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## Get your humanitarian paws off my country

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By Dayan Jayatilaka (Geneva, Sri Lanka Guardian) It is heartening that the Tamil Tigers have retained a sense of humor under extreme pressure. It is a lesson to us all. The Tigers have declared a unilateral cease-fire and promised not to engage in any offensive military operations. The joke is in two parts. Firstly, they are in no shape to engage in any offensive military operations. In the second place these clowns have pulled this on us and the IPKF on more occasions than I can recall. The first cease-fire in 1985 saw the Tigers under Kittu ringing Sri Lankan army camps in Jaffna with landmines. The IPKF's stop-go campaign -- its rhythm and inconstancy influenced by Tamil Nadu and electoral considerations -- enabled Prabhakaran to survive, escape and turn the tables on them, culminating in the suicide bomb murder of Rajiv Gandhi on Tamil Nadu soil in 1991.

Let's be crystal clear on this. The only deal that must be on the table is "hands up or feet first". The Tigers, starting with the leadership must surrender themselves and their weapons to the Sri Lankan armed forces, not some Third Force which it can manipulate through the Diaspora. There must be NO amnesty for the leadership, which has committed war crimes.

Anyone anywhere who cares for the Tamil civilians trapped in the no fire zone should recognize that over a hundred thousand civilians came through to safety precisely during a brilliantly surgical military operation, and NOT a humanitarian pause or cease-fire. It was not the product or by product of an international appeal. It was the direct product of the actions of the Sri Lankan army, and in particular, the sacrifices made by the Special Forces and Commandos. None of those who are urging from afar, a humanitarian pause/cease-fire, amnesty and talks with the Tigers, are going to live in Sri Lanka when the suicide bombers strike again, the parcel bombs go off in shops and at bus stops, promising leaders are assassinated, and dead and disabled soldiers start coming back to our villages when the war resumes as it will if we stop operations now and the Tigers survive.

What awaits us if operations are halted before the Tigers are decisively defeated? Anita Pratap, the journalist who has known Prabhakaran from before July 83 and has had access to him virtually on demand since that time, let us know a few days back, in an article for the upcoming months issue of The Week. In a special Report for the May 3rd 2009 edition, entitled Crouching Tiger, she exudes confidence that "Prabhakaran still has enough grit to continue the fight". Here is her scenario:

"Prabhakaran has lost wars before. He had created a de facto Tamil Eelam with its own army, police, courts and taxation system not once, but several times in the past-only to have it all smashed and wiped out. And he had to start all over again. At 54, Prabhakaran still has enough grit to start again and continue for another 20 years.

In the meantime, he will be watching the Indian elections closely to see which dispensation takes charge in New Delhi. He will be watching to see if there is a popular upsurge of support in Tamil Nadu for the plight of Tamils across the Palk Strait. He will be watching the disastrous impact of war on Sri Lanka's economy. He will be watching Hillary Clinton who said there should be a 'nuanced' approach to dealing with terrorism. He will be watching President Barack Obama who rightly analyzed that conflicts stem from our perception of 'the other'.

Today, Prabhakaran's situation looks dire. But the wheels of fortune are not static. Things change. America has changed. The world is changing. As new winds blow away many certitudes of the recent past, new opportunities, alignments and paradigms take their place on the world stage. And they will inexorably weave their impact in remote corners of faraway Sri Lanka... (Anita Pratap, The Week, May 3, 2009) Then there is the far more scholarly and analytical assessment of Shyam Tekwani, no sympathizer of Prabhakaran. A photojournalist earlier, Tekwani has been studying the Sri Lankan conflict since 1983 and has met the LTTE leadership on several occasions on battlefields and elsewhere. Currently he is an Associate Professor in NTU, Singapore, teaching Journalism and International Relations. In the Hindustan Times, he offers this prognosis:

"A strategic withdrawal to live to fight another day and ensure he [Prabhakaran] is not relegated to a footnote in the history books has guaranteed his endurance and longevity.

The war, it would seem, is over. Not for the LTTE. ... He has once again successfully rallied the international community behind his cause. The global outcry in support of the remaining 50,000 civilians cornered in the last strip of the battle zone and the increasingly insistent calls for an immediate cease-fire play perfectly well into his plans to save what is left of his dream and the group.

The dream of Eelam has evidently become an even more distant fantasy -- but his unswerving loyalty to it will ensure the fight will continue. Having lost the support of over 100,000 Tamils who challenged his diktat and abandoned him to flee for the safety of the army camps, his hope will now reside largely with the Tamil Diaspora. The 800,000 Diaspora, who he specifically appealed to in his Hero's Day address when he launched the "Final War" in 2006, has been the group's lifeline. Prabhakaran has mobilized the Diaspora like very few other insurgent groups ever have. Providing the mainstay of his support (funds, networks, lobbyists) the Diaspora has unwaveringly stood by him and kept up the sustained pressure for the Eelam cause alive across the capitals of the world.

It has become a truism that the only way out is a political solution, not military. Having thrust a very local issue into the international limelight, Prabhakaran has consistently reneged every opportunity to seek a political solution. Every attempt at one -- that did not mention Eelam - during the last two decades was doomed to failure. A lasting solution is extremely unlikely with him heading the group. As long as he endures, so will his cause. Therefore, any talk of a lost cause and an endgame in Sri Lanka would be premature.

The military victory could well become another pause in the history of the conflict if the same degree of effort is not invested by the Rajapaksa government to set right the wrongs of previous administrations. And the international

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community would need to ensure it sustains its campaign against groups branded as terrorists.

None of which would amount to much if Prabhakaran continues to be out there, somewhere.&rdquo; (Shyam Tekwani, &lsquo;Don&rsquo;t Write the Tigers Obit Yet&rsquo;, Hindustan Times, April 25, 2009)

We must take these scenarios with the utmost seriousness. It is always wiser to prepare for the worst case scenario. This also provides the best argument why Prabhakaran must not be given the time and space to escape and the operations must go on uninterrupted until the Tiger leadership is eradicated. Some months ago I quoted and commended the words of General Colin Powell during the Gulf War: &ldquo;first we cut it off, then we kill it.&rdquo; We have cut it off. Now we must kill it.

As Ronald Reagan, no favorite of mine, once said &ldquo;the problem with playing your last card is that once you&rsquo;ve played it, you no longer have it&rdquo;. The so-called international community played its last card in 1987 when a coercive external intrusion, catalyzed at least partly by sub-regional electoral compulsions (MG Ramachandran &ldquo;air dashing&rdquo;, as it used to be called, to prevent &ldquo;that boy&rdquo; Prabhakaran from being killed). It is not that other forces in other, more impressive combinations are incapable of doing a larger version of the same thing. The point however, is that the Sri Lankan state and citizens have been through this before and will not be deterred this time around, from defeating the secessionist-terrorist enemy, reclaiming sovereignty and restoring territorial unity. Sri Lanka&rsquo;s spirit this time around is one that will resist intervention &ldquo;by whatever means necessary&rdquo; as Brother Malcolm X used to say. There is a gross asymmetry of tangible material strengths, against Sri Lanka, but as for the intangibles, Sri Lanka has the advantage. Sri Lankans have demonstrated their willingness to fight and die in pursuit of their cause. How many others are willing to do the same in order to prevent us, and for how long and at what financial cost will they be willing to do so? No other country, institution or leader will share our fate. Therefore we alone must shape that fate, decide our own destiny. This is our country, our borders, our land, our peoples, our future. No one must be allowed to dictate to us or pressurize us. We must go ahead and do what we have to do to end our 30 years war in a manner that it cannot be easily re-started. This means eliminating the Tigers and following up a decisive victory with a generous and wise humanitarian and political policy.

(These are the strictly personal views of the author). Courtesy: [srilankagaurdian.org](http://srilankagaurdian.org)