

The Rise — Petition to Gun, 1972–1987

The structural-failure chain that produced an armed Tamil response: 1948 Citizenship Act -> 1956 Sinhala Only -> 1958/1977 pogroms -> 1972 Constitution -> 1972 standardisation -> 1976 Vaddukoddai -> 1981 Jaffna Library -> 1983 Black July -> 1987 Indo-Lanka Accord.

Two truths held together. The grievances were real, statutory and cumulative. And the organisations that arose in response committed serious wrongs from very early on — child recruitment, intra-Tamil killing, suppression of dissent — that cannot be erased by the justice of the original cause. This dossier holds both at once.

§1 Architecture of exclusion, 1948–1971

Citizenship Act 1948 stripped roughly a million Up-country (Malaiyaha) Tamils of citizenship by statute (Verite Research 2019). The Official Language Act 1956 — 'Sinhala Only' — was followed within forty-eight hours by the first post-independence anti-Tamil pogrom (DeVotta 2004). The B-C Pact 1957 and D-C Pact 1965 were both signed and both unilaterally abrogated under Sinhala-Buddhist mobilisation (Tambiah 1986; Wilson 1988).

§2 Constitutional foreclosure 1972–1976

The 1972 Republican Constitution abolished s.29(2) of the Soulbury Constitution — the minority-rights safeguard — and elevated Buddhism to constitutional primacy. The 1972–73 university standardisation policy collapsed Tamil university entry within a single cohort (DeVotta UNU-WIDER 2022; Stokke 2006). On 14 May 1976 the TULF adopted the Vaddukoddai Resolution and won the largest opposition bloc on that mandate in 1977.

§3 Pogroms 1977–1983

1977 pogrom across the south. 31 May 1981 — burning of the Jaffna Public Library, ~97,000 manuscripts and irreplaceable ola-leaves lost under organised paramilitary action (ICJ 1983; Tambiah 1986). Black July 1983 — voter rolls used to target Tamil homes in Colombo, Welikade Prison massacres of Tamil detainees, ~150,000 refugees (UN PoE 2011; ICG 2006).

§4 The exhaustion thesis

Between 1947 and 1976 the Tamil parliamentary leadership pursued every available constitutional avenue: federal proposals, pacts, satyagrahas. Each was answered by escalation. The PTA 1979 became the institutional baseline (Amnesty; Wilson 1988). The Sixth Amendment 1983 expelled the Tamil mandate-holders from Parliament outright.

§5 Militant landscape — plural and lethally competitive from the start

LTTE / TELO / PLOTE / EPRLF / EROS / TELA / ENDLF: a fragmented insurgent ecosystem (Staniland 2014; Richards CCDP 2014). Indian RAW patronage from 1983 onward established training camps in Tamil Nadu and selectively armed rival groups, structurally deforming the movement it claimed to support (Jain Commission 1997; Goodhand 2006).

§6 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord 1987 and the IPKF

June 1987 airlift over the naval blockade forced Colombo's hand. The Accord was signed without Tamil-armed or TULF central consent. Within months the IPKF was in combat with the LTTE and arming EPRLF–PLAT as a proxy. IPKF abuses against Tamil civilians were documented by UTHR(J) and later folded into OISL 2015.

§7 Structural summary

1. Discrimination preceded militancy and was statutory. 2. Non-violent avenues were exhausted before mass armed mobilisation. 3. The militant landscape was plural and lethally competitive. 4. Structural errors — child recruitment, dissent suppression, intra-Tamil killing — were present from the early period. 5. External state intervention deformed the movement it claimed to support.

Sources

- UN Panel of Experts (Darusman) 2011.
- OHCHR OISL 2015 — A/HRC/30/CRP.2.
- Neil DeVotta — Blowback (Stanford UP, 2004).
- S.J. Tambiah — Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide (1986).
- A.J. Wilson — The Break-up of Sri Lanka (1988).
- Paul Staniland — Networks of Rebellion (Cornell, 2014).
- UTHR(J) — The Broken Palmyra (1990).
- ICG — Sri Lanka country file.
- Amnesty — PTA reports.

What this is not

- This dossier does not glorify any armed group (UK Terrorism Act 2000 §12).
- This dossier does not name individuals beyond those already in Tier-A public record.
- This dossier does not propose prosecutions, sanctions, or sovereignty — TLTE refuses sovereignty (/on-what-authority).