

SRI LANKA: THE WAR CONTINUES:

BACKGROUND:

Sinhalese settlers first arrived in Sri Lanka from north-eastern India in the 5th-6th century BC. Closely linked to Buddhism they developed a great civilization in the north central part of the island. To irrigate the dry plains of the north and east a sophisticated system of water tanks and irrigation channels were constructed to support agriculture for a large population. The arrival of another Indian group, the Tamils is less documented, although small Tamil communities were among the earliest settlements.

Sinhalese hegemony was interrupted several times over the centuries by periods of Tamil rule. Later, between the fifth and sixth century AD, both groups were dominated, intermittently, by Hindu groups from southern India.

Between 1200-1500 A.D., the Sinhalese gradually withdrew to the wet areas of the south and west, abandoning the irrigation systems and leaving the Tamils to establish a kingdom in the north. In the 16th century most of the island came under Portuguese rule. In the 17th century the Dutch were in control, but by the 18th century British rule dominated, except for the Sinhalese kingdom of Kandy, in the center of the island, that managed to protect itself against all western influence. Kandy was finally ceded by treaty to the British in 1815 bringing all the island, under one government.

British rule was responsible for the development of tea and rubber plantations and the introduction of Tamil laborers from India to work on them. The British built roads, rail networks, and developed trading links with the West. They introduced English law, an English style education system, and promoted Christianity. Pressure for independence built up in the early 20th century and by 1948 Sri Lanka then known as Ceylon became fully independent, although it remained a member of the Commonwealth. Since independence ethnic differences have played a major role in Sri Lankan politics. The major group, the Sinhalese account for nearly three quarters of the population. Sinhalese are Buddhists and speak

Sinhala a very old language. Sinhalese are divided into "low country" and "Kandyan". The former assimilated more under British rule, while the latter remained more in the Sinhalese Buddhist tradition. Sri Lankan Tamils form 12% of the population. Most Tamils are Hindu but a substantial number is Christian. Tamils have traditionally been more concentrated in the north and eastern provinces of the island. They speak Tamil, a language based on a different rootstock to Sinhala. Prior to independence, Sri Lankan Tamils played an important role in politics and accounted for a disproportionate share of the educated and civil servant class. "Indian" Tamils, descendants of those brought over from southern India by the British to work the tea plantations in the south and central Sri Lanka are predominantly low caste and account for 6% of the population. "Indian" Tamils as a group were denied citizenship when Sri Lanka became independent. Half went back to India while the other half remained. In 1988 those who stayed were eventually granted full citizenship.

Muslims are concentrated in the eastern province. Descended from Arab traders who settled on the island they represent 7% of the population. Muslims speak Tamil, worship Islam, remain apart from the Sri Lanka Tamil community and are not involved in Tamil causes. Finally, small groups of Burghers (Eurasians of mixed descent), Veddas (descendants of the original inhabitants of the island before Sinhalese settlement), and Malays make up the remainder of the population.

In Sri Lanka, the caste system is less extreme than in India. Political and economic elites have largely been the farmers, the educated, and landowners. Separate caste systems exist for Sinhalese and Tamils, and in both systems the farmers are dominant accounting for over 50% within the Sinhalese population and 35% in the Sri Lankan Tamil population. The eventual formation of the two major extremist groups, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sinhalese Marxist group the Peoples Liberation Front (JVP) in the 1970's was partly a reaction against this dominance.

THE CONFLICT:

The origins of the ethnic conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese are ancient, but recent antagonisms can be found in attempts by the majority Sinhalese to reverse what was seen as excessive influence of Tamils before 1948.

Post-independence politics have been strongly democratic. The two major parties, the United National Party (UNP), and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) have generally alternated rule, leaving Tamils frustrated and fearful that a Sinhalese majority in the government would abuse Tamil rights.

Tension between the two groups grew as the Sinhalese government in post 1956 elections, sought to reverse the use of English and made Sinhala the official language of Ceylon. It was the first of several steps that appeared discriminatory to Tamils. The decades following 1956 saw intermittent outbreaks of communal violence and radicalization among Tamil groups.

Tension between the two groups increased during the 1960's and 1970's as Sri Lankan Tamils sought to obtain more autonomy through a federal system of government. By 1977, the failure of Tamil politicians in the government to attain more autonomy through peaceful means moved from support for federalism to a demand for a separate Tamil state in north and eastern Sri Lanka.

Groups were organized to commit sporadic terrorist acts to achieve these goals. The Liberation Tamil Tigers of Eelam (LTTE) began to emerge as the most violent of these separatist groups. Government reaction to the LTTE only exacerbated matters by condoning secret police tactics and violations of Tamil civil rights. In the 1980's, the situation deteriorated rapidly in the north as Tamil insurgents launched terrorist acts against police and government troops.

In 1983, a Sinhalese crowd, attending the official funeral in Colombo of a group of soldiers who had been killed in an ambush by Tamil terrorists in the north, turned into a riotous mob. The Sinhalese attacked Tamil homes and businesses throughout the city, killing more than 500 people. Tamils in the north and east reacted to the carnage in Colombo. They in turn attacked Sinhalese villages, and the region became the scene of violent bloodshed. Government security forces in the region attempted to suppress reactionary Tamils. During the crackdown terrible human rights violations were committed against many Tamils.

India's Involvement 1987

The conflict assumed an international dimension when the Sri Lankan government accused India of supporting Tamil insurgents. To stop Indian support, then President JR Jayewardene decided to bring India directly into Sri Lanka's internal dispute. Jayewardene and India's Rajiv Gandhi established a peace accord by which the Sri Lankan government made several concessions to Tamil demands. The Sri Lankan army and Tamil insurgent groups were to lay down their arms. India agreed to establish order in the north and east with an Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF).

India's attempt to solve this internal conflict ended terribly. The Tigers resumed their offensive and the IPKF found itself engaged in a bloody police action against the LTTE. Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa, elected president in 1988, reversed the policies of his predecessor JR Jayewardene and ordered the IPKF to leave the country. The IPKF carried out a staged withdrawal and finally left in May 1990.

Tamil separatism was not the only problem in 1989. Sinhalese violence in the south by the JVP against the government began as a reaction to the Indo-Sri Lankan accord. JVP intimidation forced many Sinhalese to participate in strikes and demonstrations. Government security forces reacted viciously against the JVP rebels, by capturing or killing JVP leaders. In the north the ethnic conflict with the LTTE continued and escalated into a vicious civil war.

Despite its problems, Sri Lanka has managed to maintain an unbroken record of democracy since independence. Elections have been held regularly, and in general have been free and fair, resulting in a peaceful change of governments since 1948.

Two main political parties, both Sinhalese dominated, controlled Sri Lankan politics for more than 40 years. The United National Party (UNP), and the Sri Lankan Freedom Party (SLFP) have alternated power since 1956, but in the general election of August of 1994, a coalition from the SLFP party and, Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's new People's Alliance (PA), won a majority in the 225 seats assembly. The new Prime Minister won a narrow victory over the United National Party (UNP) which had been in power for 17 years. During her campaign she carried an enormous amount of good will and persisted, in her efforts to find a peaceful solution to the 12-year-old ethnic conflict. Political violence claimed the life of her father in

1976. In 1988 and her husband Vijaya Kumaratunga, a politician, was machined gunned in their home by a Sinhalese Marxist. She had personal experience with ethnic violence.

The new premier promised an end to the war, and made press freedom and human rights major issues in the campaign. As part of her campaign, she exposed the killings of thousands of youths by death squads during a government crackdown on JVP (Sinhalese) rebels between 1988 and 1993.

During her first six months in office, she enjoyed strong support from both moderate Tamils and Sinhalese because she managed to secure a truce with the LTTE in November 1994.

The LTTE resumption of hostilities in April 1995, forced her to agree with her army generals who called for a complete military victory over the Tamil insurgents.

ECONOMY:

Sri Lanka has a dilapidated and inadequate infrastructure which is a long-term constraint on growth. The state-owned sector of the economy, a remnant of past socialist leaning governments is large and inefficient. The new government plans to encourage trade and foreign investment, and to move more aggressively to privatize many state-owned enterprises.

Both the PA and the UNP advocate an open economy and have jointly supported free market reforms.

Sri Lanka has made major strides since the early 1980's in creating a favorable environment in the private sector to attract more foreign capital. The government has deregulated most sectors, eliminated price controls, liberalized the issuance of import licenses, terminated export taxes and privatized many state owned companies. Although the private sector continues to thrive, all infrastructure, ports, roads, telephone, rail, and electricity is owned by the government. In 1994, Sri Lanka received over \$500 million in foreign assistance from Japan and the Asian Development Bank. U.S. donors have pledged \$850 million in 1995.

U.S. INTERESTS:

Strategic.

The United States and Sri Lanka have friendly relations based on a shared commitment to democratic principles.

Throughout the world the U.S. has championed individual freedoms and the protection of human rights. U.S. global leadership role and military involvement in Kuwait, Somalia, Haiti, and now Bosnia to protect lives and to broker peace has and will continue to be of vital interest to the U.S. The U.S. Government supports the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, and has called for a peaceful resolution of the conflict that will protect the interests and dignity of all Sri Lanka's citizens. The U.S. welcomed the cease fire and peace effort in 1994 by the Sri Lankan government to engage the LTTE in negotiating a political settlement. Just as quickly, the U.S. deplored the unilateral resumption of LTTE terrorist activity begun on April 19, 1995; The U.S. has urged the LTTE to engage in substantive dialogue with the Sri Lankan government to find a political solution.

Sri Lanka may be strategically important when viewed in the context of potential crisis/conflict in the Pacific Rim over potentially disruptive political, economic, or military issues which may affect the U.S. or its allies.

Located between the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Bengal it is within comfortable steaming or air distance from Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, or Indonesia. Its obvious proximity to India also makes Sri Lanka of potential strategic interest.

Economic.

U.S. economic interests in Sri Lanka are presently focused on trade and potential U.S. investment. Historically, the U.S. has encouraged the social and economic development of Sri Lanka by providing \$ 1.5 billion in bi-lateral assistance since 1948. The U.S. is Sri Lanka's largest trading partner. Exports to the U.S. totaled over \$1.1 billion in 1994. Of this total garment (textiles) accounted for more than 75%. Imports from the U.S. totaled \$197 million mostly in wheat sales. More than 200 U.S. companies are represented in Sri Lanka, and business links to the U.S. continue to increase. Trade and investment prospects for the U.S. include telecommunications, medical equipment, computers, information technology, power generation, agricultural and food products.

Military activity has remained largely limited to the north and east, although assassinations of political and military leaders and terrorist bombings have brought the civil war south to the capital. Actions in

October by the LTTE have immobilized Colombo, as spectacular bombings of key targets around the city have escalated.

Despite the efforts of the government, over the past ten years, to facilitate an attractive investment climate in Sri Lanka, the most serious issue affecting foreign investment is the war, and recent increases in military spending have had an impact on the government's ability to support investment initiatives.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Since early 1987, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have had effective de facto control of the northern peninsula and the city of Jaffna. Mrs. Kumaratunga faces mounting criticism both from the army and within her government. The peace

process she crafted in November 1994 has come apart. LTTE terrorist tactics have increased, and the military campaign in the north is costing many lives.

THREAT SCENARIOS:

SCENARIO I.

Continuation of Military Offensive Operations in The Northern Jaffna Peninsula Will Create a Massive Refugee Problem of Catastrophic Proportions, Resulting in Disease, Famine and Human Suffering.

The start of a major offensive on the northern Jaffna peninsula against the LTTE by government troops on October 18, will result in heavy fighting and affect over half million Tamil civilians living in the Jaffna region. Most, if not all, will be caught up in the most vicious fighting between government troops and the LTTE since the civil war began 12 years ago. Because the LTTE has vowed never to give up the fight, this scenario would begin with civilians, mostly women and children, caught in the crossfire, being driven from their homes, with no more than the clothing on their back. Also, as the LTTE suffers large numbers of casualties in the fighting, many Tamil civilians living in the Jaffna region will fear the forced conscription, by the LTTE, of women and young boys into their ranks. Food shortages, scarcity of water, cooking fuel, shelter, and medicine will force many to migrate 25-100 miles south to the towns of Kilinochchi, Talaimannar, Mankulam and Vavuniya.

More than 600,000 will be forced to move to locations that will offer no more than space to establish

camps. The situation will become further exacerbated as the LTTE suffering defeat in Jaffna will launch terrorist suicide bomb attacks against civilian and military targets in the south in and around Colombo in order to force a diversion of military and security forces to Colombo to protect civilians and government installations. This scenario would further see a backlash from the Sinhalese, in which they demand that the government does not divert resources to assist Tamil refugees in the north. They will, insist that all available resources will be needed in an emergency should the LTTE decide to increase terrorist bombing attacks in Colombo.

Government response to outside international aid agencies wanting to aid in the north would be mixed. Government would express fear of additional adverse response in the form of violence from the Sinhalese majority. As a result, more chaos would be created and ethnic tensions further strained. In November when the monsoon rains begin and the refugees having not yet been sufficiently and effectively supported with food, water, shelter, clothing, and medicine, the country and the international community will see serious outbreaks of disease and unrest in many camps reminiscent of recent disasters in Africa. 8.

We would see strong evidence that some LTTE cadres had infiltrated refugee camps to facilitate their terrorist operations under camp protection. A conclusion to this scenario would see a government totally inadequate, and unprepared to deal with a chaotic and disastrous situation.

Probability:

The insurgent rebellion/civil war has lasted more than 12 years and has claimed more than 45,000 lives. The LTTE leadership has repeatedly voiced its determination, no matter what the cost, in lives, and misery, to fight until they have been granted the security of an independent Tamil state. The probability of this scenario is high.

INDICATORS:

Government forces increase intensity of air and artillery bombardment of the city of Jaffna.

LTTE laid mine fields slow government troops in their advance on Jaffna.

LTTE begin to conscript young boys to fight government forces.

Tamil civilian populace begin to experience severe shortages of food, water, and cooking fuel.

Tamil populaces sense a protracted military engagement to take the city of Jaffna. Thousands begin to leave.

LTTE executes Tamil civilians in Jaffna for allegedly passing tactical information to security forces and government troops

LTTE suicide bombers step up attacks against government buildings and installations in Colombo.

LTTE cadres increase attacks on Sinhalese villages in the south.

United Nations offers humanitarian assistance to Tamil refugees.

Government says that refugee situation is under control and professes not to need outside assistance to provide relief work.

Government and existing aid agencies not able, with existing resources, to effectively support the vast numbers of refugees.

Food aid shipments and cooking fuel do not arrive on time nor in sufficient quantity to provide effective relief.

Monsoon rains arrive, slowing the government offensive in the north.

Outbreaks of fever and diarrhea among refugees. First case of cholera verified.

SCENARIO II.

Government Declares State of Emergency, Country Is Placed On A War Footing, Individual Freedoms Suspended.

This scenario sees government forces bogged down in the north. Monsoon rains have forced them to hold the ground that they have taken outside the city of Jaffna. They unfortunately must wait on the rains before renewing their offensive to capture the city.

LTTE suicide bombers in the meantime have stepped up their attacks on civilian and government targets in Colombo and outlying towns to the east.

With the army forced to remain in the north, the government under this present set of conditions, is not able to maintain law and order, nor is it able to effectively provide a secure environment for its citizens.

This scenario sees the government declare a state of emergency, which includes, the establishment of an emergency security force, the imposition of curfews, closing of schools, travel restrictions, press

censorship, random search and seizure, arrests, and detention without communication. This scenario ends with violations of human rights, Sinhalese demonstrations, loss of support for Mrs. Kumaratunga within her coalition and eventual limitations on the power of the presidency.

Probability:

Previous governments, since independence, have imposed restrictions on individual freedoms in the name of national security. During her campaign, Mrs. Kumaratunga promised a more free and open society for all of Sri Lanka's citizens regardless of their religion or ethnic origin. Having won the election by a narrow margin, continued support for her policies, given the present circumstances, is doubtful. She may not be able to hold her coalition together in parliament. Probability of this scenario is high.

INDICATORS: LTTE

Suicide bombings increase against civilian and government targets.

President and high government officials do not appear in public.

Civilians become victims of LTTE massacres in small villages.

Government declares a state of emergency, curfews are established, public assembly is restricted.

Populace violates curfews to demonstrate against government restrictions.

Food, cooking fuel and other necessities are rationed.

Government establishes an emergency "civil defense security force".

Arrests and detentions of suspected LTTE supporters increase.

Press and radio coverage of news limited.

SCENARIO III

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) Evade Government Troops In Jaffna Peninsula And Regroup In the East Provincial Region

This third scenario sees the monsoon rains provide a cover for the escape of the LTTE leadership and hundreds of their cadres. LTTE regroup in several towns on the eastern side of the island. The government in Colombo is preoccupied with the refugee problem in the north. The army is redeployed to assist in relief efforts.

Having successfully evaded death or capture members of the LTTE leadership are determined to continue the struggle another day. They begin to reorganize, plan new strategies, secure safe havens, recruit, train, and indoctrinate new cadres. This scenario sees a lull in terrorist bombings for this is only to give themselves time. This scenario also sees the LTTE trying to gain the support and trust of Tamils in the region, acquire financial support to rearm for the struggle and renew both their defense and offensive capabilities.

Probability:

LTTE suffered great losses in their defense of Jaffna. The monsoon rains afforded ideal protection for those, who survived the governments offensive on Jaffna, to join existing LTTE units in the east. The determination of the LTTE is well documented. The probability of this scenario is high.

INDICATORS:

Rumors that LTTE cadres have begun to relocate in several eastern townships.

Evidence that coercive means are being used to obtain financial and material support from the general population.

Several searches and seizures of trucks and small vehicles on roads to eastern provinces find large sums of cash and small arms.

Military reports the theft of large quantities of ammunition and explosives from storage.

International business executives are kidnapped and held for ransom

LTTE representative office in London appeals to Tamils living abroad for financial contributions to support a Tamil State.

Tamils are arrested in India drug traffic.

Government uncovers evidence that several trading companies are fronts for LTTE smuggling operations.

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