## Annex 5. Questionnaire in Sinhala

|   |  |                               |                                 |   |
|---|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Èkh   |  | ia:d<br>kh                    |                                 | fuys<br>lsisjl<br>a<br>,shkak<br>tmd  |
| <b>Tn ms,sn  idudkH f;dr;=re</b>  |  |                               |                                 |   |
| mdi,  |  |                               |                                 | ck<br>j¾.h  |
| fY%aKsh   | jhi  | <input type="checkbox"/> msßñ | <input type="checkbox"/> .eyekq | <input type="checkbox"/> isxy,<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> fou<<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> uqia,sï |
| wd.u  | <input type="checkbox"/> nqoaOd.u<br><input type="checkbox"/> lf;da,sl<br><input type="checkbox"/> yskay<br><input type="checkbox"/> bia,dï<br><input type="checkbox"/> l%sia;shdks<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> fjk;a - kï lrkak |                               |                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> n¾.¾<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> fjk;a   |
| Wmka .u\$K.rh   |  |                               |                                 |   |
| foudmshkaf.a /lshdj   |  |                               |                                 |   |
| ifydaor ifydaorshka<br>.Kk@   |  |                               |                                 |   |
| <b>f;dr;=re ,nd .kakd udOH ms,sn  úia;r</b><br>^fi i yd imhd we;s bv m%udKh m%udKj;a fkdfö ki fuys msgqmi<br>msgqj ta i yd Ndú; lrkak' wod< m%Yak wxlh meyeÈ,sj ,shkak& |  |                               |                                 |   |
| 1a. Tn mqj;am;a<br>lshjkjdo@  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tö - i;shlg jrla <input type="checkbox"/> Tö-blysg  |                               |                                 |   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tõ-Èkm;d <input type="checkbox"/> ke;   |
| <b>1b.</b> ms<s;=r Tõ ki l=uk<br>mqj;am;ao@ ^ki ,shkak&   |  |
| <b>2a.</b> Tn wka;¼cd,h mdúÉÑ<br>lrkafkao@  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tõ <input type="checkbox"/> ke;   |
| <b>2b.</b> ms,s;=r Tõ ki<br>,xldfõ ld,Sk isÿüi iy<br>uE; b;sydih ms,sn <br>úia;r i yka fjí<br>wvúj,g msúfikjdo@ | <input type="checkbox"/> Tõ - ki i yka lrkak<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> ke;                               |
| <b>3a.</b> Tn mqia;ld,hg<br>hkjdo@  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tõ <input type="checkbox"/> ke;   |
| <b>3b.</b> ms,s;=r Tõ ki Tn<br>lshjkafka l=uk j¼.fha<br>fmd;a fyda i.rdo@                                       |  |
| <b>4.</b> Tfí ksjfia b;sydi<br>fmd;a ;sfío@   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tõ <input type="checkbox"/> ke;<br><br>ms,s;=r Tõ ki tu fmd;a fudkjdo@                |
| <b>5.</b> Tn .=jkaúÿ,shg ijka<br>fokjdo@  | <input type="checkbox"/> Tõ - tu .=jkaúÿ,s kd,sld<br>fudkjðths i yka lrkak<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> ke; |
| <b>6</b> ,xldfõ ld,Sk isÿüi<br>yd uE; b;sydih .ek<br>f;dr;=re Tng ±k .;<br>yels fjk;a udoH<br>fudkjdo@          |  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>7. ,xld b;sydifha Tn<br/>leu;su ld,mßÉfpoh<br/>l=ulao@ ta wehs@</p>                            |  |
| <p>8. Tng fjk;a ckj¾.j,g<br/>wh;a ñ;=rka isào@</p>  | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tõ- lsysmfokla<br/><input type="checkbox"/> Tõ- yq.la <input type="checkbox"/> ke;</p> <p>ms,s;=r Tõ ki Tjqka<br/>ljr cd;Skag wh;ao@</p> |
| <p><b>hgoaOh .ek Tfí woyia</b></p>  |  |
| <p>9. miq.sh jir 33<br/>uq¨,af,a<br/>,xldfõ hgoaOhla ;snqKs<br/>Tn ta .ek okafka<br/>fudkjdo@</p> |  |
| <p>10. tu hgoaOh wdrïN<br/>jqfha ljod hehs lshd<br/>Tn is;kafkao@</p>                             |  |
| <p>11. Tn is;k wdldrhg<br/>tjeks hgoaOhla weröug<br/>fya;=j l=ulao@</p>                           |  |
| <p>12. hgoaOhg iinkaO jQ<br/>m%Odk md¾Yajhka ljqo@</p>  |  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   |   |
| <p>13. hqoaOh .ek Tn<br/> ±k.;af;a flfiao@ ta<br/> .ek Tn f;dr;=re<br/> ,nd.;af;a flfiao@</p>   |   |
| <p>14. rfÜ hqoaOhla we;ehs<br/> Tn m&lt;uqjrg ±k.;af;a<br/> ljodo@<br/> Wod-ug wjqreÿ 7 S ug<br/> wikakg\$olskag ,enqfKa<br/> .....</p> |   |
| <p>15. hqoaOh .ek Tn Tfí<br/> mjqf,a wh iu. l;dney<br/> lr ;sfnkjdo@</p>  | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tõ <input type="checkbox"/> ke;<br/> Tõ ki ta fudkjd .eko@ ta ljrl= iu.o@</p> |
| <p>16 hqoaOh .ek Tn Tfí<br/> ñ;=rka iu. l;dney lr<br/> ;sfnkjdo@<br/> Tõ ki ta flfiao@</p>  |   |
| <p>17. Tfí fyda Tfí mjqf,a<br/> flfkl=f.a Ôú;hg<br/> hqoaOh n,md ;sfío@<br/> Tõ ki ta flfiao@</p>                                       |   |
| <p>18. Tfí m&lt;df;a isÿjQ<br/> lsishĩ ysxidldí<br/> l%shdjka ms,sn j Tng<br/> u;lhla we;so@<br/> Tõ ki tajd fudkjdo@</p>               |   |
| <p>19. 1983 cQ,s udifha\$<br/> ,xldfõ isÿjQ lsishĩ<br/> ysxidldí l%shdjla</p>   |   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>ms,sn j Tn wid we;so@<br/>Tõ ki Tn th .ek okafka<br/>fudkjdo@</p>  |  |
| <p>20 hqo .egqi ms,sn j<br/>Tng hula wid tk .ekSug<br/>wjYH ki Tn ta i yd<br/>msysg m;kafka ldf.ao\$<br/>ta i yd ms,s;=rla ,nd<br/>.kafka fldfykao@<br/>^lreKdlr mqoa.,hkaf.a<br/>ki i yka lrkak tmd&amp;</p> |  |
| <p>21 hqoaOh ms,sn <br/>b;sydih mdi,aj,\$<br/>b.ekaúh hq;= hehs Tn<br/>is;kafkao@<br/>Tõ ki ta wehs@<br/>ke; ki ta wehs @</p>   |  |
| <p>22. Tn Ôj;a jk m%cdfõ<br/>;;a;ajh miq.sh ld,fha\$<br/>ÈhqKq jQjd hehs Tng<br/>±fkkjdo@</p>   |  |
| <p>23. wkd.;h .ek<br/>Tng fmfkkafka flfiao@</p>   |  |
| <p>24. Tng yef.k mßÈ<br/>ysxidldí l%shd fyda<br/>hqo .egqi wkd.;fha\$<br/>we;s ùu je&lt;elaùug .;<br/>yels<br/>fyd u mshjr l=ulao@</p>  |  |
| <p>ia;=;shs!</p>  |  |

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abeysekera, C and Newton Gunasinghe. 1987. *Facets of ethnicity in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientist Association of Sri Lanka.
- Alison, M. 2004. Women as Agents of Political Violence: Gendering Security, *Security Dialogue*, 35 (4): 47–463
- Althusser, L., 2008. *On ideology*. London: Verso.
- Amarajeewa, A. 2009. Eastern schools named after LTTE leaders to be renamed. In *the Daily Mirror*, September 12
- Amarasuriya, H.& Hettige, S.T. 2009. *Political and social exclusion of youth in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Policy Analysis and Research Centre, University of Colombo.
- Amnesty International. 2009. *Twenty years of make-believe. Sri Lanka's commissions of inquiry*. London: June report.
- Andersen, N. A. 2003. *Discursive Analytical Strategies. Understanding Foucault, Koselleck, Laclau, Luhmann*. Bristol: the Policy Press.
- Anderson, B.1991 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*. London.: Verso
- Apter, D.E. 1997. *The Legitimization of violence*. New York: New York University Press.
- Arendt, H. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Arendt, H. 1970. *On violence*. Houghton: Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.
- Argenti, N. & Schramm, K. 2010. *Remembering violence: anthropological perspectives on intergenerational transmission*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Arunatilake, N., Jayasuriya, S. & Kelegama, S. 2001. The Economic Cost of the War in Sri Lanka. *World Development* 29(9): 1483-1500.

- Athas, I. 2004. Karuna: here is the real story. In *The Sunday Times* June 27.
- Athukoralge, P. & Jayasuriya, S.K. 1994. *Macroeconomic policies, crises, and growth in Sri Lanka, 1969-90*. Washington, D.C: World Bank.
- Azar, E. 1990. *The management of protracted social conflict*. Hapshire: Aldershot.
- Ballentine, K & Sherman J. 2003. *The Political Economy of armed Conflict. Beyond Greed & Grievance*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Barthes, R. 1977. *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana Press.
- Baumann, G. 1999. *The multicultural riddle: rethinking national, ethnic, and religious identities*. New York: Routledge.
- Beatty, A. 2010. How Did It Feel for You? Emotion, Narrative, and the Limits of Ethnography. *American Anthropologist*. 112(3): 430-443.
- Bekerman, Z. & Zembylas, M. 2012. *Teaching Contested Narratives: Identity, Memory and Reconciliation in Peace Education and Beyond*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bernstein, B.B. 2000. *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: theory, research, critique*, Rev edn, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Md.
- Bhatia, M. 2005. Fighting words: naming terrorists, bandits, rebels and other violent actors. In *Third World Quarterly* Vol 26 No1. Pp 5-22.
- Bhatt, S., Mistry, D. 2006. *Cost of conflict in Sri Lanka*, Strategic Foresight Group, Mumbai.
- Bloch, M. 2012. *Antropology and the cognitive challenge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bohle, H.G. & Hartmut Fünfgeld. 2007. The political ecology of violence in Eastern Sri Lanka. *Development and Change* 38 (4):665-687.
- Borer, T.A. 2006. *Telling the truths: truth telling and peace building in post-conflict societies*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

- Bouma, P.S. 2003. *Political economy of Internal conflict, the A comparative analysis of Angola, Colombia, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka*. The Hague: Clingendael Institute.
- Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Thompson, J.B. 1991. *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Boyden, J. 2007. *Of Tigers, ghosts and snakes: children's social cognition in the context of conflict in eastern Sri Lanka*. Queens Elizabeth House Working papers. <http://www3.qeh.ox.ac.uk/RePEc/qeh/qehwps/qehwps151.pdf>
- Brass, P.R. 2006. *Forms of collective violence. Riots, pogroms, and genocide in modern India*. New Delhi: Three essays collective.
- Brass, P.R. 1997. *Theft of an idol: text and context in the representation of collective violence*. Princeton: N.J Princeton University Press.
- Brubaker, R. 2004. *Ethnicity Without Groups*. Harvard. University Press.
- Brun, C & Tariq Jazeel. 2009. *Spatialising politics. Culture and geography in postcolonial Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Sage publications.
- Burke, A., Mulakala, A. 2005. *Donors and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka, 2000-2005: part of the Sri Lanka strategic conflict assessment*. Colombo: The Asia Foundation.
- Bush, K. 2003. *The intra-group dimensions of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka: learning to read between the lines*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Caruth, C. 1996. *Unclaimed experience. Trauma, narrative, and history*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Cappelletto, F. 2003. Long-Term Memory of Extreme Events: From Autobiography to History. In *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 241-260.

- Chatterjee, P. & Jeganathan, P. 2000. *Community, gender and violence*. London Hurst.
- Cheran, R. 2001. *A history of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka: recollection, reinterpretation & reconciliation*. Colombo: Marga Institute.
- Clarance, W. 2007. *Ethnic warfare in Sri Lanka and the UN crisis*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications.
- Clifford, J. 1992. Traveling Cultures. In *Cultural Studies*. Routledge, 96- 116
- Cohen, A.P. 2004 [1985]. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Routledge.
- Cole, E.A. 2007. *Teaching the violent past: history education and reconciliation*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, in cooperation with the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs.
- Colenso, P. 2005. "Education and Social Cohesion: Developing a Framework for Education Sector Reform in Sri Lanka", *Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education*, vol. 35, no. 4, pp. 411-428.
- Collier, P., Hoeffler, A. & Söderbom, M. 2004. On the Duration of Civil War. In *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 253-273.
- Collier, P. 2010. *Wars, Guns & votes. Democracy in dangerous places*. London: Vintage books.
- Connor, J. 2007. *The sociology of Loyalty*. New York: Springer.
- Perera-Rajasingham, N. 2008. The politics of the governed: maternal politics and child recruitment in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka. In Coomaraswamy, R & Perera-Rajasingham, N. 2008, *Constellations of Violence.Feminist Inteventions in South Asia*.Women Unlimited.
- Daniel, V. 1996. *Charred Lullabies. Chapters in an anthropology of violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Das, V. 2007. *Life and words: violence and the descent into the ordinary*. Berkeley University of California Press.

- Das, V et al (eds). 2000. *Violence and subjectivity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Das, V., Kleinman, A., Lock, M.M. 2001. *Remaking a world violence, social suffering and recovery*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Das, V. & Poole, D. 2004. *Anthropology in the margins of the state*. Oxford School of American Research Press.
- De Alwis, M. 1995. Gender, politics and the respectable lady. In Jeganathan, P., Ismail, Q. 1995, *Unmaking the nation: the politics of identity and history in modern Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association.
- De Alwis, M. 2002. The Changing Role of Women in Sri Lankan Society. In *Social Research*, Vol. 69, No.3 September, pp.675-691.
- De Alwis, M. 2004. A rising in the east. In *The Sunday Island*. July 18.
- Deegalle Mahinda 2006. *Buddhism, conflict and violence in modern Sri Lanka*. London: Routledge.
- De Mel, N. 2007. *Militarizing Sri Lanka. Popular culture, memory and narrative in the armed conflict*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Der Derian, J. 2005. "Imaging Terror: Logos, Pathos and Ethos" in *Third World Quarterly* Vol. 26 No.1 pp. 23-37
- De Saussure, F., Bally, C., Sechehaye, A. & Riedlinger, A. 1983. *Course in general linguistics*, Open Court, LaSalle, Ill.
- De Silva, C.R. 1999. "The role of education in ameliorating political violence in Sri Lanka" in Rotberg, R.I. (ed) 1999. *Creating peace in Sri Lanka. Civil war & reconciliation*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- De Silva, KM. 1986. *Managing ethnic tension in multi-ethnic societies, 1880-1985*. Lanham: University Press of America.
- De Silva, KM. 1998. *Reaping the Whirlwind: Ethnic Conflict, ethnic Politics in Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

- De Silva, K.M. 2005. *A History of Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications.
- De Silva, KM. 2012. *Sri Lanka and the Defeat of the LTTE*, Penguin Books. Kindle edition.
- DeVotta, N. 2000. Control Democracy, Institutional Decay, and the Quest for Eelam: Explaining Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka. *Pacific Affairs* 73 (1):55-76.
- De Zeeuw, J. 2008. *From soldiers to politicians: transforming rebel movements after civil war*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Dunham, D. & Kelegama, S. 1994. *Economic liberalization and structural reforms: the experience of Sri Lanka, 1977-93*. The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- Educational Publication Department [EPD], 2006a. *History Grade 7*. Sri Lanka
- Educational Publication Department [EPD], 2006b. *Citizenship Education and Governance Grade 10*. Sri Lanka
- Educational Publication Department [EPD], 2007a. *History Grade 7*. Sri Lanka
- Educational Publication Department [EPD], 2007b. *History Grade 9*. Sri Lanka
- Educational Publication Department [EPD], 2007c. *History Grade 11*. Sri Lanka
- Educational Publication Department [EPD], 2007d. *Citizenship Education and Governance. Grade 11*, Sri Lanka.
- Educational Publication Department [EPD], 2009. *Citizenship Education and Governance Grade 9*. Sri Lanka.
- Fabian, J., 2007. *Memory Against Culture. Arguments and reminders*. London: Duke University Press.
- Fabian, J., 1983. *Time and the Other. How Anthropology Makes its Object*. Columbia University Press.
- Fairclough, N., 2003. *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N., 1992. *Discourse and social change*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Fairclough, N., Giuseppina Cortese & Patrizia Ardizzone (eds). 2007. *Discourse and Contemporary Social Change*. Bern: Peter Lang AG Publishers.
- Farrel, T. 2007. Eastern Promise. Sri Lankan troops turn Tigers back into guerrillas. *Jane's Intelligence Review* October.
- Fearon, J.D. & Laitin, D.D. 2003. Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 1, pp. 75-90.
- Feldman, A. 1991. *Formations of Violence. The narrative of the body and political terror in Northern Ireland*. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Fernando, S. 2008. Gayanajake indicted for abduction. In *the Daily Mirror*. May 7, 2008.
- Fonseka, B & Raheem, M. 2010. *Land in the eastern province. Politics, policy and conflict*. Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- Foucault, M. 1972. *The archaeology of knowledge; and, The discourse on language*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. 1980 [1972]. *Power/ Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon books.
- Frerks, G., & Klem, B. 2004. *Dealing with Diversity: Sri Lankan discourses on peace and conflict*. The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael'.
- Fuglerud, Ø. 2011. Aesthetics of Martyrdom: The Celebration of Violent Death among the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In Six-Hohenbalken, M. and Nerina Weiss (2011). *Violence Expressed*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Gaasbeek, T. 2010. *Bridging troubled waters? Everyday inter-ethnic interaction in a context of violent conflict in Kottiyar Pattu, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka*. Wageningen: Wageningen University.
- Ganepola, V., Thalayasingam, P. 2004. *Dimensions of conflict outside the North and East of Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Centre for Poverty Analysis.

- Giles et al (eds) 2003. *Feminists under fire. Exchanges across war zones*. Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Ginige, I.L. 2002. Education Research for Policy and Practice: Secondary Education Reforms in Sri Lanka. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice 1*: 65-77. Kluwer Academic Publishers
- Giroux, H. 1994. Doing cultural studies: youth and the language of pedagogy. *Educational Review 64* (3): 278-308.
- Gombrich, R.F. & Obeyesekere, G. 1988. *Buddhism transformed: religious change in Sri Lanka*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Goodhand, J. 2005. *Aid, conflict, and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka, 2000-2005*. Colombo: The Asia Foundation.
- Goodhand, J., Hulme, D. & Lewer, N. 2000. Social Capital and the Political Economy of Violence: A Case Study of Sri Lanka. *Disasters 24*(4): 390-406.
- Goodhand, J. 2006. *Aiding peace? The role of NGOs in armed conflict*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Goodhand, J., Klem, B., Burke, A., Mulakala, A., Rampton, D., Welikala, A., Philipson, L., Thangarajah, Y., Bastian, S. & Nadarajah, S. 2005. *Sri Lanka strategic conflict assessment 2005*. Colombo: Asia Foundation.
- Gramsci, A., & Buttigieg, J.A. 1992. *Prison notebooks*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Grobar, L.M. & Gnanaselvam, S. 1993. The Economic Effects of the Sri Lankan Civil War. *Economic Development and Cultural Change 41*(2): 395.
- Gunaratna, R. 2001[1990]. Sri Lanka. A lost revolution? The inside story of the JVP. Institute of Fundamental Studies.
- Gunasekera, R.G.G.O., Samarasinghe, S.G., Vamadevan, M., Dharmadāsa, K.E.Ö. 1996. *National language policy in Sri Lanka, 1956 to 1996: three studies in its implementation*. Kandy: International Centre for Ethnic Studies.

- Gunasekara, T. 2008. The Tragedy of a Rebel. In *the Sri Lankan Guardian*. January 30.
- Gunasingam, M. 1999. *Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism: a study of its origins*. Sydney: MV Publications.
- Gurr, T.R. 1994. Peoples Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System: 1994 Presidential Address. In *International Studies Quarterly* 38(3): 347-377
- Gurr, T.R. 2000. Peoples versus states: minorities at risk in the new century. Washington: USIP.
- Handunnetti, D. 2004a. Easterners sitting on a Volcano. In *The Sunday Leader*, Volume 10, Issue 35. March 14
- Handunnetti, D. 2004b. Present MoU not valid, new one should be signed- Karuna. In *The Sunday Leader*, Volume 10, Issue 35. March 14.
- Hariharan, R. 2004a. Karuna in a no win situation. In SAAG Paper no. 1165. November 13.
- Hariharan, R. 2004b. Karuna in Politics: Old War Horse in A New Mantle. In SAAG October 10.
- Hariharan, R. 2007. Capture of Vakarai and the contradictions in Sri Lanka's agenda. In SAAG note no. 359. January 25.
- Hariharan, R. 2007. Karuna's travails. in SAAG. Note no. 405, September 23
- Hariharan, R. 2008. Future of Karuna, the Reluctant Rebel. In SAAG, update No 144. Note no. 454. July.
- Harris, S. & Nick Lewer. 2008. Peace education in conflict zones - experience from northern Sri Lanka. In *Journal of Peace Education* 5(2): 127-140.
- Hart, J. (ed) 2008. Years of Conflict. Adolescence, political violence and displacement. Berghahn Books.

- Hegre, H. 2004. The Duration and Termination of Civil War". *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 243-252.
- Hettige, S.T., Mayer, M. 2008. *Youth, peace, and sustainable development*. Colombo Centre for Poverty Analysis.
- Hodgkin, K., & Radstone, S. 2003. *Contested pasts: the politics of memory*. London Routledge.
- Horowitz, D.L. 2000 [1985]. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. London: University of California Press.
- Howell, R. 1997. *Newcastle and the Nation: The Seventeenth-Century Experience* in Richardson, R.C. *The English Civil Wars. Local Aspects*. Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited.
- Human Rights Watch [HRW] (2007). Return To War. Human Rights under siege. Sri Lanka Report 19(11)(c) August.
- Human Rights Watch [HRW] (2007). Complicit in Crime State Collusion in Abductions and Child Recruitment by the Karuna Group. Sri Lanka Report. 19 (1) (c) January.
- Huyssen, A.1995. *Twilight Memories. Marking time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge.
- Ignatieff, M. 1999. *The Warrior's Honour: ethnic War and the Modern Conscience*. London: Vintage.
- Igney, Ann, 2012. Reconciliation and Remembering: (How) does it Work?. *Memory Studies* 5:251.
- International Crisis Group [ICG] 2008. Sri Lanka's Eastern Province: Land, Development, Conflict. Asia Report No.159, October 15.
- International Organization for Migration [IOM]. Unpublished. Information, Counselling and Referral Services (ICRS) Programme.
- Jabri, V. 1996. *Discourses on violence: conflict analysis reconsidered*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

- Jackson, M., 2002. *The politics of storytelling: violence, transgression, and intersubjectivity*. Portland: Museum Tusculanum Press.
- Jansz, F. 2006. *The consequences of another war in Sri Lanka: February 27-May 5th 2006*. Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence.
- Jayasekara, S & Kelum B. 2009. Karuna Sworn in as Minister. In *the Daily Mirror*, March 9 2009.
- Jayasekara, B. 2002. Hawkish Colonel Karuna riding high in Batticaloa. In *The Island*, May 3.
- Jayasundera, R. 2008. The Karuna case unplugged. In *the Sunday Leader*. January 27.
- Jayatilleka, D. 2004. In Karuna's defense. In *Asia Tribune*. October
- Jeganathan, P., Ismail, Q. 1995. *Unmaking the nation: the politics of identity and history in modern Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association,.
- Jelin, E. 2002. *Los trabajos de la memoria*. Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores
- Jelin, E & Lorenz, F.G. (eds). 2004. Educación y memoria. La escuela elabora el pasado. Madrid: Siglo XXI de España editores.
- Jeyaraj, DBS. 2004a. Pottu vs. Karuna: clash of the "Ammans". In *The Sunday Leader*, Vol. 10 issue 35. March 14.
- Jeyaraj, DBS. 2004b. Karuna and the eastern Tiger Revolt. In *The Sunday Leader*, Vol.10 issue 35. March 14.
- Jeyaraj, DBS. 2004c. The Eastern Warlord. In *Frontline*, Vol. 21 Issue 07, March 27 - April 9.
- Jeyaraj, DBS. 2004d. The Fall of Karuna. In *Frontline*, Vol. 21 - Issue 09, April 24 - May 07.
- Jeyaraj, DBS. 2004e. How Tigers gained upper hand in the East. In *The Sunday Leader*, March 28

- Jeyaraj, DBS. 2007. "Col" Karuna Caught up in Controversial London Arrest. In *Transcurrents* [www.transcurrents.com]. November 10.
- Jeyaraj, J. unpublished. Personal diary. Translated by N. Hamead.
- Jr, K.R.D. & Sobek, D. 2004. The Dynamics of Civil War Duration and Outcome. *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3):303-320.
- Kaldor, M. 1999. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Kalyvas, S.N. 2006. *The logic of violence in civil war*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kapferer, B. 1998. *Legends of people, myths of state: violence, intolerance, and political culture in Sri Lanka and Australia*. Bathurst: Crawford House.
- Karunaratne & Sons, 2007. *Citizenship Education Grade 9*. Colombo: Karunaratne and Sons.
- Kelegama, S. 2002. Sri Lankan Economy of War and Peace. *Economic and Political Weekly* 37(47):4678-4685
- King, C. 2007. Power, social violence, and civil wars. In Crocker, C.A., Hampson, F.O. and Pamela Aal. *Leashing the dogs of war. Conflict management in a divided world*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press.
- Knight, M. & Özerdem, A. 2004 Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace. *Journal of Peace Research* 41(4): 499-516.
- Koonings, K & Dirk Kruijt. 1999. *Societies of fear. The legacy of civil war, violence and terror in Latin America*. London: Zed Books.
- Korf, B. 2006. Dining with Devils? Ethnographic Enquiries into the Conflict-Development Nexus in Sri Lanka. *Oxford Development Studies* 34(1): 47-64.
- Korf, B. 2004. War, Livelihoods and Vulnerability in Sri Lanka. *Development and Change* 35(2): 275-295.

- Korf, B. & Fünfgeld, H. 2006. War and the commons: Assessing the changing politics of violence, access and entitlements in Sri Lanka. *Geoforum* 37(3): 391-403.
- Kruijt, D., 2008. *Guerrillas*. London: Zed Books.
- Krzyzanowski, M. 2011. Ethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis: Towards a Problem-oriented Research Dialogue. *Critical Discourse Studies*. 8(4): 231-238.
- Latour, B. 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lautze, S. & Raven-Roberts, A. 2006. Violence and complex humanitarian emergencies: implications for livelihoods models. *Disasters* 30(4): 383-401.
- Lawrence, P. 1998. Grief on the body: the work of oracles in eastern Sri Lanka. In Roberts, M. *Sri Lanka. Collective Identities revisited vol. II*. Colombo: Marga Institute.
- Lawrence, P. 2000. Violence, suffering, amman: the work of oracles in Sri Lanka's eastern province" in Das, V et al (eds). 2000, *Violence and subjectivity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lincoln, B. 1989. *Discourse and the construction of society. Comparative studies of myth, ritual and classification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Long, N & Long, A. 1992. *Battlefields of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Lubkemann, S. 2008. *Culture in chaos. An anthropology of the social condition in war*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Malkki, L.H. 1995. Purity and Exile. Violence, memory and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Manor, J. 1984. *Sri Lanka in change and crisis*. New York St. Martin's Press.
- Marcus, G.E. 2008. The end(s) of Ethnography: Social/Cultural Anthropology's Signature Form of Producing Knowledge in Transition. *Cultural Anthropology* 23 (1):1-14.

- Marcus, G.E. 2011. Multi-sited ethnography: notes and queries. In Falzon, M.A. 2011. *Multi-sited ethnography. Theory, praxis and locality in contemporary research*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing.
- Maunaguru, S. 1995. Gendering Tamil nationalism: the construction of woman in projects of protest and control. In Jeganathan, P., Ismail, Q. (eds) 1995. *Unmaking the nation: the politics of identity and history in modern Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association.
- McDowell, C. 1996. *A Tamil asylum diaspora: Sri Lankan migration, settlement and politics in Switzerland*, Berghahn Books.
- McGilvray, D.B. 2008. *Crucible of conflict: Tamil and Muslim society on the east coast of Sri Lanka*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Mills, c Wright. 1970. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: harmondsworth.
- Nadarajah, S & Luxshi Vimalarajah. 2008. *The politics of transformation. The LTTE and the 2002-2006 peace process in Sri Lanka*. Berghof Transitions Series. No.4. Berghof Reserch Center
- National Education Act [NEA]. 2009. Unpublished. National Education Commission
- Nesiah, A. 2005. *Satyagraha: women and non-violence: the spinning wheel*, Ratmalana: Vishva Lekha Publishers.
- Nordstrom, C. 1997. *A Different Kind of War Story*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Norris, S. 2007. The micropolitics of personal national and ethnicity identity. In *Discourse & Society* Vol. 18.
- Nozaki, Y & Selden, M. 2009. Historical memory, international conflict, and Japanese textbook controversies in three epochs. *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 1(1) Spring.
- Oberschall, A. 2004. Explaining terrorism: the contribution of Collective Action Theory. *Sociological Theory* 22(1).

- Obeyesekere, G. 1974. Some Comments on the Social Backgrounds of the April 1971 Insurgency in Sri Lanka (Ceylon). *The Journal of Asian Studies* 33(3): 367-384.
- Olick, J.K; Vinitzky-Seroussi, V. & Levy, D. 2011. *The Collective Memory reader*. Oxford University Press. New York
- Olzak, S. 1992. *The Dynamics of Ethnic Competition and Conflict*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Oquist, P.H. 1980. *Violence, conflict, and politics in Colombia*. New York: Academic Press.
- Orjuela, C. (ed). 2010. *Power and Politics in the shadow of Sri Lanka's armed conflict*. SIDA
- PAFFREL. 2008. Interim report for the Eastern Provincial Council Election May 10.
- Palihawadana, N & Shamindra Ferdinando. 2004. Karuna deputy among eight dead Tigers strike as Oslo envoy arrives. In *The Island*, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2004
- Palihawadana, N. 2006. Army take two LTTE camps. In *The Island*. October 7, 2006
- Papadakis, Y. 2008. Narrative, Memory and History Education in Divided Cyprus: A Comparison of Schoolbooks on the "History of Cyprus". *History & Memory* 20(2):128-148.
- Pearlman, W. & Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham. 2012. Non-state Actors, Fragmentation, and Conflict Processes. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56: 3-15
- Pearson, F.S. 2001. Dimensions of Conflict Resolution in Ethnopolitical Disputes. *Journal of Peace Research* 38(3): 275-287.
- Peebles, P. 1990. Colonization and Ethnic Conflict in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka. *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 49(1):30-55.
- Peiris, G.H. 2009. *Twilight of the Tigers. Peace Efforts and Power Struggles in Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Peñaranda, R.; Guerrero, J. 1999. *De las armas a la política*. Bogotá: TM Editores-IEPRI.
- Peteet, J. 2005. Words as Interventions: Naming in the Palestine: Israel Conflict. *Third World Quarterly* 26(1):153-172.
- Petersen, R.D.2006 [2002]. *Understanding Ethnic Violence. Fear, hatred, and resentment in twentieth-century eastern Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Philipson, L. & Thangarajah, Y. 2005. *The Politics of the North–East*. Sri Lanka Strategic Conflict Assessment. Colombo: The Asia Foundation.
- Podeh, E. 2000. History and Memory in the Israeli Educational System: The Portrayal of the Arab-Israeli Conflict in History Textbooks (1948-2000). *History & Memory*. 12(1): 65-100.
- Raman, B. 2004. More Ruthless than Prabhakaran. retrieved from [www.rediff.com](http://www.rediff.com) March 11.
- Ranganathan, M. 2010. Eelam Online. The Tamil diaspora and war in Sri Lanka. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Newcastle .UK.
- Ricoeur, P. 1984. *Time and Narrative*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago
- Ricoeur, P. 2006 [2004]. *Memory, History, forgetting*. London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Richards, P. 2005. *No peace, no war: an anthropology of contemporary armed conflicts*, Oxford: Ohio University Press.
- Richards, P. 1996. *Fighting for the rain forest: war, youth & resources in Sierra Leone*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.
- Rutnam, E. 2007. Pillayan gives final warning to Karuna. In *The Daily Mirror*. May 28
- Robben, A.C.G.M. & Nordstrom, C. (eds).1995. *Fieldwork under fire: contemporary studies of violence and survival*. Berkley: University of California Press.

- Robben, ACGM. 1996. The ethnographic seduction. Transference and seduction in dialogues about terror and violence in Argentina. In *Ethos* 24(1): 71-106.
- Roberts, M. 1997. *Sri Lanka: collective identities revisited vol II*. Colombo: Marga Institute.
- Roberts, M. 2005. Tamil Tiger “Martyrs”: Regenerating Divine Potency? In *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 28(6): 493–514.
- Roberts, M. 2013. Towards Citizenship in ThamilLam: Sri Lanka's Tamil People of the North, 1983-2010. *South Asia Research* 33: 57
- Roberts-Schweitzer, E., Greaney, V. & Duer, K., 2006. *Promoting social cohesion through education: case studies and tools for using textbooks and curricula*. Washington: DC World Bank.
- Ross, M.L. 2004. What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil War? *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3): 337-356.
- Rotberg, R.I. 1999. *Creating peace in Sri Lanka: civil war and reconciliation*. Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press.
- Rupesinghe, K. 2006. *Negotiating peace in Sri Lanka: efforts, failures, and lessons*, Colombo: Foundation for Co-Existence.
- Sahadevan, P. & DeVotta, N. 2006. *Politics of conflict and peace in Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Manak Publications.
- Salgado, M. 2007. *Writing Sri Lanka. Literature, resistance and the politics of place*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Samarasinghe, S. 2007. *Documents on plan to get rid Karuna from Lanka surface*. In *the Sunday Leader*, November 11.
- Samarasinghe, S.W.R.D.A., Coughlan, R., & Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. 1991. *Economic dimensions of ethnic conflict*. London Pinter.
- Sambandan, V.S. 2004. History from the LTTE. In *Frontline Magazine* 21(3).

- Sánchez Meertens, A. 2013. Courses of Conflict: transmission of knowledge and War's History in Eastern Sri Lanka. *History and Anthropology* 24(2): 253-273.
- Sánchez Meertens, C. 2011. *Las cifras de la Guerra y la guerra de las cifras: la política de las estadísticas del conflicto armado colombiano*. Documentos CESO No.178. Bogotá. Universidad de los Andes.
- Scott, S.B. 2009. The Perpetuation of War in U.S. History textbooks. *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 1(1).
- Scheper-Hughes & Philippe Bourgois (ed) 2004. *Violence in war and violence. An anthology*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing..
- Schrijvers, J. 1999. Fighters, Victims and Survivors: Constructions of Ethnicity, Gender and Refugeeness among Tamils in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 12 (3): 307-333
- Senaratne, J.P. 2003. *The Security Establishment in Sri Lanka: a Case for Reform*. London: Zed books.
- Six-Hohenbalken, M & Nerina Weiss. 2011. *Violence expressed. An anthropological approach*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Schlichte, K. 2009. *In the Shadows of Violence. The Politics of Armed Groups*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.
- Schmidt, B., Schröder, I. 2001. *Anthropology of violence and conflict*. London: Routledge.
- Senaratne, J.P. 1997. *Political violence in Sri Lanka, 1977-1990 : riots, insurrections, counter-insurgencies, foreign intervention*. Amsterdam: VU University Press.
- Shastri, A. 1990. The Material Basis for Separatism: The Tamil Eelam Movement in Sri Lanka. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49(1):56-77.
- Singh, A.K. 2007a. Batticaloa: LTTE's lost citadel. In *South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP)* [www.satp.org](http://www.satp.org).
- Singh, A.K. 2007b. Colonels Control. *South Asia Intelligence Review*. Retrieved from [www.outlookindia.com](http://www.outlookindia.com). March 27, 2007

- Six-Honenbalken, Maria & Nerina Weiss (eds) 2011. *Violence Expressed*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Skinner, J. 2005. *The people in-between: inter-ethnic relations amongst the displaced in Trincomalee district, Sri Lanka*. Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies.
- Social Indicator 2004. *Knowledge attitudes practices survey on the Sri Lankan peace process, potential for peace*. Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- Sørensen B.R. 2008. The politics of citizenship and difference in Sri Lankan schools. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 39(4): 423-443.
- Spencer, J. 1990. *A Sinhala village in a time of trouble: politics and change in rural Sri Lanka*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Spencer, J. (ed.) 1990, *Sri Lanka: History and the roots of conflict*. London: Routledge.
- Spencer, J. 1997. Post-Colonialism and the Political Imagination. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 3(1):1-19.
- Spencer, J., 2007. *Anthropology, politics and the state: democracy and violence in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; New York.
- Staniland, P. 2012. Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Insurgent Fratricide, Ethnic Defection, and the Rise of Pro-State Paramilitaries. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56: 16-40.
- Subramanian, N. 2004. Behind Karuna's Revolt. In *The Island*. March 11.
- Swamy, M.R.N 2006 [1994]. *Tigers of Lanka. From Boys to Guerillas*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications.
- Swamy, MRN. 2010. *the Tiger Vanquished. LTTE's Story*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Tambiah, S.J. 1986. *Sri Lanka: ethnic fratricide and the dismantling of democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Tambiah, S.J. 1992. *Buddhism betrayed? Religion, politics, and violence in Sri Lanka*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tambiah, S.J. 1996. *Leveling crowds. Ethnonationalist conflicts and collective violence in South Asia*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Taraki, [Sivaram] 2004. Can the renegade Karuna deliver his Big Magic? In *the Daily Mirror*, July 14.
- Tawil, S., Harley, A., Braslavsky, C. 2004. *Education, conflict and social cohesion*. Geneva: Unesco, International Bureau of Education.
- Thiranagama, S. 2011. *In my mother's house. Civil war in Sri Lanka*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Thangarajah, C.Y. 2003. Veiled constructions: Conflict, migration and modernity in eastern Sri Lanka. *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 37(1-2):141-162.
- Tilly, C. 2003. *The politics of collective violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilly, C & Sidney Tarrow. 2007. *Contentious politics*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Thompson, J. 2009. *Intergenerational justice: rights and responsibilities in an intergenerational polity*. New York: Routledge.
- TMVP. 2006 [unpublished]. Party Constitution Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal.
- TMVP. 2007 [unpublished]. All Party Representatives Committee Proposals.
- Trawick, M. 2002. Interviews with Students in Eastern Sri Lanka. In Mines, D.P. & Sarah Lamb (eds). 2002. *Everyday Life in South Asia*. Indiana University Press.
- Trawick, M. 2007. *Enemy lines: childhood, warfare, and play in Batticaloa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Turner, V. 1995 [1969]. *the Ritual Process*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Turpin, J. & Kurtz, L.R. (eds). 1997. *The web of Violence. From interpersonal to global*. University of Illinois Press.

- University Teachers for Human Rights [UTHR(J)] 2004a. *The Worm Turns and Elections Where the People Will Not Count*. Bulletin No 35 March 8.
- University Teachers for Human Rights [UTHR(J)] 2004b. *Averting a Blood Spill in Batticaloa*. Statement released March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004.
- University Teachers for Human Rights [UTHR (J)] 2004c. *The Batticaloa Fiasco & and the Tragedy of Missed Opportunities*. Information Bulletin No.36. May 29
- Van der Veer, P. 1994. *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Vinci, A. 2006. The Problems of mobilisation and the analysis of armed groups” in *Parameters* 36, no. 1 (Spring).
- Von Benda-Beckmann, K & Pirie, F. 2007. *Order and disorder. Anthropological perspectives*. Berghahn Books.
- Walter, B.F. 2004. Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Recurring Civil War. *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3):371-388.
- Warnapala, W.A.W. 1980. Sri Lanka's New Constitution. *Asian Survey* 20(9): 914-930.
- Waterston, A. (ed.). 2009. *An Anthropology of War: Views From the Frontline*. Oxford: Berghahn books.
- Weinsten, J.M. 2007. *Inside Rebellion: The politics of insurgent violence*, Cambridge University Press
- Welikala A. 2008. *A State of Permanent Crisis: Constitutional Government, Fundamental Rights, and States of Emergency in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives and Friedrich Naumann Stiftung.
- Whitaker, M.P. 2007. Learning politics from Sivaram. *The life and death of a revolutionary Tamil journalist in Sri Lanka*. London: Pluto Press.
- Whitehead, N.L. (ed) 2004. *Violence*. Oxford: School of American Research Press/James Currey.

- Willis, P. 2000. *The Ethnographic Imagination*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Wilson, A.J. 2000. *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism: its origins and development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Wimaladharma, S; de Silva, A & de Silva, N. 2005. Growing up with war. Experiences of children affected by armed conflict in the eastern province of Sri Lanka. Working paper series No.11. Colombo: Centre for Poverty Analysis.
- Winslow, D. & Woost, M.D. 2004. *Economy, culture, and civil war in Sri Lanka*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Wood, E.J. 2003. *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wood, E.J. 2008. The social processes of civil war: the wartime transformation of social networks. *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 539-561
- World Bank. South Asia Regional Office & World Bank. Colombo Office. 2005. *Treasures of the education system in Sri Lanka: restoring performance, expanding opportunities, and enhancing prospects*. Colombo: World Bank Colombo Office.
- Young, J.E. 1988. *Writing and rewriting the Holocaust: interpreting Holocaust narrative*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Žižek, S. 1997. Desire: Drive= Truth: Knowledge. *Umbr(a). A Journal of the Unconscious*. The Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture. pp.147-152.

### **Cited Interviews by the author**

Emiliano [alias]. Former TMVP Combatant. March 31 2010

Ernesto [alias]. Former TMVP combatant. Batticaloa April 1, 2010

Fidel [alias]. Former TMVP combatant. March 31 2010.

Jehanandan, Jeyaraj [*Lateeb, Lateeban, Suranga, Ganesh, Raj, Vidushan*]. Karuna's former personal bodyguard; Assistant General Secretary of the TMVP & Vicechairman Vavunaitivu Pradesha Sabha. February 15 2010; April 1 2010; April 22 2010.

Krishna Suppiah. Engineer, former LTTE member; former PLOTE member; TMVP propaganda coordinator in the UK. May 12, 2012.

Manuela [alias]. Victim of TMVP violence. Batticaloa April 4, 2011.

Marcos [alias]. Former LTTE and TMVP combatant. March 31, 2010

Mohamed Mihlar Mohamed Hanzeer, [Azad Moulana]. Spokesperson of the TMVP and private Secretary to the Chief Minister for the Eastern Province. May 15, 2010.

Nahalingam Thiraviyam [Jeyam]. Former LTTE Vaharai military commander; TMVP commander; Eastern Provincial Council member. May 15, 2010

Pusbaraja. Poosari. Hindu priest Valachennai. March 17 2011.

Rajadurai Manoharan. London-based Sri Lankan Lawyer, Vice-president of the TULF; TMVP adviser and Karuna's attorney while in the UK. May 11, 2012

Seyed Ali Zahir Moulana. Former Member of Parliament for the UNP and SLFP. 2010. April 7, 2010; May 1, 2010.

Sivagheeta Prabhakaran, [Padmini]. Former general secretary of the TMVP; Mayor of Batticaloa. April 24, 2010

Sivanesaturai Chandrakanthan, [Pillayan]. Former LTTE combatant; former Chief Minister for the Eastern Province; Current head of the TMVP. December 10, 2009; December 19, 2009; February 13, 2010.

Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, [Karuna]. Former LTTE military commander; former head of the TMVP; former Minister for National Integration and reconciliation; deputy minister for resettlement. May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

## Samenvatting in het Nederlands

In maart 2004 kondigde een zekere Karuna Amman zijn afsplitsing aan van de LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), een gewapende groep die de vorming van een onafhankelijke Tamil staat nastreefde in het noorden en oosten van Sri Lanka. Zes maanden nadat hijzelf en de duizenden strijders onder zijn leiding met de LTTE gebroken hadden, lanceerde Karuna een nieuwe politieke beweging – de *Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP)* [Tamil People Liberation Tigers]. Hiermee trad hij toe tot de officiële politieke wereld terwijl hij tegelijkertijd betrokken bleef bij de militaire operaties tegen zijn voormalige rebellen-bondgenoten. Vijf jaar later, in mei 2009, kwam de burgeroorlog in Sri Lanka ten einde. Karuna, die nog geen lustrum eerder de militaire commandant was van één van de meest geavanceerde rebellenlegers in de wereld, maakte nu deel uit van de regering van Sri Lanka als Minister voor Nationale Integratie en Verzoening.

In dit proefschrift verdedig ik de stelling dat de dissidentie van Karuna van de LTTE en de oprichting van de TMVP cruciale factors zijn geweest in de beeindiging van de burgeroorlog in Sri Lanka. Maar ook, dat de TMVP, als collectieve onderneming, zowel een factor van continuïteit als van transformatie van het conflict is geweest, aangezien het de gewelddadige praktijken heeft gelegitimeerd ten overstaan van de nieuwe generaties. In die zin vertegenwoordigt de TMVP zowel een sociaal-politieke transformatie als een mechanisme van intergenerationele kennisoverdracht. Mijn argument is dat deze twee processen een oorlog weliswaar in stand houden maar op de lange duur deze ook veranderen. De documentatie en kritische analyse van de oprichting van de TMVP heeft mij daarom de gelegenheid gegeven om verscheidene lopende debatten, met name in antropologie en conflict studies, onder de loep te nemen. Dit is ook de reden dat ik geloof dat mijn onderzoek waardevol kan zijn voor onderzoekers die zich bezig houden met gewapende opstandelingen en collectieve identiteits verhoudingen op andere plaatsen in de wereld.

Een onderzoek naar de opkomst van TMVP vraagt tevens om een verkenning van de wijze waarop deze groep zowel produkt als producent is van bepaalde conflict-epistemologieën. De beleving van geweld evenzo als de kennis en reflectie erop zijn immers verstrengelde processen (Robben & Nordstrom 1995). Het is dan ook van belang om in een onderzoek als dit -naar gewelddadig conflict en de sociologie van gewapende actoren- te kijken naar de mobiliserings mogelijkheden die

entrepreneurs van geweld benutten; naar de organisatie structuren die zij opbouwen en naar de interpretatiekaders die zij ontwikkelen om hun doelstellingen te presenteren aan aanhangers, tegenstanders en derden (King 2007:117). In dit boek worden al deze drie dimensies in beschouwing genomen rondom TMVP's ontstaan en ontwikkeling. Daar dwars doorheen spelen de themas van afsplitsing en dissidentie – fenomenen die in de vakliteratuur vaak onderbelicht zijn gebleven ondanks hun belang voor het verklaren van de uitkomst van burgeroorlogen (Staniland 2012:17).

Deze tekst analyseert de Berichten uit Batticaloa [*Letters from Batticaloa*] zowel epistolair als acronymisch (dwz. de interpretatie van de veranderende betekenisgeving aan de afkorting T.M.V.P.), aangevuld met ethnografisch materiaal, interviews en andere gegevens die tussen 2008 en 2012 uit verschillende bronnen verzameld zijn. Het verloop van Sri Lanka's burgeroorlog wordt geïllustreerd aan de hand van de levensverhalen en directe verslagen van sleutel-informanten (waaronder Karuna), die door de tekst heen zijn gevlochten.

Terzelfdertijd ambieert dit boek een bijdrage te leveren aan een geïntegreerde theorie over de dynamiek van gewapend conflict, rond de noties van *transmission* en *transformation* [overdracht en transformatie], en een dialoog aan te gaan met een serie begrippen die uiteindelijk geleid hebben tot het nieuwe concept *semantic alliance* [semantische alliantie]. Hiermee bedoel ik de mechanismen die de overdrachts en transformatieprocessen verbinden en daarmee de voortzetting van, en de variaties in een burgeroorlog kunnen verklaren.

De onderzoeksvragen die dit werk oriënteren zijn daarom als volgt geformuleerd: hoe heeft de opkomst van de TMVP als paramilitaire groep en politieke beweging de Sri Lankese burgeroorlog getransformeerd? Deze eerste kwestie is ontsproten aan een gebrek aan *documentatie* over een sociaal-historisch fenomeen met enorme politieke en militaire consequenties. De tweede vraag komt daarentegen voort uit het ontbreken van *theoretische verklaringen* voor de sociale reproductie van de oorlog: hoe hebben de vormen van kennis-overdracht over de oorlog (een proces uiteindelijk gewijzigd door de TVMP) bijgedragen tot haar continuïteit over meer dan drie decennia van systematisch geweld waarbij verschillende generaties betrokken waren?

Het theoretisch kader voor de beantwoording van deze kwesties maakt gebruik van een combinatie van experiëntiële en *discourse* benaderingen van conflict studies. Dat wil niet zeggen dat er geen aandacht besteed wordt aan de politieke economie van conflict of de meer instrumentele benaderingen van geweld. Het betekent echter wel dat de argumentatie-lijn de *culturele mechanismen* van reproductie van gewapend conflict benadrukt.

Veldwerk werd ontwikkeld als een variant van *multi-sited ethnography* (Marcus 2011), gecombineerd met een wat abstractere excursie door het onderwijsbeleid, om via de verhalen van schoolhoofden en onderwijzers over hun begrip en ervaring betreffende het gewapend conflict uit te komen bij de middelbare school leerlingen en hun kennis van, en visies op, conflict en geweld. Veel van deze leerlingen zouden medestudent geweest zijn van de meeste TMVP strijders, als die niet tot de gewapende strijd waren toegetreden. Door het institutionele traject van kennisoverdracht en vervolgens de respons van studenten en voormalige strijders te analyseren, werd het mogelijk om zowel praktisch als begripsmatig de verschillende processen en locaties van conflict-transmissie te integreren.

Het combineren van de verschillende bronnen en verhaal-lijnen die deel uit maken van deze studie is ethisch, methodologisch en stylistisch een grote uitdaging geweest. Ethisch, in de zin dat het opnemen van verhalen van daders niet mocht verworden tot een platform voor geweld. Methodologisch, omdat noch de TMVP leden noch hun slachtoffers gebrek hadden aan *narrative agency*, en dus in staat waren om dingen te vergeten, bewust weg te laten of een verkeerde voorstelling van zaken te geven (Waagenaar in Kalyvas 2008:50). En stylistisch, omdat ik vast wilde houden aan de diversiteit van perspectieven, de rijkdom aan beschrijvingen en de complexiteit en soms ambivalentie in het denken en handelen van de geïnterviewden. Toch heb ik geprobeerd om deze diversiteit een zodanige choreografie te geven dat deze veelzijdige geschiedenis ook voor een niet in de context ingevoerde lezer begrijpelijk blijft.

Een cruciaal doel van dit werk is om processen van identiteitsvorming (TMVP) en reproductie van oorlog (kennisoverdracht) te integreren. Deze uitdaging begint in Hoofdstuk 1 (*The Dawn of the Split*) met de behandeling van de omstandigheden van de door Karuna geleide afsplitsing. Deze *narratieven* geven inzicht in de debatten over de (her)legitimisering van geweld en de mobilisatiestrategieën voor het gewapend conflict. Deze eerste benadering registreert de breuk met de bestaande

machtsstructuur: het gaat dan om het tot leven brengen van een *verschil* dat op zijn beurt de basis vormt voor een nieuwe identiteit en voor de continuïteit van het conflict.

Hoofdstuk 2 (*Acronyms of an Identity in Transition*) kijkt naar de consolidatie van de TMVP als een politieke beweging en bediscussieert zaken als sociale cohesie in overgangstijden. Dit gebeurt aan de hand van een verkenning van de veranderingen in de naam van de organisatie. De vorming van interne verschillen in de Tamil gemeenschap en hun weerspiegeling in de gewapende beweging komen hierbij naar voren. Deze tweede benadering onderzoekt hoe nieuwe sociale scheidslijnen gecreëerd worden en de doelstellingen van geweld opnieuw worden uitgevonden.

Hoofdstuk 3 (*Geography, Economy and Iconography of the Revolt*) behandelt de instrumentele, discursieve en visuele strategieën die men hanteert om de organisatie en zijn gewelddadige praktijk te onderbouwen. Demografische aspecten van de TMVP worden onder de loep genomen, en er wordt speciaal aandacht besteed aan de plaats van gender en leeftijd in de rebellenorganisatie. Het lokale karakter van de TMVP wordt in een bredere context geplaatst, en de militaire en politieke allianties die de verbinding tussen lokaal en globaal mogelijk maken, voor het voetlicht geplaatst. Symboliek en nieuwe interpretaties van de geschiedenis nemen in dit hoofdstuk een belangrijke plaats in als mechanismen van productie, distributie en consumptie van tekst en beeld (o.a. TMVP's eigen kranten, videos en muziek). Deze derde *benadering* verkent de sociale (materiele en immateriele) mechanismen voor het voortbestaan van geweld— oftewel de mobiliserings en legitimeringstechnologieën van de collectieve onderneming.

Hoofdstuk 4 (*TMVP's Explosion and Paramilitary Democracy*) geeft een overzicht van de interne spanningen die tot een nieuwe afsplitsing geleid hebben. Deze nieuwe afscheiding heeft de beweging er echter niet van weerhouden om de sprong naar de officiële politiek te maken en als een erkende partij aan lokale en provinciale verkiezingen deel te nemen. Deze cruciale overgang en de daarmee gepaard gaande discursieve verschuivingen en gewelddadige praktijken worden diepgaand geanalyseerd in dit hoofdstuk, dat eindigt met TMVP's eerste viering van hun *Dag der Helden* – een eigen versie van 'gedachtenis politiek' (*memory politics*).

Hoofdstuk 5 (*The Social Reproduction of War*) richt zich specifiek op het transmissie proces vóór TMVP. Hierbij wordt het proces nagevolgd waarin inter-generationale kennisoverdracht in verschillende fasen en op verschillende gebieden plaats vond en zowel de continuïteit als de transformatie van de oorlog mogelijk maakte. In dit

onderdeel worden de herinneringen van de vertegenwoordigers van het officiële discours door de tekst heengevlochten. Vervolgens wordt het bredere spectrum van de jeugd en haar consumptie van kennis over de oorlog behandeld – van zowel middelbare school studenten als jeugdige voormalige strijders. De onderlinge verbindingen tussen deze discourses maken het mogelijk om de TMVP opnieuw in het debat op te nemen. In dit hoofdstuk wil ik dan ook aantonen dat het een vergissing is om de dynamiek van burgers en die van gewapende actoren als twee gescheiden sociale sferen te beschouwen, terwijl er in feite voortdurend symbolische en epistemologische uitwisselingen plaats vinden tussen beide. Het ging er hier dus om de verbindingen tussen onderwijs, kennis en conflict te onderzoeken.

De conclusies (*TMVP and the Transmission of Conflict*) laten zien hoe een systematisch ethnografisch verslag van TMVP's opkomst een bijdrage levert aan de verkenningen over kennisoverdacht van de oorlog. Daarmee wordt een verklarend kader geleverd voor de continuïteit en de transformatie van de oorlog in Sri Lanka. Maar andersom werkt het ook: de uitkomsten van het transmissie-proces dragen bij aan de verklaring van TMVP's ontstaan. Hiermee komen we terug op het belang van de *semantic alliance* als een conceptuele bijdrage die als resultaat van deze dissertatie gezien kan worden. Door dit begrip er bij te halen wordt het makkelijker om de processen van symbolische controle (en symbolische weerstand) te analyseren, waarbij het conflict voortdurend gereactiveerd wordt doordat machtsrelaties om gezet worden in *discourse* en discursieve relaties in machtsrelaties (Bernstein 2000).

Karuna's opstand in 2004 maakte de weg vrij voor een dramatische koersverandering in Sri Lanka's burgeroorlog. Maar deze radicale verschuiving zou niet van blijvende aard geweest zijn als hij zijn individuele beslissing niet in een collectieve onderneming had omgezet: de TMVP. De materiele gevolgen van deze massale afsplitsing waren ongekend hoog voor de LTTE, aangezien zij van de ene dag op de andere 40% van hun mankracht en ongeveer de helft van hun gebied kwijt waren. Maar ook omdat de breuk de grootste schending van interne (militaire) geheimen betekende in jaren; omdat de TMVP uitgroeide tot de meest directe uitdager van LTTE's hiërarchische structuur en tenslotte omdat de dissidente organisatie de LTTE beschuldigde van wat ze zelf jarenlang bestreden hadden - namelijk *discriminatie*- en deze ook nog eens verbonden aan een achtergestelde regionale identiteit en aan een behoorlijk groot leger van dissidente strijders.

De vorming van de TMVP heeft tevens een spoor van nieuwe slachtoffers achtergelaten. In de dissertatie worden deze slachtoffers opgenomen en komen zij aan het woord als een vorm van erkenning. Tegelijkertijd betekent dit ook een bewuste onderkenning dat de geweldspraktijken van de TMVP een wezenlijk onderdeel vormden van hun collectieve identiteitsvorming, wat ons er aan herinnert dat politiek en geweld soms gemakkelijk in elkaar overgaan. De paradox inherent aan TMVP's proces is dat door hun verheerlijking van regionalisme, LTTE's ethno-nationalisme ondermijnd werd, maar aan de andere kant het streven van de regering om Sri Lanka tot een geïntegreerde nationale eenheid te maken weer in de kaart werd gespeeld. In die zin werd regionalisme een onverwachte en zeker ook problematisch instrument voor staatsvorming.

Tenslotte heeft de opkomst van TMVP aangetoond dat alle vooronderstellingen over de oorlog nogal veranderlijke constructies zijn. Maar ook heeft de beweging een terugkeer betekent naar omstandigheden vergelijkbaar met de toestanden die ooit het conflict deden ontbranden. Het einde van de burgeroorlog heeft immers niet geleid tot een nieuw sociaal contract in Sri Lanka, en TMVP's poging om de oorlog een nieuwe betekenis te geven is bezig langzamerhand uit het algemeen bewustzijn te verdwijnen. Toch heeft de TMVP de Sri Lankese geschiedenis beïnvloed. Elk hoofdstuk in dit boek geeft een inzicht in de veranderingen die zij teweeg gebracht hebben, en –nog belangrijker- in de strategieën die zij daarbij gevolgd hebben. Daarmede worden in deze analyse de huidige debatten in conflict studies en antropologie verbreed, verfijnd, verbonden en uitgedaagd, met name rondom de processen van sociale reproductie van de oorlog.

# Curriculum Vitae

---

Ariel Sánchez Meertens was born in Bogotá, Colombia on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1979. He studied Anthropology at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Between 2002 and 2006, he worked as a research assistant for the director of the Colombian Institute for Anthropology and History - INCANH, as a Consultant for the ombudsman office (Bogotá) and as a consultant for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - UNHCR (Barranquilla office). He then undertook his master research in Sri Lanka, focusing on the discourses on Black July 1983, receiving his MA degree (cum laude) from the Centre for Conflict Studies (Utrecht University) in the Netherlands in 2007. Ariel briefly worked as a junior lecturer at the Centre for Conflict Studies, before joining as a PhD candidate the department of Cultural Anthropology (Utrecht University) in 2008. As part of his PhD trajectory, he worked with the Netherlands Embassy in Sri Lanka and later obtained a Marie Curie fellowship from the European Commission (Sustainable Peacebuilding programme) to become a staff member at the International Conflict Research Institute – INCORE - from the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland.