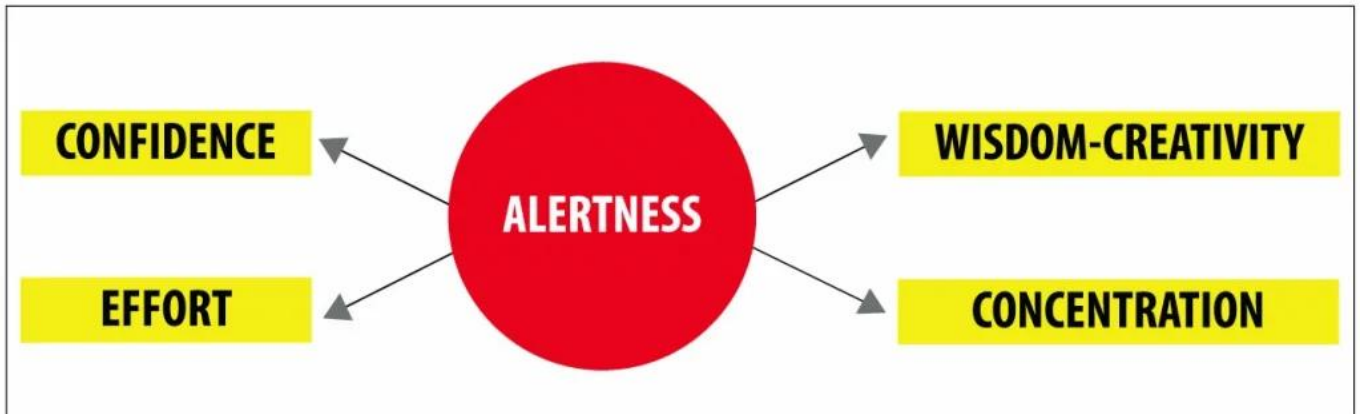


The War Against Terror A Postscript

Posted on



This is the translation of an article that appeared on ‘Anandaviri Harasara’ commemorative issue | By Deepal Sooriyaarachchi

In 2002, delivering the Henry Steel Olcott lecture, Senior Lawyer Gomin Dayasiri made the following observations using his experiences during the Geneva Peace Talks of which he was also a partner.

- 1 LTTE was not acting bona fide in taking part in the peace talks;
- 2 It is a myth that the LTTE cannot be defeated militarily; and
- 3 Even within the current legal and administrative framework, aspirations of the Tamil speaking community can be achieved.

Those of us who listened to that lecture were convinced that the Government of Sri Lanka had the confidence that the LTTE can be militarily defeated and what followed from the Marvil Aru incident up to May 19, 2009, the day on which Prabhakaran was destroyed was undoubtedly a crucial period in the military history of Sri Lanka. The success of the Humanitarian Operations not only united this country, it also ensured Sri Lanka’s territorial integrity after many years.

The aim and objective of this short paper is to present varying perspectives on the lessons that can be carried on to the future from this victorious mission. The points that follow are discussed solely based on the views expressed by various leaders at different points of time through media.

Our Security Forces, other countries that are battling with terrorism as well as Public Service and Business Management can learn a lot by compiling, analysing and meticulously studying the findings made at the battlefield during the course of the Humanitarian Operations. Our sincere hope is that a new culture of such retrospective reporting would eventually commence sooner than later.

There was a glaring difference between the approach in which the anti LTTE measures were carried out in the past two and a half decades and how it was done during the last three years. There are some strong characteristics of the approach, namely.

The President as the Head of State and the Commander of the Armed Forces strongly believed that the LTTE Terrorism could be defeated and that it should be done through military measures. The President took this stand after making bona fide attempts to enter into peace talks with the LTTE and realising the futility of those efforts.

The President appointed his brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa as the Defence Secretary who had been a full time Armed Forces personnel and a veteran officer of the Army. It is a well-known fact that the President trusted the capabilities of the Defence Secretary as well as his deep loyalty towards the President.

All the Armed Forces Commanders have been in the forefront of the battle in their respective Armed Forces and they have been involved in countering the LTTE from its inception. The trust that is a natural corollary based on the relationship between the President and the Defence Secretary resulted in the complete humanitarian mission being carried out without any unnecessary political interferences. In order to elaborate the importance of the points mentioned above, it is important to examine the views expressed by Suntzü, a Chinese military expert who lived about

2,000 years ago.

“He (the General) who is capable and does not have to contend with interference by the ruler will win.” (Line 3.49 of Chapter 3 on Strategic Attacks)

Suntzu’s Art of War is used as reference material in almost all military academies. In the present day, his philosophy is used in Business Management as well. It is indeed very inter-esting to compare some of his teachings with the current War victory in Sri Lanka.

“When orders are regularly enforced, it is because of the mutual trust and confidence between the commander and his men”. (Line 9.77 of Chapter 9 on Movement and Deploy-ment of Troops)

It is not difficult to realise that this principle is as important as not having any political inter-ferences. The brotherly trust and faith in each other between the President and the Defence Secretary was a great strength for the Commanders. Therefore, the ability to make the neces-sary decisions must have been vested in the Defence Secretary himself. If not for this trust, it becomes difficult for a Commander to get the approval of the President when making decisions that are of tactical importance and those decisions that have to be made immediately. This is evident in the information published in the reports on Sri Lankan war history.

Further, the information revealed by the Defence Secretary after the victory of the war shows the confidence that he had on the Commanders of the three Armed Forces, the Inspector General of Police and the Director General of the Civil Defence Force. It is this principle that is demonstrated when the Commander of the Army appointed Ground Commanders whom he trusted irrespective of the seniority of the officers.

“It is also very important to realise that in the end, it is the man at the grassroots level who matters to win the war for us. It is the lowest level soldier who carries the weapon and goes and faces the bullet. It is he who goes in front and destroys the enemy and takes over a bunker or overcomes an obstacle. They go in the front. They are the people who have suffered the most in this whole campaign.”

- Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Defence Secretary, Business Today, June 2009, businessstoday.lk

The guiding principle that was followed by the Defence Secretary was that the most important person is the soldier who is behind the weapon. He was personally interested in the welfare of soldiers and it resulted in boosting the morale of the soldiers and also increased the confidence and faith of the soldiers about his leadership. The Defence Secretary taking a personal initiative and interest in providing the necessary body armour, helmets etc prior to commencing the military operations and also looking after the families of the soldiers who were injured or killed in action must have built mutual confidence between the soldiers and the military command.

This chain of mutual trust has been strengthened by the fact the ground leaders were aware of the fact that they would not let each other down and by the fact that all of them worked together as one team.

According to Sun Tzu, a leader should not have the following weaknesses – recklessness, cowardice, a quick temper, sensitivity to honour and being overly compassionate.

“If he is overly compassionate to the people, he can be disturbed and harassed”.
(Line 8.29 of Chapter 8 on Variations and Adaptability)

The main tactic of the LTTE was to attack the important places in the South where the common people in the South would feel its impact and pressurize the leadership through such bloodshed. Previously, the Southern leadership could not withstand this pressure. However, the Defence Secretary pointed out that understanding the tactics of the enemy enabled the President to successfully face this challenge.

If not for this extraordinary dedication and determination, the current leadership would have also repeated the mistake that was made over and over in the past and this unfortunate armed conflict would have continued despite the killings of innocent people in Kebithigollewa and closing down leading schools in Colombo for the fear of our children being attacked by the LTTE.

As the ancient Chinese proverb goes, “If one does not forget the events of the past, they can become valuable lessons for future situations.” The LTTE strengthened themselves by dragging each and every succeeding Sri Lankan government for peace talks while they reached the crucial places in the South and carried out attacks in places where it would most affect the people of the South. The current leadership carefully examined these previous activities of the LTTE and strengthened the military capability of the Armed Forces and prepared themselves. It was considerably successful in preventing attacks on political leaders in the South and attacks on economic and sensitive areas in the South that would affect the ordinary people.

The reports of the media alone were sufficient to indicate that the current leadership has examined the manner in which the LTTE used to operate and analysed their activities to have a good understanding of the enemy. It is evident in the very fact that the enemy or its strength was never over-estimated or underestimated; there were no predictions that the humanitarian operations would be over by a particular day. Views expressed by Sun Tzu on this are very strong.

“Thus it is said: He who knows the other side (the enemy) and knows himself will not be defeated in a hundred battles.” (Line 3.51 of Chapter 3 on Strategic Attacks)

“He who does not know the other side (the enemy) but knows himself will have an even chance of victory or defeat.” (Line 3.52 of Chapter 3 on Strategic Attacks)

“He who does not know the other side (the enemy) and himself is bound to be defeated in every battle.” (Line 3.53 of Chapter 3 on Strategic Attacks)

It is timely to compare this with Sun Tzu’s saying below:

“There are some routes and paths that must not be taken. There are some armies and troops that must not be assaulted. There are some cities that must not be attacked. There are some grounds that must not be contested.” (Lines 8.8 to 8.11 of Chapter 8 on Variations and Adaptability) Until now it was the common perception

that the LTTE could not be defeated militarily. Various defence analysts and even certain high-ranking officers of the Armed Forces subscribed to this view.

Jane's Defence Weekly website which provides views on international military tactics and strategies published a special report dated September 4, 2000 praised the tactics and strategies of the LTTE. This was only one such example for placing LTTE on a high pedestal. However, it is clear that the present military leadership had prepared their strategy after carefully analysing and understanding the nature and the capabilities as well as the weaknesses of the enemy. Increasing the number of troops, increasing military equipment and technology, improving the intelligence network and the communication network indicate that the leadership had a clear understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses of the Armed Forces.

"No matter how stubborn, resilient and determined a smaller and weaker force is, it will eventually become captive to a larger and stronger force." (Line 3.30 of Chapter 3 on Strategic Attacks)

The validity of this statement has been proven all over the world in various military campaigns and once more it proved its truth in Sri Lanka. One of the biggest challenges that the Sri Lanka Navy had to face was suicide boat attacks. However by improvising small boats that can go faster and which accommodate only about five personnel, the Navy was able to successfully destroy the sea capabilities of the enemy. This is yet another instance that proves the truth of the above principle. According to an article published in Jane's Defence Weekly on February 27, 2009, Tim Fish, a naval reporter states that other Navies around the world should also study this unconventional military tactic.

"Direct the various forces of the army as if instructing one person." (Line 11.106 of Chapter 11 on The Nine Battlegrounds)

"Once the troops are united as one body, the courageous ones will not advance forward by themselves. The cowardly ones will also not retreat by themselves." (Lines 7.44 and 7.45 of Chapter 7 on Military Manoeuvres)

Until this campaign, the military offensives against the LTTE were referred to as operations that were carried out in order to protect the 'territorial integrity' of the country or those that were done for 'Peace'. Though it is a concept that appeals to the intellect, as a communication tool the concept of "Peace" does not deliver a tangible message to the recipients of such communication. Different people can interpret the word 'Peace' in different ways. On the other hand, the members of the LTTE fought based on the simple demand "a separate state for us". They had a specific goal that they wanted to achieve; namely to have a defined territory and to fight until they were recognised as a separate sovereign state by the international community.

However, this time, the military offensive was referred to as a "humanitarian Operation". Once President Mahinda Rajapaksa who visited injured soldiers at a hospital stated that the Humanitarian Operations would continue until the very last innocent Tamil civilian was rescued from the clutches of the LTTE. He mentioned that this was a Humanitarian Operation to rescue the innocent Tamil speaking people from the LTTE and not a war against a group of people of this country.

It was often heard that the Humanitarian Operations would continue, "Until the last terrorist is destroyed" or "until Prabhakaran is captured". It conveyed a much more tangible message that was specific. This is of utmost importance in any military campaign because each and every soldier in the battlefield would know their mission, what their aim is and the end that they are fighting for.

The constant dialogue that the Defence Secretary had with the Commanders of the Armed Forces made a special contribution to the success of the Humanitarian Operations. The Defence Secretary himself and all the Commanders of the Armed Forces reiterated the same view.

"...the main problem was not putting the right man at the right place and the right time. It was all about service seniority and not about performance. We had high-ranking officers, but not all of them had the necessary commitment or proven skills... I went against the traditional thinking. I appointed junior officers who had battlefield experience to key commanding positions." - General Sarath Fonseka, Army Commander, Business Today, December 2008, businessstoday.lk

Referring to the last leg of the Humanitarian Operations as a “rescue mission of the innocent Tamil speaking people held hostage by the LTTE” was yet another successful communication strategy. All those who were involved in the Humanitarian Operations identified a definite goal and an object as a result of that.

“Thus when the date for war is decided upon, close all border exits, cancel all travel permits and disallow the movement of emissaries from other states”. (Line 11.116 of Chapter 11 on The Nine Battlegrounds)

We live in a democracy. The communication technology is advanced, as a result of this, the free flow of information is very high and widespread. In such a backdrop, it was not so easy for the military to implement ideal and most effective strategies to control the enemy. We in the civil society witnessed the challenges the security forces had to face when they wanted to conduct cordon and search operations in the Western Province, when they wanted to establish various check points, etc. Naturally these activities impinge upon the liberties of the innocent citizen. The complexity of this challenge worsened as 65% of the Tamils were living outside North and East and some of the operations had to be carried out carefully as not to get in the way of innocent law abiding civilians.

It was also a victory in itself that the government was able to ensure impartial reports to media though it was an immensely difficult task as we live in a day and age when it is possible to spread photographs, videos and such other false propaganda around the world simply by pressing a button on a mobile phone.

It was another strategy to reform the Civil Defence Force to protect the threatened villages and to protect Main Supply Routes.

Furthermore, during the entire Humanitarian Operations initiative, the Government of Sri Lanka had to face immense International pressure. Now, even after the Humanitarian Operations the pressure continues. During the whole operation, it was very important to note the sensitivity of India to this Humanitarian Operation. During the Humanitarian Operations, it was the responsibility of the Defence Secretary Gotabaya Rajapaksa and the Secretary to the President, Lalith

Weeratunga along with the Senior Advisor to the President and Member of Parliament Basil Rajapaksa to keep the Indian Government informed of the situation in Sri Lanka. The success of the manner in which they have carried out this function is evident if one looks at how India dealt with the LTTE problem in Sri Lanka in the past and the manner in which it dealt with it this time.

“...The third way is to burn the heavy military equipment and supplies of the enemy. The fourth way is to burn the armoury and warehouses of the enemy. The fifth way is to burn the transportation trains of the enemy.” (Lines 12.4 to 12.6 of Chapter 12 on Attacking with Fire)

This principle can be clearly seen throughout the operations against the LTTE. The most important aspect regarding this is the destruction of ten floating weapons warehouses of the LTTE both in the territorial waters of Sri Lanka as well as those that were far out in the high seas. The Navy Commander used statistical data to point out how crucial it was to destruct these floating warehouses in leading the Humanitarian Operations to a crucial path. The contribution of the Air Force in destroying some of the enemy warehouses should not be forgotten as they also played a crucial role.

One unique feature of this military offensive was the fact the GOSL continued to provide essential items to the people in areas that were under the LTTE control even though that most of those items were ending up in the hands of the enemy.

“He who is able to unite himself with his officers and men as one mind, spirit and purpose will win.” (Line 3.47 of Chapter 3 on Strategic Attacks)

“The advantages gained from weather are inferior to those gained from terrain, and the advantages gained from terrain are inferior to those gained from winning the harmonious support of the people” – Mencius a disciple of Confucius

One of the most important reasons why this Humanitarian Operations was successful was because the Government was able to rally the whole country around this cause. From the “Api Wenuwen Api” campaign that changed the image of the soldier, to the media reports that were brought to people from the battleground it

played an important role in gathering the support of the people. The Defence Ministry website (defence.lk) was instrumental in providing the latest news on the Humanitarian Operations to those who were within Sri Lanka as well as those who were around the world. The popularity of the website was evident from the fact that the website had as much as 34 million hits a day during the last leg of the Operations. The Defence Ministry website was also instrumental in countering the false propaganda of the LTTE that was being spread around the world. One such example is the time the LTTE circulated a photo taken at the Iraq War as if it happened in Sri Lanka. The defence website was successful in countering this false propaganda.

Earlier the people did not have access to information except for the reports of a few defence analysts. However, the daily reports from the battlefield were telecasted through many electronic media. Consequently, the people in the South were able to understand the gravity of the Operations. They were also assured that the Operations were actually taking place and that there would be an end to the fighting.

People of the South strongly believed that the Humanitarian Operations were carried on to rescue the innocent Tamil people in the North. The media exposure helped to build empathy between the civilians in the North and the South. As a result of this, people of the South considered it their moral obligation to take care of and look after the displaced Tamil people of the North. The outpouring of support from South was second only to the Tsunami support effort.

The other factor that indicates the unity of people towards this cause can be seen in the increasing number of young men who enlist themselves in the Armed Forces everyday.

“Which side (army) can execute and implement law and order more effectively? Which side (army) has more and stronger troops? Which side (army) has better-trained officers and men? Which side (army) is more enlightened in the administration of rewards and punishments?” (Lines 1.21 to 1.24 of Chapter 1 on Detailed Assessment and Planning)

It is with valid reasons that the President, the Defence Secretary and the Commanders of the Armed Forces claim that we have the most disciplined and professional Armed Force in the world.

“...we had to look for an alternative to the new scenario. The Sea Tiger boats were capable of doing 40 knots which is about 80 Km/h. We had to develop a counter strategy. Our answer was the small boat concept. Thus the Sri Lanka Navy developed a low profile small boat with superior speed, high manoeuvrability and lethal firepower similar to the weapon outfit of a Dvora fast attack craft. Squadrons of these craft were stationed in strategic locations. This small boat concept was successful in effectively countering the LTTE suicide craft threat. ”Our engineers did the necessary research and development. They took about six to eight months. They made moulds and then made larger versions of fibreglass dinghies and came up with a new and superior product which can sail in rough sea conditions. Our engineers are constantly working to improve the craft.” - Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda, Navy Commander, Business Today, February 2009, businessstoday.lk

The army demonstrated a very high degree of restraint when they were subjected to humiliations by terrorists during the CFA period when they were confined to camps. In many instances they restrained the use of heavy weapons even to their own disadvantages to protect civilians. Zero casualties was the declared goal of the Army.

Even when there were suicide attackers amongst the civilians who were coming in to the Government controlled areas and when they were committing suicide attacks and harming the Armed Forces the Security Forces kept on assisting the civilians; they kept on protecting the people who were escaping from the ruthless clutches of the LTTE.

When there are more than one hundred thousand people in an Army, certain incidents are bound to take place, but as a whole, the discipline of our Armed Forces is truly exemplary. The humanitarian qualities of our Armed Forces were aptly demonstrated when some of them offered their own meals to the old, the infirmed, pregnant mothers and children. Once the Secretary of Defence pointed out where this humane nature of these soldiers stem from when he said, “These

young men come from villages where they go to Sunday school every week and they are brought up in a culture where they go down on their knees and worship their parents". Their inner sense of discipline was developed to the stage where it could be used to successfully carry out the Humanitarian Operations because of the great leadership that guided them in the battlefield.

The armed soldier has proven himself more disciplined than some of the current day university students who take up arms and turn violent at the slightest provocation.

Another instance that manifests the discipline of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces was the manner in which the body of the LTTE leader Prabhakaran was brought. In 1989 when the J V P did not allow some dead bodies to be lifted above the knee level, the soldiers bringing the body of the LTTE leader on their shoulders show the restraint of our Armed Forces.

"Exploit the unpreparedness of the enemy. Travel by routes that he does not expect nor is concerned about. Attack where the enemy least expects." (Lines 11.32 to 11.34 of Chapter 11 on The Nine Battlegrounds)

This is the traditional principle of war. However, the Sri Lankan Security Forces went beyond this and attacked the enemy strongholds. The comments made by the Commander of the Army on the attacks carried on at places such as Malavi, Thununkai, Nachchikuda provide proof for that. The strategies used to destroy the morale of the enemy and to successfully defy their tactics will go down in military history as extraordinary strategies in terms of their creativity and imagination. The elimination of Tamilchelvam, by taking a very accurate target was one such instance when the Sri Lanka Air Force proved its mettle and the ability to go beyond traditional methods of fighting a war. Though not understood by the ordinary civilian, there have been a number of such creative and innovative war strategies used throughout the period of the Humanitarian Operations.

It is no secret that sacrifices have to be made to achieve any end. Many times the Defence Secretary as well as the Commanders of the Armed Forces have stated

that immense sacrifices were made during the Humanitarian Operations. If one were to think that sacrifice means giving up something for another, from the very soldier who has sacrificed his own life at the battlefield to the whole nation has made many sacrifices for this historic achievement.

People such as the Army Commander who considered this War the only thing in their lives and gave everything to it would always receive the gratitude of the whole nation. There are many lessons that can be learnt from this war victory.

“It has been proven now that the Air Force is fully in line with Zero Civilian Casualty Strategy. We release UV footage at times like the recent attack on Soosai’s headquarters so that it will show you exactly what we are doing. Next to the target, there was a wall and a building. Even the wall is still intact. That shows our accuracy.” - Air Marshal Roshan Goonetilleke, Air Force Commander, Business Today, March 2009, business.today.lk

“Though one should conquer a million men in battle field, yet he, indeed, is the noblest victor who has conquered himself.” - Dhammapada, Sahasra vagga 4

The final victory described here is about the victory over defilements. According to the teachings of Lord Buddha, there are five qualities that have to be developed by anyone who aims at achieving the supreme bliss of nibbana- Shraddha (Confidence), Veeriya (Effort/Determination), Sathi (Alertness/Awareness) Samadhi (Concentration) and Panna (Wisdom) as mentioned in the Anguththra Nikaya, Panchaka Nipatha. These five qualities not only help in achieving nibbana, but they also help one to be successful in life. According to the teachings of Lord Buddha, Faith and Wisdom, and Effort and Concentration must balance with each other while Sathi or Alertness should be all pervading all the time. A number of factors that contributed to the success of the Humanitarian Operations can be grasped from the diagram given above.

Confidence and Wisdom

From the very beginning, the leaders had the confidence that this war could be won. It is an important element to have confidence for any effort to be a success. However it should not be mere blind faith or confidence, it should be an informed decision that is taken after carefully analysing one’s own strengths as well as

weaknesses. The ability to work creatively arises only when there is confidence to work with an open mind.

Effort and Focus

When there is only effort and ambition, it can result in taking irrational decisions or giving up the effort halfway before results can be achieved or the end is met. It is important to have ambition and effort to go forward amidst the hurdles on the way, but it is equally important to move forward according to a strategy. This balance was clearly demonstrated when the Armed Forces rescued thousands of innocent civilians from the clutches of the LTTE amidst their shelling which caused large scale damages to the Security Forces. Even then amidst LTTE shelling the Armed Forces did not lose their balance and worked with unwavering ambition to rescue even the very last innocent Tamil speaking civilian.

“We expanded the existing system and we created several other intelligence agencies and came up with a special intelligence branch. Then we created the Directorate of Military Intelligence. We also had the Military Intelligence System and they were sharing intelligence among the Armed Forces and we share our intelligence with them. We also gave them special training on collection of intelligence and they produced results and we reviewed the progress of these bodies on a weekly and even a daily basis...Even now, we are meeting weekly, sometimes more than once a week.” - Jayantha Wickremaratne, Inspector General of Police, Business Today, April 2009, business.today.lk

Alertness

Alertness means the awareness that the above four forces are constantly at work and taking measures to maintain their balance as well as keeping track of everything that is going on and understanding what is taking place around you.

It was mentioned that during the Humanitarian Operations, the Intelligence Networks shared the information gathered through various technologies such as the UAVs etc amongst the Armed Forces, the Intelligence Network and everyone involved in the Operations when it was necessary. All the Security Forces worked together as one team to reach one goal.

Furthermore, they were always aware of the activities of the enemy and countered the terrorist. One apt example for this is the manner in which the suspect of the Dehiwala railway bomb incident was apprehended at a checkpoint in Vavuniya. However, looking at the operation as a whole it was “alertness” of everyone involved that resulted in the success of the operations. It is really a state of mind that facilitates awareness and sensitivity to changes that are taking place around you. This is analogous to the control panel of a machine or providing information to the management of an institution. Keeping abreast with the information and being updated is important to make the correct decisions. Making correct decisions is a natural corollary of awareness and alertness.

“The War is won but peace is not. The great powers, united in fighting, are now divided over the peace settlements.” This was stated by Albert Einstein during the fifth Nobel Commemoration speech on December 10, 1945.

It can be seen that even in Sri Lanka, a similar situation is arising. For the past thirty years the blood of our people drenched the Sri Lankan soil. Our mothers, fathers and our children laid down their lives, and the pain that was caused was the same, irrespective of any difference, irrespective of the languages that we speak.

Post 1948, after British rule there were a number of significant uprisings in Sri Lanka; the 1971 revolt, 1989 uprising, the Black July in 1983 and the Tamil Eelam war that had started by 1983. Except for the Black July in 1983, all the other uprisings were armed struggles against democratically elected governments. As a result of these various incidents, Sri Lanka lost at least three hundred thousand people, most of whom were able young men; a large number was disabled; many more have left the shores of the country and all these have caused a considerable setback in the economic development of the country.

“The Civil Defence Force (CDF) was earlier known as the Home Guard Force. It was established to protect the ‘Threatened Villages’...After February 2006, when the terrorist attacks on innocents resumed, the Secretary of Defence, Gotabaya Rajapaksa recommended to the President that the Home Guard Force should be reorganised, restructured with better training and deployed for the protection of the threatened villages as an independent force under the Ministry of Defence... I am proud to say that today all the threatened villages in the island are protected by the CDF...” - Rear Admiral Sarath Weerasekara, Director General- Civil Defence Force, Business Today, May 2009, businesstoday.lk

It is truly a paradox as to how people who are not even willing to kill a stray dog, and people who pray for everyone's wellbeing everyday in their prayers could take arms and fight each other for three long decades. The time has come to stop and consider whether this war was started because the people in this country wanted it or if it was continued because we wanted to, since it was other countries that reaped the gains and socio-economic benefits out of the war that lasted for three long decades.

The time has come to lay the foundation to a society that is equal and egalitarian, a society that finds solutions to their problems through negotiations and mutual understanding and not by taking up arms against each other.

"You can't solve a problem with the same mind that created it" -Albert Einstein

This is a very important saying. The three-decade long conflict was a creation of the older generation, but those who suffered as a result of the short-sighted actions of the previous generations is today's younger generation. However, most of those who have come forward to find a solution to the current problem have also been those of that generation which is responsible for these historic mistakes. It is crucial that the measures taken to prevent this kind of incidents from happening again should ensure that the future generations are able to fulfil their dreams and visions of a better Sri Lanka. The President's address in Parliament on 19th May provided a new paradigm shift. There he stated:

"We have removed the word minorities from our vocabulary three years ago. No longer are the Tamils, Muslims, Burghers, Malays and any other minorities. There are only two peoples in this country. One is the people that love this country. The other comprises the small groups that have no love for the land of their birth. Those who do not love the country are now a lesser group."

The President's words, "we have removed the word minorities", allow all people of this country to be equal. Most of the dividing factors that divide people are factors that are adopted after birth. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that everyone is born equal with equal rights and equal responsibilities towards each other.

Therefore, the new paradigm proposed by the President poses a new challenge to even those who claim to be minorities.

I would like to propose two measurements to determine the success of the new Sri Lanka that is built on the basis of this new paradigm.

Any child in new Sri Lanka should be able to dream of becoming the first citizen of this country and he should have equal rights and an equal ability to pursue that goal. Tomorrow, if I am to be born in a Tamil or a Muslim family, the solution that we propose today has to be fair and just to me.

In order to come up with such a solution it has to be reached keeping in mind the needs of the future generations as well as equality, fairness and justice. In reaching such a lofty goal while paying attention to economic and political issues, it is even more important that we take a holistic view in the sphere of education as well. At the end, it is the education process that conditions the nation to adopt changes and thrive to succeed.