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**The (Re) Construction of Sri Lankan Tamil Political Identity  
in the UK**

## Editorial Note

*The policy papers were produced in the context of the project Diaspora Dialogues for Development and Peace. We commissioned brief policy and background papers (mainly) from activists to get their views on how they perceive their political activism, as opposed to how outsiders view them. To generate as many policy papers as possible, reflecting diverse viewpoints, the project invited activists and academics via a "Call for Papers". Since the majority of the papers were written by activists or by those who are both activists and academics, the papers cannot be viewed as a neutral account of the present history. Nonetheless, we believe that these are unique perspectives that are hardly recognized in the scholarly writing and should be given space for reflection.*

*The views expressed are those of the authors and contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the Berghof Peace Support or any of its constituent agencies. Any comments or feedback should be addressed to the authors directly.*

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## Selvarajah Senthan/Nirmanusan Balasundaram

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## **Abstract**

The crux content of this paper is to introspect and explain the (re) construction of Tamil political identity in UK. The paper finds that the process of the political identity of Tamil diaspora in the UK is evolving through the dynamics of transnational political practices and political discourse from a uni-polar identity formation process to a multi-polar formation process in the aftermath of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) military defeat in May 2009. However, this evolving process of identity does not mean a 'loss in importance' of Tamil Nationalism struggle, the 'root of the identity does still remain strong with a repositioned strategy of transnational preview. The cognitive and context aspects of the transnational political discourse of the Tamil nationalism are at the root of the identity formation of the Tamil diaspora in the UK, despite being in the nascent stage but with a strong vision statement.

# 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Transnational politics can be defined as the political practice of diaspora communities, the relationship that they maintain and establish with their homelands and host countries and their activities that influence the national conflict<sup>2</sup>. Diaspora is a transnational community because of its organisation of life in various parts of the world crossing territories and boundaries. A diaspora group views itself as a particular ethnic group based on its shared identity and collective memory. The ethnicity based affection and the cultural ties in the homeland of an ethnic diaspora group can play an influential role in the conflict in the homeland. Various diaspora groups scattered throughout the world have showed such a political function and become successful in creating *ethnic pro-self-nationalistic movements* for the support of the struggle in their countries (Goldring et al. 2003).

There is always an ideological importance in conditioning the formation of such ethnic nationalist diaspora movements and constructing the political identity in order to facilitate the diasporic society. Discourse<sup>3</sup> is considered to be the favoured vehicle of ideology in which language is the key element (van Dijk 2001, 11-13). In the stream of politics, nationalism can be considered an ideology. Hence, the creation of a 'discourse of nationalism' is a result of interface between the ideology/nationalism and discourse practices. Studies have illustrated the influence of nationalist discourse in the political practices of a society and vice versa.

In Sri Lanka, the identity of Tamils has been formed as a distinctive group. Nationalism has played a crucial role in the process of identity formation of Tamils. A state and an ethnic identification are the two main conditions for the involvement of Nationalism (San Martin 2008, 2-3). Smith defines nationalism as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining identity, unity and autonomy of a social group some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential nation (Smith cited in Van der Wilk 2007). This description of nationalism well accommodates the generally referred definition of Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism that *it is the conviction of the Sri Lankan Tamil people that they have the right to constitute an independent or autonomous political community*.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, such a political entity can be called as 'Tamil Eelam'.

The identity re-structuring of a diaspora community of an ethnic group as Winland underlines is largely subjective by its homeland associations and relationships, and importantly its closeness to nationalism. Winland further states that (Winland cited in Hoskins 1997, 24)

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that this paper was originally written in April 2010.

<sup>2</sup> For more reading of transnational politics of diaspora please see Goldring et al. 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Please see the following definitions of discourse: "Discourse is a mode of organising knowledge, ideas or experience that is rooted in language and its concrete contexts" (Merriam Webster, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discourse>). "Discourse encompasses the use of spoken, written and signed language and multimodal/multimedia forms of communication, and is not restricted to 'non-fictional' (eg. stylistics) nor verbal (eg. gesture and visual) materials" (Centre for Discourse Studies of the Aalborg University, <http://diskurs.hum.aau.dk/english/discourse.htm>).

<sup>4</sup> For more understanding of Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism, please see Wilson 2000 and Russell 1982, Ch. IV.

“[r]ather than view patriotic /nationalist sentiments and expressions as periodic blips in an immigrant adaptation process, transnationalism should be seen as playing a central and continues role in the construction of diasporan identity”.

The influencing factors of the identity structuring observed above such as nationalism, discourse and political practices take different forms in varying degrees of the living nature of a diaspora community. Territorial nationalism takes the form of ‘distance nationalism’ or transnationalism and national political practice takes the form of ‘transnational political practice’, while the ‘political discourse’ is mediated by these two factors.

Political discourse and transnational political practices are the two vital aspects that influence the re-structuring of political identity of a diasporic community. In order to better understand the evolution of the Tamil diaspora’s political identity in the UK, it is important to examine the dynamics of political discourse and transnational political practices. This paper touches on such theories throughout the text.

The analysis of this paper is directed at understanding the following questions: 1. How was the political identity of the Tamil diaspora in the UK shaped pre and post May 19, 2009? 2. How influential and effective were the organisations in (re) structuring the political identity of the Tamil diaspora? 3. How effectively do they try to fill the vacuum as the result of the LTTE defeat? 4. Has the democratic space been widened and have new opportunities emerged? 5. Has the mode of activism changed after May 19? 5. What ‘new’ organisations and campaigns emerged?

The research methods used in this study are interviews with individuals and organisations, and participant observations. The names of the interviewees are not referenced in order to maintain confidentiality. The interviews are personal interviews and some were conducted over the phone. Participant observant technique was employed to acquire information about the Tamil diaspora’s transnational practices and activities.

## **2. The Political Identity of the Tamil Diaspora before 19 May 2009**

In order to understand the formation of the diaspora’s political identity, it is important to examine the development of the transnational political discourse and political practices in the context of ‘context’ and ‘cognitive’ aspects. Context is an ongoing situation or background, and it controls all levels of political discourse. Tuen Van Dijk observes it as *a relationship between situational, societal, political or cultural aspects of the ‘environment’ of text and talk, on the one hand, and the structures of discourse itself, on the other.* Cognitive aspect is about how a participant’s experiences interpret and represent the relevant facets. For Van Dijk, this psychological element of cognitive aspect is

“a representation in Episodic Memory (part of Long Term Memory).[...] These are subjective, and possibly biased representations of ‘reality’, and may also feature evaluations of events or situations (opinions), as well as emotions associated with such events – as is typically the case by the dramatic or traumatic events of our lives” (Van Dijk 2006, 169).

The ‘context’ and ‘cognitive’ aspects explained by Van Dijk are very much related to the media production. Social structure and the discourse are mediated by ‘context’ and ‘cognitive’ aspects. This is a continuous interaction between the social structure and the discourse practice. As noted earlier discourse is a favoured vehicle of ideology (nationalism). Media is the main creator of the (political) discourse, and this discourse serves as the vehicle of ideology (nationalism). This is an interactive process in which society is shaped by discourse and vice versa (Van Dijk 2001, 11-13).

Borrowing the idea from Giddens, Kandiah writes, media flies over the time and space and “touches down on happenings and participants from the places and times in which they are immediately embedded; they transport them into every day consciousness of the recipients in their own here and now” (Kandiah 2001, 26). Here these happenings and participants (actors) are attached to the ‘past’. Due to the involvement in the ‘cognitive process’ the media enables the recipients to access them both through individual recall and institutionalized collective memory.

The psychological and psychical experience with conflict and psychological need of the Tamils for the establishment of Tamil Eelam have been the momentum behind the Diaspora’s political interest and its formation of identity. This psychological need for the creation of Tamil Eelam goes back to the pre violence era (1949-1983) and pre-independence era of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, the level of this psychological need varies between these two periods due to the then political climate and political discourse. Media has played a prominent role in creating the psychological need. The competition between Sinhala and Tamil politicians to promote nationalist ideologies during these periods caused both sides of the media to become promoters of ideologies that greatly increased this psychological need for Tamil Homeland. However, the communal riots in the 1950s and 1970s and the ethnic violence that erupted in 1983 created great deal of traumatic experience, including experience with physical violence. This traumatic physical experience paired with the increased ‘psychological need’ has been a key for the support of Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora towards the Tamil nationalism struggle and the promotion of collective memory.<sup>5</sup> It is in this way, the Tamil nationalism has been kept alive and strong, grown and crossed through neighbouring states and/or continents. Advancements in information communication technologies such as the mobile phone, internet and satellite TV have contributed to the growth and binding force of Tamil nationalism.

When looking at the situation that prevailed before 19 May 2009, the LTTE’s media campaign was very powerful and successful in capturing the Diasporas’ imaginations and project support toward the homeland struggle. The LTTE used the maximum technological advancements, particularly in designing vast websites both in Tamil and English, making

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<sup>5</sup> The collective memory is shared, passed on and also constructed by the group, or modern society. The collective memory is defined by Maurice Halbwach as: "While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember" (Halbwachs 1992, 48).

streaming videos that promoted the cause of Tamil Eelam struggle. This enabled the LTTE to effectively withstand the propaganda of the Sri Lankan government, and to manage and control the dynamics of the discourse production of the Tamil Diaspora community. It was able to create a significant monopoly over the diaspora's media content.<sup>6</sup>The LTTE's media was able to create a public opinion for Tamil nationalism amongst the Tamil diaspora and maintain the collective memory which was further inspired by the transnational activities of the Diaspora organisations. In this sense, the LTTE was able to create a dominant discourse of the armed struggle for Tamil Eelam. Events such as martyrs' day have been spectacular for the monumental support they have gathered among the diaspora community. Due to the overwhelming support of the diaspora Tamil media, the discourse of the 'armed struggle for Tamil Eelam' was dominant in the 'orders of discourse'<sup>7</sup> and successful in mind setting the diaspora in support of their cause. There was not much opposition to the dominant discourse created by the LTTE media. Therefore, the 'orders of discourse' during that time were 'too asymmetric' and did not enable a perfect political discourse. Political discourse is a way of making decisions in democratic conditions. As Johnson and F. Johnson explain, political discourse enables to make a decision to solve a community's problem through informal exchange of reasoned views, and several goal-directed groups take part in this decision making process (Johnson/Johnson 2000, 4).

### The Transnational Political Practices

Sriskandarajah explains that the political discourse and practice have become a powerful mechanism for strengthening the diaspora-homeland nexus as well as intra -diaspora connections among the Sri Lankan Tamils. Sriskandarajah states, "The intensity, duration, and impact of the civil war in Sri Lanka have made this politicisation more concrete. Key premigratory experiences have become politicized and shaped the political identity of diaspora Tamils" (Sriskandarajah 2005, 493). The transnational political practices associated with this production of discourse heavily relied on the armed struggle in the homeland. In terms of the political activities of the Tamil diaspora, the LTTE was involved in directing, organising and administering the Tamil diaspora community. The LTTE was not the sole organisation that organised and controlled all Tamil diaspora political activities; many diasporic organisations supportive of the Tamil nationalism struggle also engaged in numerous political and economic activities over time.<sup>8</sup>

In many instances, with the help of the intellectuals and diaspora activists, the LTTE carried out successful lobby efforts at human rights organisations and brought attention to the international community about the ethnic discrimination of the successive Sri Lankan

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with a senior Journalist, Harrow, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Fairclough's idea of "discursive order" is that "[i]n every society where social action takes place, several discourses operate at the same time. Sometimes discourses reinforce each other, other times they might conflict with each other. The scholars refer to this network of discourses as 'orders of discourse. In this network of discourses, there will be dominant discourses, which are considered to be mainstream modes of creating meaning, other discourses are seen as oppositional, or alternative, or perhaps legitimizing. The orders of discourse become the arena in society where the power plays take place and manifest themselves" (Fairclough 2002, 9).

<sup>8</sup> Interview with a senior member of a leading diaspora organisation, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010.

governments and their human rights violations against the Tamils<sup>9</sup>. The manner in which the LTTE acquired the support of the diaspora is partially condemned by some people. The main accusation was the LTTE used violence and intimidation to control the diaspora. There have been instances where the LTTE used threats and intimidation to collect funds from the diaspora people, but, it is incorrect to say that the much evidenced 'sense of moral support' of the Tamil diaspora towards the LTTE was invoked by intimidation and violence. Conversely, the LTTE and its proxy associations have provided many tangible services to the diaspora community including: housing, employment, education and in some cases security. The need for these services created a dependence, which in turn, was advantageous for the LTTE.<sup>10</sup> However, the LTTE did not require this dependency to gain the diaspora's support, and therefore this relationship should not be seen as a dependent. The Tamil diaspora, bound by the influence of Tamil nationalism, provided their support because of the faith in the armed struggle of the LTTE.

Perhaps for this reason, the report by Crisis Group mentioned that the defeat of the LTTE was a great disappointment for the Tamil diaspora and consequently created a great deal of anger, despair, demonstrations and protests. The report states that the LTTE

“was widely seen as the only group that stood up for Tamils and won them any degree of respect. The Tiger's humiliating defeat, the enormous death toll in the final months of the war and the interment of more than a quarter million Tamils left the diaspora feeling powerless, betrayed by the West, demanding justice and, in some cases, wanting revenge” (ICG 2010, i).

Until the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009, the LTTE leadership in the diaspora remained unchallenged and undamaged. As Chad Hoskins notes, the LTTE was acting as the spokesperson for the Tamil diaspora, and much of the uniqueness attached to the Tamil diaspora comes from the LTTE's unquestioned leadership (Hoskins 1997).

These political actions and practices are the ongoing situations that prevailed pre May 19, and therefore can be seen as the 'context' of that time. As we have already defined, the 'context' is an ongoing situation or background, and controls all levels of political discourse.

**Finding1:** The cognitive and context aspects of the transnational political discourse make Tamil nationalism the core of UK Tamil identity formation, but the interconnected transnational political practices organised through the LTTE makes this a 'uni-polar' formation pre 19 May 2009.

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with a Diaspora Political Activist, Harrow, London, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with a Diaspora Political Activist, Harrow, London, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

### 3. Reconstruction of the Political Identity after 19 May 2009

As discussed above, most of the political activities of the Tamil people pre May 19 centred on the LTTE. Most of the Tamil people were passive participants in a movement that did not cultivate active engagement of the people. Most activities were directed and controlled by the LTTE network and there was little space for the independent political diaspora action with the potential to influence international politics and increase chances for engagement with the international community. The Tamil diaspora's call for the international community to stop the war did not take multiple forms during the final stage and immediate aftermath of the war. Moreover, a massive number of people became involved and increased the movement's visibility. This increased visibility did not trigger the British authority to act in their favour, because the actions lacked leadership, guidance, strategies and an agenda. However, these demonstrations and protest campaigns created solidarity among the Tamil diaspora against the Sri Lankan government.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, the defeat of the LTTE created suspicion and misunderstanding among the Tamil nationalists, activists, and organisations. There is a division among the activists as to how to handle the problems that face the Tamil community and move forward with a political strategy.<sup>12</sup> However, some diaspora organisations have been successful in establishing an organisational based collective leadership. Despite difference in opinion, the majority of Tamil diaspora organisations are now starting to unite under common goals and beliefs. It is a kind of unity in diversity position paving the way for political discourse which did not exist during the pre May 19 period among the Tamil diaspora community.

The Tamil Diaspora network has started functioning independently through constructive engagement with the socio-political networks in the UK. The decisions concerning the political future of the Tamil people are taken in a democratic manner. For example, despite the diaspora organisations' varying degrees of support to the Tamil political parties who ran in the 2010 Sri Lankan parliamentary elections, they manage to work together with an understanding of their differences in practising transnational political activities. This unity despite differences is seen among the Tamil diaspora, and has subsequently created relatively symmetric 'orders of discourse' of transnational political practices. As discussed earlier, the 'orders of discourse' pre May 19 were 'too asymmetric' to create perfect political discourse. Now this unity in differences is more beneficial than unity in similarities, being the opposite to the pre May 19 situation. Even the gap between the anti-LTTE Diaspora and the pro LTTE Diaspora has decreased, and there is a considerable progress in their relationship.

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<sup>11</sup> Telephone interview with a Tamil diaspora political activist, East Ham, London, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with a senior member of a diaspora organisation, 22nd January 2010.

In the UK, the British Tamils Forum (BTF) is functioning as an umbrella organisation and playing a crucial role in bringing together the diaspora organisations and foundations. The BTF engages with them to bring to light to the humanitarian crises and human rights violations in Sri Lanka against the Tamils, and to advance the Tamil national cause through democratic means.<sup>13</sup> With its Tamil identity, the BTF attempts to raise awareness among British politicians and public; the decision makers and agencies working in the fields of humanitarian and human rights, about the suffering and the continued discrimination of the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka.<sup>14</sup> Through various non-violent strategies such as: advocacy, non-violent resistance, diplomacy, boycotts, moral purchasing, supporting anti-war political candidates, demonstrations and national political lobbying groups, the BTF is mobilising the Tamil diaspora in the UK and increasing the people's participation in the political process. Its strategies include integration of societies and empowerment of the diaspora Tamils in terms of socio, political and economic conditions in the UK.<sup>15</sup>

The strategies of the BTF have the potential of creating socialisation. Socialisation is about people learning their culture (skills, knowledge, values, motives and roles) appropriate to their position or group in society through a process (Michener et al. 2004). The process of socialisation provides avenues for a community to create and strengthen the much needed bond with other communities throughout their life. The Tamil Diaspora living the UK has not yet achieved such socialisation. Achieving this socialisation can assist the Tamil diaspora in politically, socially and economically empowering itself and creating a constructive integration in their host countries, while sustaining the 'Tamil' identity and collective memory.

It should be noted that the BTF organised the much discussed Global Tamil Forum in London in February 2010. The success of the GTF conference is unique and considered a great leap forward in the transnational politics of Tamil diaspora. As widely reported in the Tamil media, the conference achieved its first, and one of its core objectives in moving towards the formal practice of transnational politics of Tamil Nationalism.

The notable presence of the then British Foreign Minister David Milband and the then Foreign Secretary William Hague, at the conference and their supportive speech for the operation of the GTF, can be seen as a sign of the UK's support for the political activities of Tamil diaspora. Then British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's meeting with the delegates of the GTF indicates improved prospects. Calls from the UK have become louder for a constitutional change towards power sharing arrangements and investigation into war crimes at a conference initiated by Tamil Eelam advocates.<sup>16</sup> The attendance and participation of national and international, and political and non-political delegates at inaugural event was a milestone for the transnational politics of the Tamil diaspora in the UK; despite the Sri Lankan government's pressure to stall the event. These are not just events, but important political developments, and intended reflections of

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13 British Tamils Forum, <http://www.tamilforum.com/about.html> and an interview with a spokesperson of BTF on 30th January 2010.

14 British Tamils Forum, <http://www.tamilforum.com/about.html> and an interview with a spokesperson of BTF on 30th January 2010.

15 British Tamils Forum, <http://www.tamilforum.com/about.html> and an interview with a spokesperson of BTF on 30th January 2010.

16 GTF Inaugural Conference - London 2010 - UK calls for constitutional reforms in Sri Lanka; Text of press release issued by the GTF, see [http://transcurrents.com/tc/2010/03/gtf\\_inaugural\\_conference\\_londo.html](http://transcurrents.com/tc/2010/03/gtf_inaugural_conference_londo.html).

political reality and mood. British politicians from the three main parties expressed consent and their willingness to engage with the Tamil diaspora in the UK.

Apart from the BTF, the following are other diaspora organisations engaging in social, political and economic activities.

1. Provisional Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam (PTGT) – It is a government in exile. It is based internationally in the USA, Canada, Norway and the UK. After the defeat of the LTTE, the PTGT was organised to fulfil the political aspirations of many Tamils living abroad and in Sri Lanka.
2. Movement of Referendum on Vaddukkodai Resolution- (The original ‘Vaddukkoaddai’ resolution asked the mandate from the Tamil people to negotiate an autonomous region for Tamils. The current referendum is asking the Tamil Diaspora whether that mandate is still valid and applied)
3. Tamil Legal Advocacy Group – TLAP
4. Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice
5. Tamil Youth Organisation – TYO
6. Boycott Sri Lanka
7. White Pigeon
8. Student Against Tamil Genocide – SATG
9. Tamil Information Centre – TIC
10. Sri Lanka Democracy Forum

The UK is the first country where the PTGT and Referendum on Vaddukkodai Resolution work together. In addition, other organizations, such as Boycott Sri Lanka and TYO are also working together under the unity based approach.

Moreover, the Tamil Diaspora youth are emerging as new actors and their participation in the diaspora political activities in the UK has increased. They work both independently and collaboratively with other organisations; and they have been successful in organising demonstrations and marches. A notable example is the parliament square peace campaign in April and May 2009 where they played a key part in mobilising the people and creating a conducive atmosphere for such mobilisation efforts. Especially, during the peak of the UK Tamil diaspora’s nonviolent campaigns, Parameswaran Subramanyam, 28, ended his 24 day hunger strike in Parliament Square on April 30, 2009. Thousands of people gathered every day at the site and protested against the war in Sri Lanka (Gosden 2009). Commenting on this situation, Crisis Group in its 2010 report states, “watching the devastation of the final months of the war and the seeming indifference of governments and the United Nations, many Tamils, particularly the younger generation born in the West, grew deeply disillusioned” (ICG 2010, ii). The Crisis Group foresees a greater role in transnational politics from this younger Tamil generation. There are indications

this younger generation will potentially fill in leadership gap. Crisis Group writes in its report, “Raised and educated in the West and armed with advanced university degrees, many young Tamils have become increasingly active in diaspora politics and are seen by TGTE and GTF leaders as one of the diaspora’s most precious resources” (ICG 2010, 20).

The visits of the Tamil youth during the ceasefire period provided them the opportunity to see how their relatives were victimised by both the war and the administrative structures of the LTTE’s de facto state in the Northeast Provinces. The viciousness of the last stage of the war pushed them into action.

**Finding 2:** The cognitive and context aspects of the transnational political discourse make Tamil nationalism the core of the UK Tamil diaspora’s identity formation. Though, the decentralised approaches of the transnational political practices organised through the independent diaspora organisations cause this formation to be a multi-polar formation process in the aftermath of LTTE military defeat in May 2009.

## 4. Conclusion

This analysis clearly reveals the transformation taking place in the process of political identity construction of the Tamil diaspora in the UK after the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009. Finding 1 shows that the cognitive and context aspects of the transnational political discourse make Tamil nationalism the core of the UK Tamil diaspora’s identity formation, but the LTTE’s centralised transnational political practices make this a ‘uni-polar’ formation pre 19 May 2009. In turn, Finding 2 of this study partially supports Finding 1, “The cognitive and context aspects of the transnational political discourse make Tamil nationalism the core of the UK Tamil diaspora’s identity formation.”. However, it partially differs from Finding 1, because decentralised approaches of the transnational political practices organised through the independent diaspora organisations cause identity formation to shift from a uni-polar process to a multi-polar process in the aftermath of LTTE May 2009 military defeat.

The underlying logic of these two findings clearly validates the hypothesis generated in this study by concluding that the process of the political identity of Tamil diaspora in the UK is evolving through the dynamics of transnational political practices and political discourse, from a uni-polar identity formation process to a multi-polar formation process in the aftermath of LTTE military defeat in May 2009. However, this evolving process of identity does not mean a ‘loss in importance’ in the Tamil Nationalism struggle. The cognitive and context aspects of the transnational political discourse make the Tamil nationalism the core of UK Tamil diaspora identity formation. In other words, in spite of the obvious shift in strategy, the goal of self-rule or autonomy remains the same.

This clearly shows that the Tamil Diaspora network has started functioning independently through constructive engagement with the socio-political networks of the UK. As we have seen in the analysis, the decisions regarding the political future of the Tamil people are taken in a

democratic manner. A unity in difference is constructed among the diaspora organisations in practicing the transnational politics through this multi-polar process. As evident in the discussion, this unity in differences is seen among the Tamil diaspora media as well as they have been creating relatively symmetric 'orders of discourse' of transnational political practices to have a political discourse. This 'orders of discourse' pre May 19 was 'too asymmetric' to have a political discourse. This unity in differences is more beneficial than unity in similarities, but it was other way around pre May 19.

According to diaspora theories, the transnational political practices in relation to homeland conflicts of diaspora can create either destructive or constructive impacts on conflicts. As per these theories, 1. Diaspora can function as a tool for promoting peace and development; 2. Diaspora can have negative or even destructive consequences. 3. Diaspora can function simultaneously as 'peace-makers' and 'peace-breakers' (Pirkkalainen/Abdile 2009, 5). It is in this regard, the democratic transformation that has taken place in the Tamil diaspora's practice of the transnational politics has a potential to become an effective force in the conflict resolution process, as it has inevitably become an actor in the Sri Lankan ethnic conflict.

Despite having the potential to contribute to conflict resolution, the Tamil diaspora still do not have sufficient institutional resources to contribute to a just and sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. Therefore, a collaborative work between the Tamil diaspora, other states and international agencies is vital for its constructive engagement. There is a great potential for creating sufficient resources for Diasporas, by collaborating with: states, international agencies, regional organisations and NGOs in contributing to the conflict resolution process in the current age of globalization.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> GTF Inaugural Conference - London 2010 - UK calls for constitutional reforms in Sri Lanka; Text of press release issued by the GTF, see [http://transcurrents.com/tc/2010/03/gtf\\_inaugural\\_conference\\_londo.html](http://transcurrents.com/tc/2010/03/gtf_inaugural_conference_londo.html).

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