Failure to understand the conflict by UN and the West created a humanitarian Crisis–Prof. Gunaratna

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By-Leel Pathirana - For Asian Tribune Singapore, 18 April, (Asiantribune.com): "Sri Lanka has Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Head of the International Center for Political Violence, Terrorism Research and security Studies Nanyang Technology University in Singapore. become a living laboratory on how to and how not to fight terrorism. Governments from around the world have started to study the Sri Lankan case. Western and other military, law enforcement security and intelligence services are today consulting the Sri Lankan government on how they reduced the LTTE power from a formidable to a mediocre organization. Sri Lanka provides the best case study of how to dismantle a terrorist group militarily. Sri Lanka still needs to develop its core competencies to fight LTTE's domestic and foreign support base politically, economically and diplomatically. Until then the conflict will subsist and may even revive, said Prof: Rohan Gunaratna.

In an interview with Asian Tribune Prof: Rohan Gunaratna added unfortunately, both Sri Lankans and foreigners lacked an understanding of the LTTE, especially of Prabhakaran - Asia's master of terror. To educate our friends in the West, Sri Lanka needs to train its diplomats and others concerned on how the LTTE operates in the West. Otherwise, LTTE will hoodwink the international community, the press and others making them behave like LTTE's agents of influence. Sri Lankan born Prof. Rohan Gunaratna is the Head of the International Center for Political Violence and Terrorism Research and Professor of Security Studies at the Nanyang Technology University in Singapore. A world authority on Al Qaeda, Professor Gunaratna was a former Senior Fellow at the Combating Terrorism Centre at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Today, he holds several honorary appointments including as Honorary Fellow and Member of the Advisory Council, International Policy Institute for Counter Terrorism, Israel. He holds a masters degree in international peace studies from Notre Dame, US, where he was Hesburgh Scholar and a doctorate in international relations from St Andrews, where he was British Chevening Scholar. Prof. Gunaratna has over 25 years of academic, policy, and operational experience in counter terrorism. In addition to testifying before the 9/11 Commission, he led the specialist team that designed and built the UN database on the mobility, weapons and finance of Al Qaeda, Taliban and their Entities. He serves on the editorial boards of "Studies in Conflict and Terrorism" and "Terrorism and Political Violence", the world's leading journals on terrorism and counter terrorism. He chaired the first International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation in Singapore in 2009. In addition to authoring Inside Al Qaeda, an international bestseller published by Columbia University in New York, Gunaratna wrote several national bestsellers on the Sri Lankan conflict. This include, "Sri Lanka A Lost Revolution?: Inside story of the JVP," " Indian Intervention of Sri Lanka: the role of the Indian Intelligence agencies," "International and Regional Implications of the Sri Lankan Tamil Insurgency," and "Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis and National Security." In addition to debriefing several hundred LTTE leaders and members, Gunaratna interviewed the LTTE leader Veupillai Prabhakaran in 1987 for his book "War and Peace in Sri Lanka." Leel Pathirana interviews Prof. Rohan Gunaratna exclusively for Asian Tribune: Asian Tribune: Welcome to Asian Tribune Professor Gunaratna. You have been a keen watcher and an analyst of the LTTE, its methods of warfare and its organizational structure. You have stated in previous occasions that LTTE is a resilient group and is difficult to defeat militarily. How was it now possible for Sri Lankan Forces could wipe out LTTE, within three years? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna: The LTTE belongs to the most ruthless and cruel class of terrorist groups that engaged in mass fatality and mass casualty attacks. If the LTTE had access to a nuclear, chemical, biological, or radiological weapon, it would use it. Together with Al Qaeda, the Pakistani Taliban, the Lebanese Hezbollah, the LTTE belongs to the “A” team of terrorists. Nonetheless, the Sri Lankan case study has demonstrated that even a threat group like the LTTE can be militarily defeated. There is no terrorist group in the world like the LTTE that has targeted and killed so many quality leaders. Sri Lanka is the first country in the world to defeat a terrorist group that employed suicide attacks to such an extent. The reason why the Rajapaksa government succeeded and others failed is clear. None of the previous governments had the political will and the military skill to defeat the LTTE. Furthermore, the previous governments had no national plan and a well coordinated strategy to defeat the LTTE. Asian Tribune: After 27 years of fighting with the LTTE, the major factor is the overwhelming public support for the armed forces and the Police, how do you see these changes? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna: Public support is crucial in the fight against terrorism and insurgency. The Sri Lankan government understood the vital importance of public support for recruitment to the armed forces and the police. Unlike previous governments that had a dual policy of war and peace, the Rajapaksa government generated public support by explaining its position: that is, the government will fight to the end. Government also highlighted its victories. Success generates success. People want to join the winning side. Government also respected those killed, maimed and injured in battle as war heroes. Government also took the right step to work together with Tamils leaders and masses. By building bridges to the Tamils, government criminalized the LTTE by highlighting its atrocities, extortion, and more recently the mass hostage taking orchestrated by Prabhakaran. Asian Tribune: Ongoing war is fought on multiple fronts. Ground, sea and air followed by intelligence and the Police support. In which perspective do you see this strategy? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna: The government understood the importance of fighting the LTTE on all its fronts. Towards this, government engaged and locked the LTTE on all its fronts, except the international front that needs to improve. Unlike previous governments, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, the Secretary of Defence coordinated the armed forces, the police, the intelligence service and other kinetic capabilities. He was ably assisted by the army chief Lt. General Sarath Fonseka, Navy Chief Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda, and the Air Chief Air Marshall Roshan Gunatillake. They had all suffered from the LTTE: their friends, colleagues and family members were killed. They were highly motivated, dedicated and competent commanders. They had all experienced battle and knew what exactly the ground commanders and troops needed to win.

They worked hard, day and night, and every day, supporting the frontline warrior to fight to the end. Asian Tribune: For a longtime, the LTTE was a dangerous and ruthless terrorist outfit. But they suddenly collapsed within 3 years. How can these lessons be applied to other terrorist outfits in the world? And will this be a symbolic event for the rest of the world in terms of fighting against terrorism? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna: Sri Lanka has become a living laboratory on how to and how not to fight terrorism. Governments from around the world have started to study the Sri Lankan case. Western and other military, law enforcement security and intelligence services are today consulting the Sri Lankan government on how they reduced the LTTE power from a formidable to a mediocre organization. Sri Lanka provides the best case study of how to dismantle a terrorist group militarily. Sri Lanka still needs to develop its core competencies to fight LTTE's domestic and foreign support base politically, economically and diplomatically. Until then the conflict will subsist and may even revive. Asian Tribune: I remember according to the most of the defense and military analysts, commanders of all three forces emphasizes, that operations for countering LTTE activities should be first started from the North-East, and to be liberated. Subsequently they adopt that strategy and the "Mavil Aru" issue also came at the same time. Thus, the entire North East could be liberated and the civilian's could be re-settled. Do you think this was a good start? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:As Sri Lanka is one of the smallest countries in the world, any citizen should be permitted to live anywhere in the country. For fear of the LTTE, over a million Tamils and Muslims live in the south. Similarly, Sinhalese should be permitted to live anywhere in the country. There should be no organized settlement anywhere in the country. Our aim should be to create a united Sri Lanka and reinforce a Sri Lankan identity. This cannot be done in one generation and through forced settlement. However, if we encourage Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese to live together in harmony in this generation we will have a Sri Lankan identity in the next generation. To do this we need time to heal, programs to reconcile and visionaries to build bridges between communities and faiths. Asian Tribune: After CFA (Cease Fire Agreement) signed on 2002 between the LTTE and the United Front Government led by Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe, they managed to smuggle large numbers of military hardware. Did they hoodwink the then government or were they aware about the LTTE acquiring the military hardware? Can you elaborate how they strengthened and develop militarily during that interim period? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:Prabhakaran once told a group of Black Tigers that wanted to recommence operations to be patient. Prabhakaran said that achieving Tamil Eelam was like a journey from Jaffna to Kathiragama. As the journey could not be made without resting in Vavuniya, Anuradhapura, Colombo, and Galle, Prabhakaran equaled these resting places to peace talks. Prabhakaran argued how every period of peace interludes benefited the LTTE. The LTTE recruited domestically and procured globally during all the ceasefires. There were no exceptions. If there is a cessation of hostilities tomorrow, the LTTE will regroup, reorganize and fight back! Many diplomats and international civil servants do not understand the LTTE model of political behavior. They think that Prabhakaran is as sincere as they are. Prabhakaran never does what he says. Prabhakaran is one of the most deceptive terrorist leaders in the world. Unfortunately, both Sri Lankans and foreigners lacked an understanding of the LTTE especially of Prabhakaran, Asia's master of terror. To educate our friends in the West, Sri Lanka needs to train its diplomats and others concerned on how the LTTE operates in the West. Otherwise, LTTE will hoodwink the international community, the press and others making them behave like LTTE's agents of influence. Asian Tribune: Vice versa, most of the heavy damages took place to our forces and the materials during Chandrika's regime. For instance, Mullaitivu Army Base captured by the LTTE and in one night we lost 1526 soldiers, then Poonaryn, Nagasevanthurai Naval base pre-down attack we lost 625 soldiers, Then the Colombo Airport Attack etc., can you describe why these attacks could not be prevented? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:The security forces and defense ministry was poorly led and staffed during the Chandrika regime. A well intentioned lady, President Chandrika Kumaranatunge appointed people who were loyal to her but utterly incompetent. Mr.Chandrananda de Silva, a former elections commissioner, who was clueless about military and security matters, was appointed as defense secretary. Appointing Chandrananda as defense secretary was like getting a gynecologist to perform a brain surgery. He had no core competence and made blunder after blunder for which the nation paid heavily. Camp after camp fell, billions of rupees of weaponry and equipment were taken away by the LTTE, and thousands of soldiers, killed, maimed and injured. Based on an assessment by Professor Gerard Chaliand, the foremost French counterinsurgency specialist, I recall Nanda Godage, one of Sri Lanka's finest ambassadors briefing Chandrananda of the imminent collapse of the Elephant Pass camp. Chandrananda did not understand the subject, so he chose to ignore the threat. After such a monumental defeat, any self respecting defense secretary would have resigned, faced prosecution for neglect of duty or faced firing squad in an African country. Both to the intelligence service and to the armed forces, President Chandrika Kumaratunge also appointed others who could not do their job properly. Both when in government and afterwards, I told her this but she is still under the impression that she had appointed the best. Asian Tribune: Turning point of the Intelligence sector can be pointed out, precisely targeting the Head of the LTTE’s political wing, S.P. Tamilselvan, Head of the LTTE military intelligence Col. Charles (Shanmuganathan Ravishankar) killed in Pallamadu, Mannar and destroying massive "Floating Warehouses" (which carried military hardware) in the international waters … How do you see these successive missions? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:Three principal strategies worked against the LTTE. The strategy of the army adopted by General Fonseka was to fight the LTTE everywhere. It was not a fight for territory but to reduce the military strength of the LTTE. The LTTE made a mistake by pouring in its fighters and resources to challenge the advancing government forces. Once the overconfident LTTE was stretched out and weakened, the military started to dominate strategic stretches of land and close in on the LTTE leadership. The strategy of the navy was to detect and disrupt the flow of weapons and other equipment to the LTTE fighting force. The strategy adopted by Admiral Karannagoda was to go after the LTTE. Unlike any previous commander, Admiral Karannagoda guided his fleet to go out to the international waters and destroy LTTE ships supplying the killing machine in Sri Lanka. In addition to destroying high value targets, the strategy of the air force was to work closely and support the army and the navy to do their job effectively and efficiently. Asian Tribune: Sri Lanka police is playing a major role behind the scene specially stabilizing security in Colombo and suburbs. Arresting and interrogating suspects, acquiring vital information

etc., what is your comment? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:Securing the capital city, the nerve centre of any country, is crucial. Prabhakaran understood the importance of targeting the economic hub and the political centre. Whenever Colombo suffered an attack, it nearly paralyzed the nation. The LTTE successfully penetrated Colombo and maintained between 200-400 spies, operatives and logisticians at any given time. By bombing civilian targets, the LTTE destroyed not only the lives but the dreams of Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese. They also killed some of Sri Lanka's best and brightest including the hardworking President Premadasa, the outstanding foreign minister Lakshman Kadiragamar, parliamentarian and a legal scholar Neelan Thirchelvam, and a respected counter terrorism specialist Colonel Thuwan Nizam Muthalif. As defense secretary, Gotabhaya Rajapaksa forced the different security and intelligence agencies to work together. The recent success to securing Colombo is because the different agencies have started to work collaboratively. Although the threat to Colombo persists, the police and the intelligence services have been able to secure Colombo to a large extent. The CID, TID and other specialist investigative and intelligence agencies have played a crucial role in dismantling the LTTE infrastructure in the south. Operating under constant threat the leaders and staff of these agencies risked their lives to collect intelligence and arrest LTTE spies, logisticians and operatives. As the true guardians of security of Sri Lanka, these men relentlessly targeted LTTE's vast support infrastructure that provided recruits, funds, supplies, safe houses, transportation and other material. This infrastructure recruited from the criminal world and even well to do Sinhalese to work for the LTTE for commercial gain. Long after Prabhakaran has been neutralized, it is essential to secure and protect Colombo from infiltration and attack. Asian Tribune: Can you explain how exceptional Col. Tuwan Nizam Muthalif is? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:Without exception, there was no one in the Sri Lankan military, law enforcement or the intelligence establishment who knew more about the LTTE than Colonel Muthalif. He built his knowledge of the battlefield and understanding of the LTTE though sheer hard work, dedication and commitment. Highly respected by the Sri Lankan and foreign intelligence community, Colonel Muthalif understood that intelligence was the spearhead of counter terrorism. More than any other officer, he interviewed so many LTTE sympathizers, supporters, members and leaders. After engaging them in dialogue, Colonel Muthalif turned so many LTTE cadres to abandon violence and enter the societal mainstream. He educated, trained and mentored a young generation of intelligence operatives who like him functioned fearlessly. While serving in Jaffna, Batticaloa, Vauniya, and Colombo, he disrupted and dismantled more than 100 terrorist cells planning to kill, maim and injure. Considering the sustained and grave damage inflicted by Col Muthalif to the LTTE, Prabhakaran and Pottu Amman decided to assassinate him. However, the Sri Lankan government failed miserably to protect this invaluable son of Sri Lanka. At the time the LTTE assassinated Col. Muthalif in Colombo, he was commanding officer of the Military Intelligence Corps. The knowledge and understanding built of the LTTE by Col. Muthalif and his team of Tamil, Muslim and Sinhalese officers and soldiers enabled Sri Lanka to achieve this current victory. Asian Tribune: In fighting with a Terrorist outfit, new methods should be formed in order to countering them and those strategies should be unconventional if I am not mistaken. Let me ask you, innovation or setting up of the DPU (Deep Penetration Unite) and elite SF (Special Forces) how do you see their missions as a counter Terrorism analyst? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:Terrorists adapt, evolve and change to survive. When fighting terrorism, the terrorist should become the mentor. Unless government shadows the terrorist, the government cannot win. Unless government forces both in sea and land adopt LTTE technologies, tactics and techniques, the government cannot effectively interlock and engage the enemy. Understanding and adopting the modus operandi of the enemy was crucial for the government to defeat the LTTE. The navy using small boat operations at sea and the army using small team operations on land denied the LTTE the freedom to operate. In terms of expertise and experience, the Sri Lankan naval and land Special Forces units are the best in the world. Asian Tribune: Let's talk little about diplomacy, India trained the LTTE and both lost their head of states Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi to terrorism. War against terrorism has almost come to and end. Before it comes to and end, before restore peace in the areas, before resettling the internally displace civilians, India is pressing about a political solution and sometimes ask for an immediate ceasefire. Is this a prudent approach when the government engages in a decisive moment? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:India has a huge responsibility to share for spawning and sustaining the Sri Lankan conflict. Although India accuses Pakistan of supporting terrorism, India is guilty of state sponsorship of terrorism in Sri Lanka. The first batch of Tamil Tigers was trained in Establishment 22 in Chakrata, north of Dehra Dun, India's principal military training facility in Uttara Pradesh. The second batch of Tamil Tigers was trained in Himachal Pradesh. The training was conducted by serving instructors of the Indian government. The remaining seven batches including the batch that included Tenmuli Rajaratnam alias Dhanu who killed Rajiv Gandhi was trained in Tamil Nadu. In addition, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), India's foreign intelligence service provided specialist training in another number of states including underwater demolition training in Vishkhapattnam. India's covert role is meticulously documented in "Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Role of India's Intelligence Agencies." If India has any sense of shame and guilt, New Delhi must resolve its domestic issues and not get involved in Sri Lanka again. Sri Lanka must educate India using its foreign service, information ministry and its politicians. Sri Lanka must post its most able Tamil speaking diplomat to Madras and invest substantially to bring all the important Tamil Nadu politicians to Sri Lanka. This should include politicians in the opposition including those corrupt and poorly educated politicians who are in the payroll of the LTTE. Many Tamil Nadu politicians believe that the Sri Lankan government is engaged in atrocities similar to what the Indian military committed in Kashmir or the northeast. Asian Tribune: The LTTE's international chief procurement man Selvarasa Padmanadan alias Kumaran Padmanadan (KP) was listed wanted by the Interpol. But he is freely traveling, isn't he? Then what is the role of the Interpol? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:To quote a LTTE leader in the U.K. that fought with KP, "It is KP that made everything possible." Until KP is alive, LTTE will remain a formidable threat and Sri Lanka will be under threat. For crimes, KP should be arrested and tried. Sri Lanka must not rely on Interpol to arrest KP. Working with the Thai authorities, Sri Lanka must initiate its own operation. More than ever before arresting KP has become a national security priority. The principal function of the foreign service of Sri Lanka should be to advance its national security and foreign policy goals.

The Sri Lankan foreign minister and the head of the Sri Lankan intelligence service must visit Thailand and remain in Bangkok until KP is arrested and handed over to Sri Lanka. If this cannot be accomplished in the next few weeks, government should request for US assistance and the US has significant influence over the Thai military. KP has cultivated Thais ranging from politicians to military generals and businessman. Asian Tribune: Did Tsunami became a blessing for them, in order to get many foreign expertise to assist their arms manufacturing plants? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna: As a group with a presence on the coast, when the Tsunami hit, the. LTTE lost a few hundred cadres and lost a dozen attack craft. Nonetheless, the LTTE benefited greatly from the Tsunami funds. Unfortunately, the Western nations from Norway to Canada and Australia were taken for a ride. These well meaning nationals and their nations contributed appreciably to the LTTE. With the help of funds raised in these countries, the LTTE improved the efficacy of its killing machine. Through the Tamil Rehabilitation organization, the LTTE channeled millions of dollars to modernize the LTTE land, air and maritime forces. Asian Tribune: Sri Lankan internal separatist conflict and it's bloodshed over innocent civilians Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims has been a very "lucrative business" to the NGO's, and their affiliated Agents in Colombo, they wanted terrorism to be prevailed, what is your comment? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:It is true that the Sri Lankan conflict produced a group of entrepreneurs whose heart is not in ending the conflict. But it is a very small group and they must not be confused with the larger NGO community in Colombo that has rendered yeoman service. They must now look towards the future of Sri Lanka especially how they can contribute in a post-Prabhakaran scenario to develop Sri Lanka into a first world country. We have all the indicators present in a first world country from literacy to resources. With international governmental and non governmental funding, we must create employment, economic opportunities, and build a state of the art utilities infrastructure in the northeast. We must bring the economic status of the northeast to the standard of the southwest. We must repeat the Malaysian success and build roads linking the northeast to the rest of the country. We must build a superhighway linking the north and the south. Without working with all the partners, Sri Lanka will fail to make the country a first world nation. Asian Tribune: Most of the International organizations including the UN are creating a civilian catastrophe in order to avoid the capture of the LTTE leadership. How a Ceasefire will lead to release civilians as they have been keeping them hostage by the LTTE? The Sri Lankan government should move fast to kill or capture the LTTE leadership. The operation to capture or kill Prabhakaran, a proclaimed offender in Rajiv Gandhi murder, is a matter for the Sri Lankan state. Like Hitlar, Pol Pot, and Osama Bin Laden, Prabhakaran is a mass murderer. Neither the UN nor Norway has a say in it. Both the UN and Norway has failed miserably in mediating or facilitating the Sri Lankan conflict. In many ways, their failure to understand the conflict has created a potential humanitarian crisis. As the LTTE will try to use its network overseas to revive the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the government needs to reach out to the international community. There should be recognition that the LTTE is an international terrorist group. Although the LTTE kills in Sri Lanka, its network is global. As such, the foreign ministry of Sri Lanka has a major responsibility to formally and informally educate foreign governments, international organizations and others that have an international voice. After Minister Kadiragamar was assassinated, the Sri Lankan Foreign Service has failed to play the required role to keep world leaders, opinion makers, the diplomatic missions, international bodies, and the foreign media updated. Like the military, the foreign ministry should be proactive - before the threat develops, it must preemptively neutralize it. It is very clear that Prabhakaran has engineered a humanitarian crisis to save himself and the LTTE. It is also clear that the LTTE is behind all the demonstrations from Canada to London to Sydney. However, only a few heads of missions and staff in the Foreign Service are capable of communicating this message effectively to foreign governments and other interested parties. They require training and education. Towards this, a proper Foreign Service school and a well staffed and resourced counter terrorism division should be established. Furthermore, an ambassador for counter terrorism should be appointed. Asian Tribune: Did Karuna's (Ex-Eastern rebel commander) split become a blow to them? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna: The LTTE could never have been defeated if not for Karuna's decision to leave the LTTE. The government should encourage more Tamils in the LTTE to defect. As LTTE is a conscript and not a volunteer group any longer, government should offer an amnesty to LTTE leaders and members. Except for Prahakaran, Pottu Amman and others who have committed serious crimes, every member of the LTTE should be entitled for an amnesty. Karuna's decision to leave the LTTE was very timely. Prabhakaran depended so much on the East for recruits and resources. With Karuna realizing that Prabhakaran was not fighting for the Tamils but for himself and his group, Karuna decided to bid farewell to the LTTE. Both Karuna and his men tasted freedom during the talks and he never wanted to return to the jungles permanently. Although the intelligence community and the military worked well with Karuna, Ranil Wickramasinghe was responsible for opening the eyes of Karuna. Karuna and leaders like him can play a crucial role in developing a rehabilitation program for former combatants. A leader like Karuna, Pilliyan and Douglas Devanda can kill the avowed vision of Prabhakaran to create an independent Tamil state. Long after Prabhakaran, both in Sri Lanka and overseas, a segment of the Tamils will still believe in an independent Tamil homeland. These mainstream Tamil leaders can politically, socially and economically play a role to empower the Tamils, and integrate them to the rest of the country, and make them think and act like Sri Lankans. Asian Tribune: What will be the future of the LTTE? What Tamil Diaspora will do? Still they can finance them, can't they? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna: If the current degree of pressure can be maintain in the next one and a half to two years, the LTTE can be dismantled completely. The LTTE international network will survive for about a year after the LTTE domestic network has been crippled. With the seizure of LTTE computers in Vishwamadu, the government is in possession of names and details of those who work and support the LTTE network overseas. Working with foreign governments, Sri Lanka should help foreign governments to investigate and prosecute those who support the LTTE. Belatedly, both the Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils are realizing that Prabhakaran has inflicted untold pain and suffering on an entire generation of Tamils. As predicted by Thangathurai , the leader of the original TELO, if Prabhakaran assumes leadership of the Tamil national movement, Prabhakaran would sacrifice the entire Tamil community. Sending Tamils to their death in the guise of saving the Tamil community by Prabhakaran has been prevented. Leaders such as Minister Douglas Devananda, Minister Karuna, and other Tamil

leaders have stepped forward to formally and informally explain the ruthlessness and cruelty of Prabhakaran. For sustained peace, it is paramount for the government to invest even more in shaping public opinion against violence. Without public support no insurgency can be won. After the LTTE assassinated Rajiv Gandhi, Prabhakaran miscalculated the public opinion of the Tamils. The Tamils are a smart community of people. They knew that the LTTE and Prabhakaran could never create an independent Tamil state. A segment of the Tamil community that hitherto supported the LTTE has today abandoned Prabhakaran. They perceive Prabhakaran as a looser and the LTTE as an unwise investment. However, there is a group of Tamils that live overseas that have a romantic notion of the LTTE and of Tamil Eelam. They have been exposed to high doses of terrorist and extremist propaganda, some false and others partly true. Living in foreign countries make a segment of the Diaspora should hark back and look at the LTTE as if it is going to solve all their problems. Asian Tribune: April 05th is a historical day in Sri Lanka as the rise of JVP insurgency which subsequently led to a debacle, and last April 05th the LTTE encountered their major debacle at east of Puthukudirippu loosing their most senior commanders together with 520 cadres in a single incident, how do you see this, are they are really weak? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna: In the recent offensive operations by the LTTE as well in LTTE counter attacks, the LTTE has suffered not only middle level leaders but commanders with long battle experience. They include Theepan, LTTE Battle Commander, Vidusha, Commander of women’s wing and Dugha, Deputy Commander of the women's wing and Gaddafi, Commander of the Black Tigers and the bodyguard unit. These developments demonstrate that the LTTE is desperate for quality leaders to lead its fighters in battle. With the LTTE suffering heavy fatalities and casualties, most of the fighters are newly minted. These inexperienced and poorly motivated fighters are no match for a battle hardened and well equipped Sri Lankan military. The LTTE is forcibly recruiting from a population that is no longer willing to support the LTTE. With no experienced commanders to lead, LTTE's ability to resist will diminish day by day leading to a military defeat of the LTTE. In his attempt to survive, Prabhakaran ordered the LTTE to take a 100,000 civilians hostage. Today, pockets of civilians are resisting and revolting against the LTTE. This is despite the LTTE has brutally suppressed any expression by the civilians. The LTTE has also shot dead and detained civilians speaking out against the LTTE. The desire to survive from the LTTE has made the civilians attempt to escape against LTTE instructions that they will be shot. When the LTTE attempted to prevent civilians fleeing, some brave civilians grabbed the weapons from the LTTE members and fled. Many LTTE members did not resist the civilians as they are demoralized. As there are many LTTE members that are keen to desert, it is essential for government to constantly announce its package to any LTTE member abandoning the LTTE. (a) Safety and security for the cadre and the family (b) A job and (c) An amnesty. Asian Tribune: Finally, let me ask you. A war against Terrorism can not be fought for the forces itself, if there's no political leadership behind them. President Mahinda Rajapaksa is the commander-in-chief and Mr. Gotabhaya Rajapaksa is the secretary of Defense, public security law and Order. How do you see their leadership? Prof. Rohan Gunaratna:The best appointment Mahinda Rajapaksa made as President was to appoint his own brother Gotabhaya Rajapaksa as Defense Secretary. I am against appointing relatives and friends but in this case, Gotabhaya was the ideal man for the job. I have known Gotabhaya since he was a young Colonel in the frontline fighting against the LTTE. Gotabhaya has the vision and the mission. It is not the president but the defense secretary that is the number one target of the LTTE. He knows that one day he will be eliminated by the LTTE: yet, he is uncompromising in his service to his country and to his people. While his brother Gotabhaya Rajapaksa is focusing on securing Sri Lanka, the President has three major challenges. First, he must develop a master plan to economically develop the country especially the northeast. As the first President of a country free of terrorism, President Rajapaksa, should focus on developing Sri Lanka into a first world country. To inject new life to the country, he must tap into Sri Lanka's most untapped resource - the expatriate community. The roads in Colombo are third rate worse than a very poor country in Africa. The airport needs to be upgraded and a pianist to welcome the arrivals. The amazing wildlife sanctuaries should charge both locals and foreigners a market rate. Second, he must institute good governance. He must prosecute his corrupt and sack his incompetent ministers and civil servants immediately. Third, he must make the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghurs think and act Sri Lankan. Sri Lanka belongs to all its inhabitants. If a minority of the misguided Sinhalese claim that Sri Lanka belongs to the Sinhalese, then the Tamils will claim the north and Muslims the east. As the majority, the Sinhalese must be more generous to its minorities. Today, any majority community will be respected by the way it treats its minorities. Misguided nationalists both Sinhalese and Tamils have nearly destroyed this country. Religion, language and caste are very private and they must never be used to build political strength. We all have an obligation to build the broken bridges between the different communities. We must treat all communities the same way. We must be very careful of ethnic and religious entrepreneurs that seek to divide people on the basis of their ethnicity or faith. They are scoundrels that must be rehabilitated. If the government gives way to the ultra Sinhala nationalists, who advocate the Tamils as second class citizens, we will never have a united Sri Lanka. The same way, the Rajapaksa government has defeated the armed Tamil nationalists, Mahinda Rajapaksa has to use his Sinhala credentials to contain ultra Sinhala nationalism and build a truly united Sri Lanka. Building a united Sri Lanka where every ethnic and religious community can live in harmony should become his legacy. Otherwise, a segment of Tamils will cling on to the legacy of Prabhakaran. Within his term of office, the President should build a visionary plan and work towards making Sri Lanka the most developed country in South Asia. - Asian Tribune – Courtesy: Asiantribune.com