

Parallel Governments

-Living between terror and counter terror

in northern Lanka (1982-2009)

Daya Somasundaram

University of Jaffna

Pre-publication copy of:

Somasundaram,D. (2010) **Parallel Governments: Living Between Terror and Counter Terror in Northern Lanka (1982—2009)**. Journal of Asian and African Studies, 45: 568-583, doi:10.1177/0021909610373899; <http://jas.sagepub.com/content/45/5/568.abstract>

Abstract

This paper is a naturalistic and ecological ethnography of the period between 1980 and 2009 in northern Lanka, using participant observation, in-depth interviewing, focus groups, key informants, literature survey and critical inquiry techniques. The Lankan and Indian states and various Tamil militant groups vied for the control, loyalty, obedience and subservience of the civilian Tamil population through terror, counter-terror; the media, arts, history writing, in cyber space and other propaganda; democratic and extra-democratic means such as elections, relief, rehabilitation; and other methods. Community leaders were eliminated and dissent suppressed. Whole villages and communities have been displaced multiple times.

Introduction

By Terror thereof to forme the wills of all. And whoever calls this into question proposes an end to what we know of politics and as such.

Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan* (1651)

The prophetic dream of Marx and the over-inspired predictions of Hegel or of Nietzsche ended by conjuring up, after the city of God had been razed to the ground, either a rational or an irrational State, but one which in both cases was founded on terror.

Albert Camus, *The Rebel* (1971)

But faced with the endemicity of torture, terror and growth of armies, we in the New World are today assailed with a new urgency. There is the effort to understand terror, in order to make others understand.

Taussig, 'Culture of terror – space of death' (2004)

How does one become socialized to terror? Does it imply conformity or acquiescence to the status quo, as a friend suggested? While it is true that with repetitiveness and familiarity people learn to accommodate themselves to terror and fear, low-intensity panic remains in the shadow of waking consciousness. One cannot live in a constant state of alertness, and so the chaos one feels becomes diffused throughout the body. It surfaces frequently in dreams and chronic illnesses.

Linda Green, 'Living in a state of fear' (2004)

Terror has been an instrument of statecraft, diplomacy and political advocacy for centuries ... The mainstream global culture of statecraft insists that the true antidote to terror is counter-terror.

Ashis Nandy, 'Narcissism and despair' (2009)

It was Thomas Hobbes who first pointed out that behind the veneer of states is the spectre of violence and threat of terror that is used to control and rule the subject populations; for example, through the police or, increasingly in the modern 'security states', through intelligence agencies and other covert operations. When this control and rule is challenged, comes under question or is weakened, the covert violence becomes more overt, manifesting as techniques of terror. When the power to rule is contested by other parties, they may vie for control, loyalty and legitimacy through terror and counter terror tactics on the populace.

The ongoing ethnic war in Lanka was a good example of the modern use of terror on a mass scale. All parties to the conflict have resorted to a 'dirty war' (Nordstrom, 1994) with the use of terror tactics in the bitter contest for power. The Sri Lankan state, the various Tamil militants, who for over two decades fought to create an independent state, the Sinhala Janatha Vimukthi Perumana (JVP), an ultra leftist militant group that made two attempts to violently overthrow the government, and India, during its short intervention in the north-east part of the island (1987–90) to impose peace, have all used mass terror to control the population, compel obedience and suppress dissent. But in the scale, duration, sheer numbers of victims and in the vast resources, national and international, available to it, it is the Lankan state that is most guilty of the misuse of power and the privileges that accrue to it as a state. Though critical at times, the international community (IC), its many organizations, diplomatic missions, the UN, and aid agencies giving technical support, military hardware, training and the global network of socioeconomic ties and mutual relationships that give covert recognition, legitimacy and tacit sanction, are also indirectly implicated in what is actually going on in countries like Lanka (Nordstrom, 2004). Some, like the former

Australian Foreign Minister, Garret Evans (2007), have advocated through the International Crisis Group for the right and duty of the IC to intervene when the state fails to protect its citizens, a principle called Right to Protect (R2P). Between the terror and counter terror of the Lankan state, paramilitaries and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) existed the shadow world (Nordstrom, 2004). This was the grey area beyond the legal, formal, overt world where civilians have to survive when the official government collapses around them.

An extraordinary situation has developed in the north-east where, since 1983, the writ of the official government no longer runs. Various Tamil militant groups have been contesting the state and between themselves in internecine fighting for power, control and the legitimacy to rule. For a period between 1987 and 1989, the Indians attempted to establish military and administrative control in the north-east but even then, the situation was muddled with the Lankan state, Indian proxy paramilitary group, Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), and the LTTE contesting each other for different aspects of power. Among the Tamil militants from over 36 groups post-1983, the LTTE emerged as dominant, ruthlessly eliminating other contenders by 1986 (Hoole et al., 1988). However, the other militants have retained some power by aligning either with the states or the LTTE. The LTTE also managed to establish at different times, varying degrees of absolute military control over different territories, so called 'uncleared areas' by the Lankan state which continued to pay government salaries, provide rations and materials as well retain a modicum of administrative control. But the LTTE established a de facto government, a mini state, of its own with police, army, navy, air force, legal codes, courts, prisons, taxes, customs, immigration, administration, local government, planning, development programmes, social services, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), financial system, trades, shops, commercial ventures, medical services, educational services – trappings of a counter state in the uncleared areas. It also continued to have considerable control and power over the local population in state controlled, 'cleared areas', through sympathy, terror and infiltration of most institutions and organizations. The Lankan state managed to deliver a mortal blow to the LTTE by May 2009 following a long, brutal military campaign against the LTTE which tried to hold onto civilians as human shields, that left 20,000 civilians dead, perhaps 60,000 injured, and over 300,000 displaced, with many confined in internment camps (Philp, 2009; Philp and Evans, 2009; UTHR-J, 2009; Wax, 2009). Thus the power and control in the whole north-east was under intense, violent contest on a daily basis through terror and counter terror. Extra judicial revenge and reprisal killings, abductions, disappearances, torture, intimidation, threats, assaults, extortion and robberies are daily occurrences that the civil population faces. Often it is not clear who is responsible for what within an overall reign of terror. There were economic blockades, sanctions, embargoes, restrictions or quotas for essential and other goods, transport barriers, frontier closures, wholesale battles, curfews, hartals or strikes, hoarding, shortages, lack of food, water, electricity, shelter, exorbitant prices, multiple taxes, extortion, economic paralysis or poor quality services and chronic understaffing.

Counter Insurgency (CI)

It becomes somewhat easier to understand what was going on in the north and east of Lanka from a framework of counter insurgency strategy (Whitaker, 2007). Current CI doctrine start from the colonial masters' experience of administering their far-flung empires. Native populations often rebelled against the imperial powers using insurgent methods and they were met with counter insurgent techniques. According to Sivarami (Whitaker, 2007), the original CI manual was by Frank Kitson (1971, 1977) who had been the British army commander in charge of CI operations in Kenya, Malaya, Cyprus and Oman. Kitson described the use of penetration agents, the mounting of psychological operation (or psyops – i.e. propaganda, misinformation, PR), the making of fake political concessions to split the opposition, the wielding of army counter terror, the cordoning off of communities, the deployment of hooded informers,² and, somewhat less forthrightly, the rough interrogations and 'network' (that is, the hooding, torture, 'turning', disposal, or dispatching of captives) that are being used in Lanka by the state in its CI operations (Whitaker, 2007). The most current and state-of-the-art CI manual is that of the US Army (2006) which is being 'successfully'

implemented in Iraq by one of its authors, General Petraeus. After emphasizing the essentially political component of CI, all these experts assert that CI when practised properly is effective (Amato, 2002; Kitson, 1971, 1977; US Army, 2006; Vijayasiri, 1999; Whitaker, 2007). Malaya and Kenya are trumpeted as success stories in the practice of CI. However, apart from temporarily suppressing the immediate rebellion, it is not clear how far CI is effective in solving the underlying problems that are the source of the insurgency in the first place. As recent uprisings in Kenya and stirrings in Malayasia show, the underlying inequities are left simmering in the post colonial situations. Amato (2002) and Vijayasiri (1999) are quick to point out that CI was not carried out properly in Lanka and if used correctly it would be successful. They mention lack of clear political will or policy as the cause of failure of CI in Lanka but suggest how to improve the CI operations. Perhaps President Rajapakse with his brothers, advisors and General Sarath Fonseka took these admonitions to heart to mount a more successful CI campaign against the LTTE in 2007–09.

In the post 9/11 world with the consequent global war on terror, terrorism and counter terrorism have become very closely associated, if not synonymous, with counter insurgency discourse. Other similar terms are asymmetrical warfare where a less resourced and weaker force will use unconventional, guerrilla, or subversive techniques in the conflict with stronger and more established states and those helping them. Essentially it is a struggle for power, for legitimacy to rule from the target populations. Both parties will vie for the support and allegiance of the civilian population using whatever techniques they think will work. Thus, though officially denied, terror and counter terror become one of the accepted methods of the dirty war, of trying to win over, frighten or coerce the population to their side. Instead of the traditional violence, it is now thought more effective and efficient (cost-effective) in the long term to use the ‘stick and carrot’ method to psychologically win over the population. Sivaram reports a discussion with a retired Lankan army general who said

that a population targeted by C-I is actually like the body of a prisoner who has been taken under the Prevention of Terrorism Act ... So you treat the target population as a prisoner: break its will, reduce its expectations to bare minimum, so Tamils who set out to demand a separate state would end up just arguing for not being tortured. So your aspirations are depressed from separatism to being allowed to travel without being shot. And then the nice guys – the NGOs, the paramilitaries are the nice guys who come and talk to you and you start giving them intelligence and you become pliant. And you start learning the lesson of just being grateful for being alive. (Whitaker, 2007: 153)

Sivaram himself finally became a victim of covert CI operations, being eliminated extra-judicially in 2005, for his forthright writings.

Fundamentally, CI is aimed at re-establishing the legitimacy of the state while cutting of the target population’s support and sympathy for the insurgents (US Army, 2006). According to Sivaram, ‘ ... Another aim of counter-insurgency is to induce war-weariness in the target population ... the state is always focused on destroying the political will of the target population, and the art and science of doing that is counter-insurgency’ (Whitaker, 2007: 153) and the way it does that is:

Massacres and terror; Arrest, detention, torture, all indiscriminate, and interrogation to destroy the basis of civil society; Checkpoints, constant checks; Promote vigilante groups [who] create an atmosphere of terror and collapse the social fabric (Patricia Lawrence’s thesis becomes important here [see Lawrence, 2000]): people lose their psychological moorings and so become unable to make any kind of politically cohesive statement, so the vigilante groups become a regime of terror within a regime of terror; Promotion of numerous political and interest groups from within the target population to dilute and obfuscate the basic issue in question that in the first place gave rise to the insurgency. (Whitaker, 2007: 150)

Massacres (see Table 1) of innocent civilians by all the parties to the conflict became relatively common. Apart from individual, targeted political abductions, disappearances and extra-judicial killings (Human Rights Watch, 2008), these mass executions can only be called crimes against humanity that keep the population in abject terror. They easily qualify for persecution under criteria set out for war crimes by

the International Criminal Court (2002). The various contending authorities, the state, paramilitaries, LTTE and even the Indian army for short periods, believed, against all the best advice of CI expertise (Kitson, 1971; US Army, 2006), that judicious use of these terror tactics would keep the population under their control and counter the appeal of the opposing party by winning over 'hearts and minds' through fear.

Table 1 War Crimes in Lanka - Civilian Massacres

Date	Place	killed	Description	Possible Perpetrator
July 1983	Welikade Prison	53	Tamil Detainees	State Officials, prisoners
24 July 1983	Jaffna	60	Tamil civilians	Lankan Army
April, 1984	Jaffna	70	Church (Our Lady of Refuge)	Lankan Army
20 Nov. 1984	Dollar and Kent Farm, Mullaithivu	62	Sinhala ex-convicts and settlers	LTTE
2 nd Dec 1984	Iraperiyakulam army camp, Vavuniya	100	Young Tamil men	Lankan Army
4 th Dec 1984	Mannar	107	Tamil civilians	Lankan State forces
May, 1985	Valvetithurai	70	Tamil Civilians and school boys	Lankan State forces
14 May 1985	Anuradhapura	146	Bus stand and Vihare	LTTE
May 1985	Thambiluvil, Eastern province	60-63	Tamil Youth	Lankan State forces
15 May 1985	Northern Seas off Delft	34	Passengers on Kumuthini (boat)	Lankan Navy
3 June 1985	Pankulam	85	Civilian bus passengers	
May 3, 1986	Katunayake Airport	16	Passengers with foreign tourists	Tamil militants

? May 1986	Central Telegraph Office	14	Civilians	Tamil militants
April 1987	Colombo	113	Car bomb, central bus station	LTTE
2 June 1987	Aranthalawa	31	Buddhist monks & civilians	LTTE
22 Oct. 1987	Jaffna Hospital	70	Patients, doctors, nurses and staff	Indian army (IPKF)
August 1987	Trincomalee	100	Sinhala villagers	LTTE
April 1989	Trincomalee	51	Car bomb	LTTE
2 August 1989	Valvittithurai	63	Tamil Youth and Boys	Indian army (IPKF)
1 August 1990	Akraipattu	14	Executions of Muslims	LTTE
4 August 1990	Kathankudi Mosque	103	Muslim men and children in Prayer	LTTE
18 Aug. 1990	Eravur	121	Muslim men, women and children	LTTE
05/09/1990	Vantharumoolai	158	Tamil Civilian refugees	Lankan State Forces
10/09/1990	Saththurukkondan	184	Tamil Civilian refugees	Lankan State Forces
12/06/1991	Kokkaddicholai	82	Tamil Civilians	Lankan State Forces
October, 1991	Palliyagodella	109	Muslim men, women and children	LTTE
09/08/1992	Mylanthanai, Batticaloa	32		Lankan State Forces

02/01/1993	Killaly Sea	52	Fleeing refugees	State navy
18/04/1995	Nachchikuda	30		Lankan State Forces
25 May 1995	Kallarawa	42		LTTE
October 1995	Border Villages in East	120	Hacked	LTTE
January 1996	Colombo	100	truck with explosives , Central Bank	LTTE
11/02/1996	Kumarapuram	24	Civilians	Lankan State Forces
20/04/1996	Killaly sea	42	Fleeing refugees	Lankan State Navy
24 July 1996	Dehiwala	56	Train bombing	LTTE
11/08/1997	Mullaitivu,(Manthuvil)	40	Tamil Civilians	Lankan State Forces
10/06/1998	Suthanthirapuram, Mullaitivu	32	Tamil Civilians	Lankan State Forces
17/9/1999	Gongala	52	Men, women and children hacked	LTTE
25/10/2000	Bindunuwewa	31	Surrendered child, youth soldiers	? Lankan Police, officials
15 June 2006	Kebethigollewa, Anuradapura	64	mine attack on a civilian bus	LTTE
7 August 2006	Muttur	17	French Action against hunger workers	Lankan State Forces
April 2, 2007	Ampara	16	Bombing of civilian bus	LTTE

Nov. 28, 2007	Colombo	18	Bombs	LTTE
Dec. 5, 2007	Anuradhapura	16	Bombing of civilian bus	LTTE
16 Jan. 2008	Buttala	27	Bus passengers	LTTE
29 Jan 2008	Palampiddi	20	School children	DPU
2 Feb. 2008	Dambulla	20	Bus passengers	LTTE
Jan -19 May,2009	Vanni	20000	Tamil Civilians	Lankan State Forces & LTTE

Table 2 War Crimes in Lanka - Mass Displacements

Date	Place	Numbers	Description	Possible Perpetrator	Comments
1956	Gal-Oya spread to other places	3000	widespread anti-Tamil violence	Mobs	Followed protests to Sinhala only Act
1958	Colombo, Outstations	35000	Mass displacement of Tamils following widespread anti-Tamil violence	Mobs	Followed Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam pact and its abrogation.
1977	Hill Country, Colombo	15000	Mass displacement of Tamils following widespread anti-Tamil violence	Mobs	Followed UNP winning 1977 elections
1983	Colombo, South West, Central	250000	Mass displacement of Tamils following widespread anti-Tamil	Mobs and politicians	

			violence		
Post 1983	Abroad	500000 to 1,000,000	Mostly Tamils	Lankan State forces	Asylum abroad
August 1987			Sinhala villagers	LTTE	
October 1987	Jaffna	300,000	Indian army Pawan army operation	IPKF	
1988	North East	253000	IPKF operations	IPKF	
October 1990	North	100,000	Muslims ordered to leave	LTTE	Fear of the 5 th Column
October 1995	Jaffna	400,000	Advancing Lankan forces on Jaffna	LTTE	Engineered by LTTE
1996	North	335000	Lankan forces operations	Lankan forces	
1997	North	255000	Lankan forces operations	Lankan forces	
1999	North	51000	Lankan forces operations	Lankan forces	
2000	North	192000	Lankan forces operations		

2001	North	67000	Lankan forces operations	Lankan forces	
Dec. 2006	North and East	520000		Conflict	
April 2007	East	301,000		Conflict	
June, 2007	Colombo	376	Tamils	Lankan authorities	Deportation to Vavuniya
August 2007	Northeast	460,000		Conflict	
Jan. to May 2009	Vanni	300,000	Tamils	Military operations	Internment in camps

Sources: **Tamil Centre for Human Rights – TCHR** (www.tchr.net) http://www.sangam.org/2007/11/Killed_1956_2007.php?uid=2619

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=44523f134>

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/53A197CF6F0A92E3C1257362002C1F9A/\\$file/Sri+Lanka+-September+2007.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/53A197CF6F0A92E3C1257362002C1F9A/$file/Sri+Lanka+-September+2007.pdf)

Table 1 gives a few, illustrative and representative examples of unambiguous cases of civilian massacres involving more than 15 civilians with a clear, planned intent carried out in a deliberate, organized way to cause terror or as a lesson. Disorganized mob killings or where soldiers have gone 'berserk' or where the action could be argued to be accidental, unintentional, or 'collateral damage' have been left out. Numbers injured have been left out (not available or reliable in most cases).

Sivaram had described 'levels of terror' during a lecture on CI at Palmerstone North, New Zealand in 1999 (Trawick, personal communication) as something that can be turned on and off, and increased or reduced as the situation necessitated. It would be like a fine tuning to keep the population under control, like the use of the friendly and 'bad' interrogator, where the population will start yearning for periods of less terror and do anything to avoid an increase in terror levels.

In relation to abductions and disappearances, a recent Human Rights Watch report (2008), gives a very clear description of what is happening:

Hundreds of enforced disappearances committed since 2006 have already placed Sri Lanka among the countries with the highest number of new cases in the world. The victims are primarily young ethnic Tamil men who 'disappear' – often after being picked up by government security forces in the country's embattled north and east, but also in the capital Colombo ... Most are feared dead. Enforced disappearances have again become a salient feature of the conflict. Figures released by various governmental and nongovernmental sources suggest that more than 1,500 people were reported missing from December 2005 through December 2007 ... In the great majority of cases documented by Human Rights Watch and Sri Lankan groups, evidence indicates the involvement of government security forces – army, navy, or police. The Sri Lankan military, empowered by the country's counterterrorism laws, has long relied on extrajudicial means, such as 'disappearances' and summary executions – in its operations against Tamil militants and JVP insurgents. The involvement of the security forces in 'disappearances' is facilitated by Sri Lanka's emergency laws, which grant sweeping powers to the army along with broad immunity from prosecution ... Also implicated in abductions and 'disappearances' are pro-government Tamil armed groups acting either independently or in conjunction with the security forces ... The LTTE has been implicated in abductions in conflict areas under the government's control ... the LTTE prefers to openly execute opponents, perhaps to ensure a deterrent effect on the population. LTTE abductions may also be underreported because the family members of the victims and eyewitnesses are often reluctant to report the abuses, fearing LTTE retribution.

As part of the CI and counter CI, the various authorities vying for the loyalty and subservience of the community have ruthlessly eliminated what they have perceived as obstruction to their power and control. Apart from the abductions, disappearances and extra-judicial killings by the state and its allied paramilitary forces, the internecine warfare among various Tamil militant organizations competing for the loyalty of the community have resulted in the elimination of many of its own ethnic, more able, civilians – a process of self-destruction, auto genocide (Hoole, 2001). Those with leadership qualities, those willing to challenge and argue, the intellectuals, the dissenters and those with social motivation have been weeded out ('*Pullu Kalaithal*' or *weeding* – those eliminated are labelled as 'anti social elements' or 'traitors'). They have either been intimidated into leaving, killed or coerced into silence. At critical nodal shifts in power, recriminations, false accusations, revenge and retribution were very common. It happened in 1987 (IPKF, the Indian intervention); in 1990 (LTTE takeover), in 1996 (SLA control), after 2005 with the collapse of the ceasefire, and is happening from May 2009 with another shift in the power balance. The loss of leadership and the talented, skilful, resourceful persons, the professionals, technocrats and entrepreneurs, from the community has had devastating consequences. Many left over the years due to increasing difficulties, traumatic experiences and social pressure from family and colleagues, the so-called 'brain drain'. Those who remained have been targeted by those aspiring to rule the community.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) warns of the destructive consequences to a society which experiences the systematic degrading and debilitation of its richly talented members. This is the loss of vital resources (Hobfoll, 1998), the destruction of social capital, the nodal points of vibrant relationships and essential networks which is a prominent cause of 'collective trauma' (Somasundaram, 2007). Without leadership and organization, vital networks and functioning relationships have collapsed, leaving the community easy prey to competing propaganda, authoritarian control and suppression. Many have observed that ordinary people in Jaffna have become passive and submissive. These qualities have become part of the survival strategy passed on through the socialization process, where children are taught to keep quiet, not to question or challenge, and to accept the situation, as assertive behaviour carries considerable risk. The creative spirit, the vital capacity to rebuild and recover is being suppressed.

Torture was used as a routine CI procedure carried out on Tamil detainees (Doney, 1998; Somasundaram, 2008). Apart from in the attempt to obtain information, it was used to break the individual personalities of those who tried to resist, as well as an encompassing method to coerce a community into submission. Many individuals did not survive torture, but those who did were released in a broken condition; or when dead, their maimed bodies were conspicuously exhibited to act as a warning to others. It became one aspect of institutionalized violence and laws were passed which legitimized the use of torture and death in custody (Amnesty International, 1986). Thus torture became institutionalized as an aspect of state terror. It was similarly used by the militants but without the legal veneer. The Istanbul Protocol for the Investigation and Documentation of Torture Project team speak of community trauma by the creation of a 'repressive ecology' based on imminent, pervasive threat, terror and inhibition that causes a state of generalized insecurity, terror and rupture of the social fabric (Baykai et al., 2004).

Another CI technique was mass displacement of people from their habitat and home environment (Table 2) as a way of cutting off support for the insurgents but also cutting the sustaining roots of resident populations. Displacement from familiar surroundings cause a fundamental disruption in life and relationships, a disorganization and confusion that breaks the cohesiveness and spirit of communities. There had been mass displacement of Tamils after each episode of the anti-Tamil violence in the south, that is in 1956, 1958, 1977, 1981 and 1983. During the war, people belonging to all three ethnic communities, Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim, have been displaced. However, the overwhelming majority of those displaced have been Tamils. Over a million have fled abroad through precarious and devious routes as refugees to India, Europe, the US, Canada, Australia and other countries, seeking asylum there and forming a worldwide diaspora. The current population of the Jaffna peninsula in the north is 400,000, while the projected population for 2004 was 1,200,000. This indicates the level of depopulation of one of the areas. Similarly, all the outlying villages in Trincomalee, 52 in all, have been emptied of their Tamil inhabitants by the security forces. A similar fate awaited the *Manal aru* Tamils in 1985 (UTHR-J, 1994). The 2009 military campaign displaced the whole Vanni population of over 400,000, many of whom had already been displaced several times.

It seems to be a Lanka army strategy to empty an area of its inhabitants before launching an attack, perhaps to reduce civilian casualties and make it easier for military action where it becomes more difficult for the guerrillas to merge and hide within the civilian population. However, once the area has been secured, the CI strategy appears to be a long-term policy of denying a base for the LTTE and preventing infiltration by having large Tamil civilian no-go High Security Zones (and eventual colonization with Sinhala settlers), saturating the area with army camps, posts (the Indian army had a post every hundred yards or so!) and 'points', establishing a detailed list of residents, with entry and exit procedures, ID papers, frequent checking, arrests, assaults, detentions, disappearances and paramilitary and home guard surveillance, along with the simultaneous promotion of hearts and minds operations by distributing relief items, settlement programmes and other activities aimed at winning over the people. Exactly this CI strategy is currently being enacted in the east (UTHR-J, 2007) and is being planned for the Vanni with international funding.

The mass exodus of 1995 engineered by the LTTE as a counter CI strategy was another type of experience (UTHR-J, 1995). Apart from the forced breaking of the bonds with their homes and village, the trek of over 400,000 people in the middle of the night through rain and shelling effected great change in people.

They left in terror and not by choice, with few possessions, roads clogged with crowds moving slowly, step by step, the less able, the elderly, falling by the wayside; and finally arriving in makeshift, inadequate accommodation with very poor facilities or none at all. People lost their identity, pride, dignity and hope. (Somasundaram, 2007)

The total eviction of nearly 100,000 Muslims from their traditional homes in the north in 1990 by the LTTE, ostensibly as a counter CI exercise to eliminate an alleged fifth column in their areas for which there was scant evidence, is an example of ethnic cleansing (Clarence, 2007). Many of these Muslims still languish in refugee camps, a forgotten and rejected people. When the frequent mass displacement of people from their natural habitat is looked at from the CI perspective, it appears to be a strategy to remove the support base, the sustenance, information and assistance given to the opposite forces. It would also appear to be a policy designed as a method of punishment for aiding and abetting the 'enemy', inducing weariness, hopelessness, helplessness, rootlessness and despair that would make people ready to accept any conditions and break their cohesion and fighting spirit – a form of pacification. It is a destruction of the vital resources of a community, their homes, property, traditional way of life, occupation, employment, earnings and source of livelihood so they become completely dependent on handouts, at the mercy of authorities and under their power and control. It is also about ethnically-based territoriality, seen for example, in an Israeli CI strategy to retain land under one ethnic group by driving out another or creating resettlements under tight military controls, as was done in *Manal aru* (UTHR-J, 1994) and is being done in the east (UTHR-J, 2007) and planned for the newly 'conquered' Vanni.

A consequence of ongoing CI security operations was the complete militarization of every part of ordinary life. Armed uniformed men with all the paraphernalia of war were everywhere: terse, intimidating, with foreign verbal and body language. Mass arrests, assaults, executed bodies in public places, being searched, humiliated and pushed around were normal. Females constantly faced sexual harassment, abuse and violation. There were spies, informers, intelligence agents, paramilitaries in civilian clothes, unscrupulous elements and constant surveillance. In Jaffna, the atmosphere created a feeling of entrapment, of being besieged. The conditions were compared to being in an 'open prison' by some of the community leaders, the Bishop of Jaffna (Savundaranayagam, 2006) and Surgeon of the Jaffna Hospital, Dr Thayalan Ambalavanar (Partners, 1999) among them. There was also the more pervasive 'counter-control' by the Tamil militants through social pressure, intimidation, killings, abductions and internal terror, trapping the civil population between the two forces. This atmosphere and tense situation created a sense of apprehension, a constant state of alertness, a 'low intensity panic', a pervasive background of terror that did not allow people to relax and go about their ordinary life. This was exactly the feeling that made people yearn for a respite, a period of peace, the feeling that CI operatives wanted to create. A photographic record of this terror can be seen in the faces of the 'Army ID cards' issued to those returning to Jaffna after the Army took control in 1996. Despite all this, people learnt to manage their terror and life went on in the surreal atmosphere so well described by Trawick (2007). On the one hand there would be massive killings, disappearances, 'encounters', search operations, while at the same time there would be school with children in uniforms, festivals, weddings, celebrations, village markets, entertainment, sports meets. Sometimes these events happened simultaneously. I can remember back in April 2000, the day Elephant Pass Army Camp fell with over 1000 casualties, the local army commander at Marathanamiddam (probably not quite aware of what has happening 40km away) was organizing a sports meet and variety entertainment evening with loud speakers and food for civilians in the Ramanathan College grounds (a CI hearts and minds operation), with soldiers trying to herd locals to attend the event while they were trying their best to avoid going there by escaping along the lanes and by-ways.

In the war zones violence and militarization gradually permeated all aspects of daily life and family and community processes (de Mel, 2007). It was not certain a person going out to work, would return in the evening. A home could be suddenly searched, someone brutally killed, a mother raped or father taken away. A shell could land anywhere destroying everything around. Sounds of gun shots, machine-gun fire, exploding shells, diving planes and rounding helicopters were ever present. People had to adapt to frequent checks, getting down from bikes, showing ID cards, waiting while the military looked you over, body searches, the pushing and slaps, intimidation, women taking the sexual overtones and harassment as part of their daily ordeal, all in the atmosphere of possible arrest. This kind of pervasive atmosphere of violence, rather than breaking down the resistance and spirit of the population, in time creates resistance and defiance (Nordstrom, 1994), particularly in the youth. There is also the daily experience of profound humiliation during the searches, arrests, detention and beatings. Thus within each breast would grow, small at first, a rage, a hate which could be transformed into a militant and suicidal cadres (Hassan, 2008). Thus these kinds of CI policies and strategies would spawn a whole generation of rebellious youth.

The Lankan state clearly fails the US Army (2006) manual on counter insurgency criteria for legitimacy to rule over areas of the north-east by being unable to provide for the security of the populace and in the lack of political, economic, and social development as well as regime acceptance. In Jaffna, despite the heavy presence of an occupation force and various paramilitaries, an extraordinary parallel government structure is in operation. Both use terror to control the local population. The US Army manual on CI (2006: para. 1-92) says, 'illegitimate states (sometimes called "police states") typically cannot regulate society or can do so only by applying overwhelming coercion'.

People were caught between multiple powers competing for legitimacy and their obedience, allegiance. It became a risky, nuanced game of going through the motions and play acting for the benefit of each side. When one side called for a hartal or strike, the other side would want the shops open and transport operating. Shopkeepers would compromise by keeping one door open, or sometimes loosely closed which could be pushed open. When the state wanted their Independence Day or the LTTE their Heroes Day observed, people would comply by hanging out flags or cleaning their compound. Each side understood the situation and would usually not be too strict. Of course when it came down to the line, people were more terrified by the LTTE and would obey their diktat more closely. Authorities and those in administrative positions had the greatest dilemmas. Some senior administrators like District Administrators were killed for consorting too much with the other side or not complying with an order. The situation was fluid and could change from moment to moment. For example, there would be periods when the state (Lankan or Indian) and LTTE would be on good terms and it would be 'allowed' to consort with each side; but, there would be other times when this would be considered treason. Even a barber cutting the hair of the opposing side, or the Principal of St John's College agreeing to a cricket match would be shot during a particularly bad time. Terminology, terms of reference and connotation would also change. Times of changing power are extremely dangerous periods when even personal vendettas and revenge could result in being denounced, betrayed or killed. LTTE called it the time of *Pullu Kalaithal* or weeding out of unwanted elements. People who are killed could be displayed publically with accusatory placards hanging on their bodies or mutilated as a warning to others.

Nordstrom (2004) describes the

ground zero of the (shifting and fluid) front-line intersections of war and invisible economies that ultimately extend worldwide ... at the highest levels of power, they may control national concessions, transport the goods, and oversee the profits. This might be called corruption if it stopped at the national level, but these systems of profit are international. In the shadows, beyond public scrutiny, commanders may partner with international wildcatters who move consumer items, from weapons to cigarettes, into a war zone while moving valuable resources out to the cosmopolitan centers of the world in less than legal ways. More visibly they may partner with international state-sponsored vendors to procure expensive weapons and goods – exports that peacetime countries are eager to sell for their own profits, but which rarely match the actual needs of the purchasing country and its war. Systems of partnership, alliance, coercion, dependency, and outright violation variously mark these transactions. (2004: 9)

Sarvananthan (2006) estimates that the informal economy forms 30 per cent of the Provincial GDP of the north-east. The PGDP for the north is the lowest in the country (the east being also low) due to lack of economical activity, but compensated by the informal economy. The informal economy would include the extra-legal trade of goods across the various borders into the north-east, various small commercial ventures, foreign remittances, and the income and expenditure of the LTTE. The illicit movements of goods across various borders and from India could be quite extensive, particularly when the state imposed various embargoes or blockades. The cost due to risky transport across jungles, borders or the sea and the payments to various authorities at borders and elsewhere as bribes to let them through as well as other expenses such as multiple taxes and profits had to be borne by the civilians. Thus the exorbitant prices in the north-east increased the cost of living for a population already displaced and deprived of regular income. But the extraordinary fact is that most goods were available, at a price! During the severe embargo by the state on all types of essential goods to Jaffna after 1990, when the land route was cut off, most goods were still available on the pavements of Jaffna town. From the ubiquitous Panadol,³ which people believed cured all kinds of ills,⁴ to petrol which was selling at 30 times the normal rate, everything people needed for their daily living was available. During the 24-hour curfew that lasted almost a month in October 1987 when the Indian army shot people on sight, enterprising traders moved through internal by-lanes (*olungays*) to keep the small, informal shops in the interior supplied with essential goods (Somasundaram, 1998). Thus, as Nordstrom (2004) maintains, the informal economy is vital to sustain a civilian population during hard times in war zones. It is estimated that due to fighting and the collapse of most traditional occupations and income, people in the north-east have become dependent on outside remittances. As Sarvananthan (2006) points out, this is not a new phenomena in Jaffna where traditional breadwinners, due to lack of resources and the harsh climate, had ventured out to the south and abroad for employment and earnings which they remitted back to their families. This was one of the causes for increasing hostilities against the Tamils in the south when competition for jobs became more acute due to population pressures. With the civil war, the whole economy and families in the north-east, particularly Jaffna, have become heavily dependent on outside remittances for their survival.⁵ However, the remittances are now more from abroad. In the east, a good number of women have gone to the Middle East as housemaids, to earn money for their families causing severe family problems in their homes. In the north, it has also been migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Western countries sending back part of their earnings or meagre welfare payments through ‘*hawala*’ that have kept the home fires burning. It is said that each family has at least one member, if not more, abroad who then supports their family back home. For asylum seekers their families would have sacrificed considerable finances in payments to human smugglers, unscrupulous agents (transactions where they are easily cheated), and to meet the expenses involved in complicated passages through inhospitable routes to get their family member to safety. For those whose asylum issues are still pending in their host country, there is a pressure from the family back home, who would have sacrificed an enormous fortune to get him there, to keep the conflict going, as host countries have a tendency to start repatriating asylum seekers as soon as there is some semblance of cessation of hostilities.

A dominant part of the informal economy of the north and east is the LTTE's financial empire. Although it is difficult to estimate the extent of their finances, Jane's Intelligence Review (2007) and Sarvanathan (2006) have estimated the LTTE generate around US\$200–300,000,000 per year through their earnings in Lanka, both uncleared and cleared areas including Colombo, and abroad. Locally the LTTE earns through numerous direct and indirect taxes, commercial ventures, extortion, siphoning from GO and NGO sectors, and various other sources and means. Taxation includes a fixed income tax on salaries and earnings (Sarvanathan (2006) gives this as 8%), including state employees both in the cleared and uncleared areas of the north and east, which is collected in a regular manner, for example as an almost 'official' deduction before salary payments in the finance section of the organization. There can also be special 'deductions' for various reasons such as a defence levy, *Pongu Tamil* celebrations, etc. All businesses, occupations and produce are taxed varying amounts. In the formal economy of Lanka the north-east is allocated the lowest regional amount while the defence budget has been soaring, reaching 166.4bn rupees (\$1.48bn) annually. However, this is but the tip of the actual expenditure. Defence spending is often done under other headings and votes. For example large-scale training abroad is often done under foreign agreements and aid. Transport, food and other incidental costs can be borne by other departments, including the local District budget. I have been reliably informed that much of PGDP for Jaffna comes from foreign aid allocations. However, the large-scale military spending does not benefit the local population in Jaffna. None of them are in any of the security forces, which are completely Sinhala (Library of Congress, 2009). So none of the inflated salaries or incentives of the armed forces benefit Tamils. Though the state formally continues to pay the salaries, none of the benefits like overtime and other extra payments ('bata') reach the Tamil populations. Cadre positions have been cut while vacancies are not filled (Somasundaram, 2005). There are no large-scale development programmes comparable to the south, no industrial or economic investments, infrastructure development, market access or circulation of money. The economy of Jaffna has been in a frozen state except for the remittances from abroad. Thus the Jaffna population is a deprived area from the state economic point of view and people learn to survive on low or absent incomes.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of parallel governments, where two states, Lankan and Indian, and various Tamil militant and paramilitary groups vied for power and control, trying to rule and govern was seen in Jaffna, northern Sri Lanka from 1983 to the present. The international community has also increasingly become a stakeholder, attempting to mediate and influence events, even advocating the right to protect (R2P) civilians when the state fails to do so. Between these contending powers was the underworld and transnational shadow-world of arms traders, smugglers and international racketeers making a quick profit. Tactics of terror and counter terror were used to pacify and control the population. Massacres, arrests, detentions, abductions, torture, extra-judicial killings, forced displacements, conventional and guerrilla style warfare, restrictions and embargos on travel and essential items and other nefarious means were used widely. Power and control became very pervasive extending into government bodies, state institutions, schools, social and community organizations and public day-to-day events. As a result, the Tamil community was depopulated, leaders eliminated or intimidated and people became silent, passive and compliant.

Notes

This article is an updated and developed version of the paper, 'Parallel governments – living between terror and counter terror in Jaffna (1982–2006)' presented at the conference, Globalizing Religions and Cultures in the Asia Pacific, University of Adelaide, 1–5 December 2008.

1. Sivaram was the foremost military analyst and journalist in Lanka who was himself extra-judicially killed in 2005, a victim of CI, possibly at the hands of paramilitary aligned to the state.
2. Informers usually wear a hood over their heads, to hide their identify for fear of later reprisals, and in the Lanka context, the hood is made of sack cloth with slits for the eyes. Suspects are then paraded before them and they usually indicate, commonly by nodding or other sign, who is implicated. The informers, usually friends or comrades, are often under threat of further torture or death if they do not point people out (Doney, 1998).
3. Counterfeit, out of date, SPC (State Pharmaceutical Corporation) drugs, which should legally be in state hospitals where there is chronic shortage for the same drugs and banned (not hard, narcotic drugs but ordinary medical drugs long withdrawn from the market due to lethal adverse effects) drugs were freely available over the counter or on pavements. Most of the cheaper varieties were from India where the pharmaceutical industry had suddenly taken off.
4. I was treating an old lady with somatoform disorder who used to swallow Panadol on hearing bomber planes overhead (see case history in Somasundaram, 1998). Possibly it would prevent the subsequent headache?
5. The funds from the remittances and other payments (salaries) are either recycled back out of the Jaffna peninsula or do not physically reach there as they are spent on the purchase of essential and commercial goods, payment for agents, informal taxes and the like or go into savings. The actual net flow of money is thus out of Jaffna to Colombo and foreign countries. Hardly anything is spent or invested locally, the local economy stagnates as a consequence.

References

- Amato EJ (2002) *The tail of the dragon: Sri Lankan efforts to subdue the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam*. Thesis, US army Command and General Staff College, Kansas.
- Amnesty International (1986) *Sri Lanka Disappearances*. London: Amnesty International.
- Baykai T, Schlar C and Kapken E (2004) *International Training Manual on Psychological Evidence of Torture*. Istanbul: Human Rights Foundation of Turkey.
- Bronfenbrenner U (1979) *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Camus A (1971) *The Rebel*, A. Bower Trans. UK: Penguin Books.
- Clarance W (2007) *Ethnic Warfare in Sri Lanka and the UN Crisis*. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications
- de Mel N (2007) *Militarizing Sri Lanka: Popular Culture, Memory and Narrative in the Armed Conflict*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Doney A (1998) The Psychological After-Effects of Torture: A Survey of Sri Lankan Ex-Detainees. In: Somasundaram D (1998) *Scarred Minds*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 256–287.
- Evans G (2007) The limits of state sovereignty: The Responsibility to protect in the 21st century (eighth Neelam Tiruchelvam Memorial Lecture). Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES). Available at: <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4967>.

- Green L (2004) Living in a state of fear. In: Scheper-Hughes N and Bourgois P (eds) *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 186–195.
- Hassan R (2008) Suicide bombings: Homicidal killings or a weapon of war? *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38(3): 462–480.
- Hobfoll, S. (1998). *Stress, culture, and community: the psychology and philosophy of stress*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Hoole MR, Somasundaram DJ, Thiraganama R and Sritharan K (1988) *Broken Palmyra*. Claremont, CA: Harvey Mudd College Press.
- Hoole R (2001) *Sri Lanka: The Arrogance of Power, Myths, Decadence, and Murder*. Colombo: University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna).
- Human Rights Watch (2008) *Recurring Nightmare: State Responsibility for 'Disappearances' and Abductions in Sri Lanka*. New York: Human Rights Watch.
- Jane's Intelligence Review (2007) *Feeding the Tiger – How Sri Lankan Insurgents Fund their War*. Jane's Intelligence Review.
- Kitson F (1971) *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-keeping*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Kitson F (1977) *Bunch of Five*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Lawrence P (2000) Violence, suffering, Amman: The work of oracles in Sri Lanka's eastern war zone: In Das V, Kleinman A, Ramphela M and Reynolds P (eds) *Violence and Subjectivity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 171–204.
- Library of Congress (2009) *A Country Study: Sri Lanka: Ethnic Composition of the Armed Forces*. Available at: <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/lktoc.html>.
- Nandy A (2009) Narcissism and despair. *The Little Magazine* VII(3&4). Available at: <http://www.littlemag.com/security/ashisnandy.html> (accessed 7 July 2010).
- Nordstrom C (1994) *Warzones: Cultures of Violence, Militarisation and Peace*. Working Paper No. 145. Canberra: Peace Research Centre, Australian National University.
- Nordstrom C (2004) *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Partners (1999) Sri Lanka: The forgotten war. *World Mission Partners* 11(1): 14.
- Philp C (2009) The hidden massacre: Sri Lanka's final offensive against Tamil Tigers. *Times Online*, 29 May. Available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6383449.ece>
- Philp C and Evans M (2009) Times photographs expose Sri Lanka's lie on civilian deaths at beach. *Times Online*, 29 May. Available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article6383477.ece>
- Sarvananthan M (2006) *Informal Economy in the Conflict Region of Sri Lanka: An Exploration*. Working Paper 6. Colombo: Point Pedro institute of Development. Available at: http://pointpedro.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogsection&id=6&Itemid=63
- Savundaranayagam T (2006) Bishop of Jaffna urges co-chairs to prevail upon GoSL to open A9, implement CFA. *TamilNet*, 19 November. Available at: <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=20324>
- Somasundaram D (1998) *Scarred Minds*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Somasundaram D (2005) *Health and Human Rights in the Jaffna Peninsula*. Colombo: Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka.
- Somasundaram D (2007) Collective trauma in northern Sri Lanka: A qualitative psychosocial-ecological study. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 1(1): 5.
- Somasundaram D (2008) Psycho-social aspects of torture in Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health* 1(1): 10–23.
- Taussig M (2004) Culture of terror – space of death: Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the explanation of terror. In: Scheper-Hughes N and Bourgois P (eds) *Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 39–53.

- Trawick M (2007) *Enemy Lines: Childhood, Warfare, and Play in Batticaloa*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- University Teachers for Human Rights – Jaffna (UTHR-J) (1994) *From Manal Aru to Weli Oya*. Special Report 5. Colombo: UTHR-J. Available at: <http://www.uthr.org/SpecialReports/spreport5.htm>.
- University Teachers for Human Rights – Jaffna (UTHR-J) (1995). *Exodus from Jaffna*. Colombo: UTHR-J. Available at: <http://www.uthr.org/SpecialReports/spreport6.htm>
- University Teachers for Human Rights – Jaffna (UTHR-J) (2007) *The Human Rights and Humanitarian Fallout from the Sri Lankan Government's Eastern Agenda and the LTTE's Obduracy*. Briefing No. 6. Colombo. Available at: <http://www.uthr.org/Briefings/Briefing6.htm>.
- University Teachers for Human Rights – Jaffna (UTHR-J) (2009) *A Marred Victory and a Defeat Pregnant with Foreboding*. Colombo: UTHR-J. Available at: <http://www.uthr.org/SpecialReports/spreport32.htm>.
- US Army (2006) *Counterinsurgency*. FM 3-24. Washington, DC: US Army. Available at: <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24fd.pdf>.
- Vijayasiri R (1999) A critical analysis of the Sri Lankan government's counter insurgency campaign. Thesis, Kansas, US Army Command and General Staff College.
- Wax E (2009) Fresh reports, imagery contradict Sri Lanka on civilian no-fire zone. *Washington Post*, 30 May. Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/29/AR2009052903409.html?nav=emailpage>
- Whitaker MP (2007) *Learning Politics from Sivaram*. London: Pluto Press.