SRI LANKA: PROTRACTED STRUGGLE TO DECISIVE DEFEAT OF THE LTTE

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in Security Studies

By

Holly P. Woodhead, Bachelor of Arts

Washington, DC
January 31, 2011
SRI LANKA: PROTRACTED STRUGGLE TO DECISIVE DEFEAT OF THE LTTE

Holly P. Woodhead, Bachelor of Arts

Thesis Advisor: Carol C. Fair, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that the *Manwaring Paradigm* helps explain the Sri Lankan’s counterinsurgency (COIN) success against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009. This paradigm purports that COIN success is not primarily determined by military means, but rather a combination of key factors—government legitimacy, unity of effort, external support, capable armed forces, intelligence, and the ability to reduce outside aid to the adversary. I leverage scholarly literature as well as historical information on the decades long insurgency in order to evaluate how the government’s campaign against the Tamil Tigers changed overtime. Based on the data, I assess that prior to 2006, Colombo either did not possess Manwaring’s elements or they were present in weak form. After 2006, the government fulfilled all of Manwaring’s elements, except government legitimacy, which calls into question whether Colombo can maintain lasting peace and whether the regime will remain democratic. Lastly, this piece provides a nuanced understanding of how Colombo defeated the LTTE and what type of support outside nations can provide to a government fighting an internal insurgency.
I dedicate this thesis to my mom and dad for all of their love and support. I also dedicate this thesis to myself as, after all, I am an only child.

Many thanks,

HOLLY P. WOODHEAD
# Table of Contents

Introduction........................................................................................................................................... 1

Background on the Conflict...................................................................................................................... 3

Methods and Approach.............................................................................................................................. 4

Literature Review.................................................................................................................................... 8

Examining the Cases: Analysis of the Paradigm Throughout Campaign Periods.............. 16

Implications of Research........................................................................................................................ 55

Conclusion .............................................................................................................................................. 57

Appendix................................................................................................................................................. 58

Map of Sri Lanka .................................................................................................................................. 58

Bibliography ......................................................................................................................................... 59
INTRODUCTION

After more than 25 years of targeted suicide bombings, assassination attempts, and high-impact attacks against the government and civilians, Sri Lankan military forces finally disrupted and defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009. Since the victory, counterinsurgency (COIN) experts have sought to understand the manner in which Colombo was able to effectively eliminate its internal security threat. In this thesis, I will argue that the Manwaring Paradigm by Max Manwaring can explain the Sri Lankan’s success against the Tamil Tigers. According to this paradigm, COIN success is not primarily determined by military means, but rather a combination of key factors—legitimacy, unity of effort, external support to the targeted government, ability to reduce outside aid to the adversary, intelligence, and capable armed forces.

The focus of this study is extremely relevant, as the international community has witnessed a rise of insurgencies in the post-World War II era. These so-called asymmetric wars are often very costly, protracted, complex, and usually involve regional and/or global powers that have vital interests in the outcome of the conflict. The violence in such wars is striking and, at times, shocking, often leaving many people dead or displaced, economies in shambles, and governments struggling to govern. Today insurgencies can be found on almost every continent with prominent examples existing in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.

Therefore, there is little doubt that insurgencies have and will continue to pose important domestic and foreign policy challenges for many states in the foreseeable future. For the counterinsurgent, intellectually grasping the enemy and knowing how to defeat them, how to win, and implementing the measures required to do so is often messy and slow, what T.E.
Lawrence describes as, “…eating soup with a knife.”\(^1\) As such, it is vital to examine historical COIN campaigns in order to determine what elements help explain the success or failure of a counterinsurgent force. Extracting lessons learned from previous conflicts may help future counterinsurgents craft better, more expeditious strategies—the spoon in which to eat the soup.

While this analysis of Sri Lanka will not put forth specific recommendations on how to wage a COIN campaign, it will add to the body of COIN literature that decision-makers may study in order to develop their COIN strategies. Specifically, this work is geared toward understanding a domestic regime’s response to an indigenous insurgency. As such, one cannot draw parallels between the Sri Lankan case and cases where outside powers have fought insurgencies, for example, the US in Iraq or Afghanistan.

**Contribution to Literature on the Insurgency**

This thesis will provide a new approach to analyzing the Sri Lankan insurgency. No published author has yet to use the *Manwaring Paradigm* as a theoretical framework in which to assess Colombo’s political and military response to the LTTE’s war against the government. In addition, this paper will provide an argument on how to divide the conflict into campaigns in order to assess how the effectiveness of Colombo’s response may have changed over time. Should the *Manwaring Paradigm* explain the Sri Lankan Government’s (SLG) success, it will provide an informed, scholarly assessment that decision-makers can review to develop their own COIN strategies. On the other hand, if the paradigm does not explain the outcome, it will provide a foundation on which to direct further research on the subject. In the following sections

---

\(^1\) Nagl, p. xii
I will provide background on the insurgency, outline my methodology, review literature on the conflict, examine data, and conclude with the implications of my research.

**BACKGROUND ON THE CONFLICT**

At its core, the Sri Lankan insurgency was an ethnonationalist struggle born out of colonization and decolonization. The British in the 18th century imported Hindu Tamils from Southern India as laborers for colonial plantations and eventually Tamils represented approximately 13 percent of the population. Most of the island, however, was comprised of Buddhist Sinhalese. As the majority population, this group seized state power following independence in 1948 and implemented a series of discriminatory laws that favored their race over the Tamils, largely excluding them from governance. By the 1970s, after years of political strife and unrest the Tamils finally formed both legitimate and illegitimate resistance movements. The 1970s saw limited violence but, by the 1980s, Tamil rebels escalated attacks against the government.

Unrest eventually gave way to full-scale guerilla war in July 1983 when Tamil insurgents, united under the LTTE, killed 13 Sinhalese soldiers in Tamil Jaffna, which sparked widespread devastating riots that divided the nation into two hostile camps. As a result, some 600 Tamils were killed and another 79,000 were forced to relocate to the Tamil North. This marked the start of the Tamil Tiger’s violent campaign to overthrow the government and gain autonomy in northern and eastern Sri Lanka. Led by the charismatic leader Velupillai Prabhakarn, the LTTE used widespread terror and guerilla warfare tactics against civilian and government targets that resulted in a bloody conflict throughout the 1980s and 1990s. By the late 1990s, both the LTTE and the Sri Lankan Government (SLG)—who had called in
international support to help defeat the group—reached a temporary stalemate that led to a tenuous ceasefire from 2001 to 2006. Violence erupted again in spring 2006 when the LTTE launched a suicide attack against the main military compound in Colombo.

By then, President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who came to power in 2005, had pledged to crush the LTTE and deployed forces to launch an unrelenting campaign to eliminate the group. Over the following two years, an improved military defeated the LTTE in numerous battles and liberated the insurgent stronghold in the east. In 2009, the army made its final push to seize remaining LTTE territory in the north. A final government offensive in May routed and killed the remaining rebels, including Prabhakaran, who by then were isolated to a tiny corner of the island. On May 17th an LTTE representative claimed defeat, ending over 25 years of conflict.

METHODS AND APPROACH

To evaluate Colombo’s COIN success, I employ a within-case study approach. I divide the SLG’s COIN war against the LTTE into several campaigns based on the insurgency’s stage of development and I apply the Manwaring Paradigm to each period in order to compare and contrast Colombo’s response. I define the first campaign as that of 1983 to 1990. I chose this period as 1983 marked the start of the insurgency when the LTTE killed 13 Sinhalese soldiers and mass riots ensued. In this period, the LTTE reached the stage of guerilla warfare using hit-and-run tactics and engaged in political activity domestically and abroad. I define the second campaign as the period from 1990 to 2002 when the LTTE evolved as a guerilla force mixing hit-and-run with conventional tactics. In this period, the LTTE successfully repelled Indian

---

2 CIA
forces and increased attacks against the government. The campaign ended when Colombo signed a ceasefire agreement with the LTTE after Indian troop withdrawal. I define the last campaign period as that of 2006 to 2009. After a lull in attacks following the 2002 ceasefire, violence escalated when the LTTE in 2006 conducted a suicide bombing against the main military compound in Colombo. It is in this period, specifically circa 2007, that the LTTE evolved into a mainly mobile conventional warfare unit and largely abandoned the hit-and-run tactics. The campaign ended when the Sri Lankan military in May 2009 killed LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and in August captured his successor Selvarasa Pathmanathan overseas.

To evaluate the influence that a change in the international context may have had on Sri Lanka’s success, the campaign periods span both the Cold War era and the post-Cold War era. Moreover, within the post-Cold War era, the within-case examples also span the pre-9/11 and post-9/11 world. Similarly, to account for any possible influence a president’s political affiliation may have had on Colombo’s COIN strategy, the campaigns cut across several different regimes. Lastly, examining several years in each campaign and comparing campaigns over time will also help eliminate any possible bias from campaign dates selected.

Moreover, this study seeks to explain the dependent variable, the SLG’s defeat of the LTTE. I define defeat as degrading the Tamil Tigers to the point where they can no longer function as a cohesive organization, lack command and control, and cannot execute the group’s goals.

In order to evaluate the dependent variable, I employ six explanatory variables derived from the Manwaring Paradigm defined as follows:

---

3 Ibid
4 Ibid
“Legitimacy” I define as the moral right to govern, i.e. Sinhalese and Tamil acceptance of government decisions based on each groups’ stated political and moral values. I measure this element through Sinhalese and Tamil political objectives, state policies toward each group, and public attitudes toward the government.

“Organization of unity of effort” I define as civilian and military efforts geared toward implementing one strategic campaign plan—to survive, reconcile the conflict, and remove its causes. I evaluate this component by assessing whether or not the Sri Lankan political and military apparatus coordinated efforts and pursued one goal in order to defeat the LTTE. In addition, I evaluate Colombo’s efforts, if any, to implement civilian programs—such as building schools, hospitals, and infrastructure—following military operations in order to win political favor and reestablish control in LTTE strongholds.

“Support for the targeted government” I define as outside states’ military, financial, resource, and/or rhetorical support to Colombo and whether or not the support was consistent throughout each campaign.

“Ability to reduce outside aid to the insurgents” I measure as Colombo’s and/or its international allies’ ability to cut off material or non-material aid to the LTTE as well as the ability to separate the Tamil Tigers from its network of internal and external sanctuaries.

“Intelligence” I define as the government’s ability to locate, isolate, and destroy or neutralize the insurgent leadership and organizational structure. I explain this variable with the absence or presence of LTTE attacks against the government and analysis on Colombo’s espionage capabilities.
Lastly, “discipline and capabilities of the government’s armed forces” I define as the Sri Lankan military’s ability to decisively engage and eliminate the insurgents without alienating the local population. I measure this element by assessing how the Sri Lankan military conducted itself during battles as well as literature on the military’s recruits, training courses, and weapons technology.

In turn, my hypotheses are as follows:

- \( H_1 = \) Each of the campaign periods selected will evidence a different strength and/or presence of Manwaring’s six elements.
- \( H_2 = \) Colombo’s defeat of the insurgency suggests that all of Manwaring’s elements were present to a stronger degree from 2006 to 2009 than at any other period throughout the conflict.
- \( H_3 = \) Widespread LTTE attacks throughout Sri Lanka from 1983 to 2002 suggest the government was either missing one of Manwaring’s elements or the element was present, but in a weak form.

**Data Sources**

I derive data for this thesis from scholarly literature as well as historical information on the insurgency, which are extensively evaluated in my below literature review. Using this information, I examine the six aforementioned independent variables in each of the three campaign periods. I employ news reports from international and regional outlets, which help corroborate existing literature on the conflict as well as provide additional details on the LTTE, the group’s attacks, Colombo’s military and political response, and government rhetoric throughout the insurgency. Due to the clandestine nature of intelligence, I have limited
information on the SLG’s intelligence capabilities throughout the course of the insurgency. This may limit my ability to evaluate this element with great accuracy and, in turn, could influence my conclusions.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review provides the foundation for research and writing on the Sri Lankan’s COIN success against the LTTE. This section begins with a review of how to determine the effectiveness of the Sri Lankan’s response to the insurgency based on the *Manwaring Paradigm*. Next, it reviews how scholars have previously explained Colombo’s victory.

**Manwaring Paradigm**

Max G. Manwaring in the *Manwaring Paradigm* argued that, “the ultimate outcome of a counterinsurgency effort is not primarily determined by the skillful manipulation of violence in….many military battles,” but rather the outcome is determined by government legitimacy, organization of unity of effort, type and consistency of external support for the targeted government, ability to reduce outside aid to the insurgents, intelligence, and discipline and capabilities of the government’s armed forces. Manwaring derived his assessment from an empirical study of forty-three governments worldwide in the post-World War II era that resisted or succumbed to an organized and externally supported insurgency. After interviewing over 300 people who had been involved in the conflicts and compiling data, regression analysis illustrated that each of the six dimensions mentioned above were critical in determining the effectiveness of a government’s response to an insurgency.

---

5 Manwaring, pp.19-24
This paradigm is a useful theoretical framework as Manwaring studied various conflicts that spanned different regions, types of political regimes, and levels of economic development. Moreover, the elements are not culturally bound in terms of Western values or goals. In turn, the components and can be applied to any country.\(^6\) Manwaring defined the critical COIN components as follows:

**Legitimacy:** Manwaring puts forth legitimacy, “the moral right to govern,” as the single most important element. For Manwaring, the main goal of the insurgent is to destroy the legitimacy of the targeted government and, for the government, the primary objective is to protect, maintain, and enhance its right to govern. For the government, the fight for legitimacy is the most critical factor for lasting success as well as for any external power supporting the local regime.\(^7\)

**Organization of Unity of Effort:** Next, Manwaring states the targeted government must direct all efforts toward surviving, reconciling the conflict, and removing its causes.\(^8\) “Without adequate organization at the highest level to establish, enforce, and refine a national campaign plan embracing both civilian and military efforts and programs, authority is fragmented; and there is not sufficient unity of effort to resolve the myriad of problems endemic to an insurgency.”\(^9\) The government’s inability to achieve organization of unity of effort most likely will lead to government defeat, particularly if the insurgent has seized the initiative in the conflict through superior organizational skills and clearly defined objectives.

\(^6\) Manwaring, pp.19-24  
\(^7\) Manwaring, pp.19-24  
\(^8\) Manwaring, pp.19-24  
\(^9\) Manwaring, pp.19-24
Type and Consistency of Support for Targeted Government. Manwaring purports that long-term consistent external support during and after an insurgency as critical to success. He concludes that the possibility of government success declines when external powers withdraw or inconsistently provide material or nonmaterial support during an insurgency. Conversely, the opposite held true. Lastly, “failure to support an embattled government after military success in a guerilla war was deemed to have damaged progress in the other five critical areas; in most cases the guerilla war regained momentum, and the country continued to suffer.”

Ability to reduce outside aid to the insurgents. Fourth, the targeted government must cut off the insurgent from its network of internal and external sanctuaries and from their external support. When nations’ eliminate outside aid, it provides a force multiplier in the fight in the other critical areas.

Intelligence. Manwaring highlights strong intelligence capabilities as vital for the government to locate, isolate, and destroy or neutralize the insurgent leadership and organizational structure. If the appropriate intelligence apparatus is not in place, the data showed that the conflict will continue indefinitely in one form or another.

Discipline and Capabilities of a Government’s armed forces. Lastly, Manwaring notes that the local regime must decisively engage and eliminate the enemy without alienating the local population. The armed forces’ engagement in indiscriminate warfare, atrocities, and human rights abuses will hurt the government’s legitimacy.
Manwaring concludes that in order for a government to achieve success each of the elements must be robust and present.\textsuperscript{14} “To the extent that any one component is absent, or all or most are only present in a weak form, the government’s success is not likely.”\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Literature on the Insurgency}

Turning to sources that will help me evaluate the paradigm, I employ several important works that address each of Manwaring’s components.

\textit{Political Factors and Government Legitimacy}

Neil DeVotta in \textit{Sri Lanka’s Civil War} begins by indentifying the root causes of the insurgency, i.e. political and discriminatory grievances against the island’s minority Tamil community, which he argues has also prolonged the conflict. DeVotta stated that post-colonial “politics and policies sought to marginalize Tamils and empower Sinhalese, especially the majority Sinhalese Buddhists…[and that] these practices and their crass imposition” served as the catalyst for the Tamils’ rebellion against the government and calls for independence.\textsuperscript{16} The LTTE leveraged Tamil diasporas abroad to not only gain rhetorical support from individuals and nations, but also financial and resource contributions that helped strengthen the group and ensure a protracted conflict. At its height, the LTTE claimed approximately 20,000 operatives, a navy, an airforce, and several military bases.\textsuperscript{17} As such, the group signaled to the SLG that defeat would not be easy but would require a political solution, i.e. either participation in government or a separate state.

\textsuperscript{14} Manwaring, pp.19-24
\textsuperscript{15} Manwaring, pp.19-24
\textsuperscript{16} DeVotta, p.169
\textsuperscript{17} DeVotta, p. 169
DeVotta furthered that the turning point in the conflict came in 2006 when the SLG abandoned political approaches and pursued a military strategy to counter the Tamil Tigers. DeVotta noted that the LTTE in 2006 controlled over 15,000 square miles but by May 2009, Sri Lankan security forces had cornered the group to less than one square kilometer. Military forces also killed experienced LTTE leaders and fighters and eliminated the group’s conventional warfare capabilities.\(^{18}\) Colombo also controlled media and shut off the insurgents’ ability to disseminate propaganda and generate support.\(^{19}\) DeVotta noted, however, that the government’s victory came at the expense of human rights violations, media freedom, and numerous casualties, which he argued created a new set of problems within the country and, in turn, could threaten peace.

Nira Wickramasinge in *Sri Lanka in 2008* corroborated DeVotta’s argument, but examined only one year of the insurgency, that of 2008. Wickramasinge noted that by 2008 Colombo had pulled out of the six-year cease fire with the LTTE and engaged in a military assault against the group in the North, what the author deemed the “peace with war strategy.” According to Wickramasinge, on April 23 the military deployed 160,000 troops to eliminate 10,000 LTTE operatives in a conventional ground offensive.\(^{20}\) While the attack resulted in close to 200 military and 25,000 civilian deaths, the army made “inroads into LTTE territory and severely weakened the group.”\(^{21}\) Forces continued to move north into LTTE strongholds, seizing LTTE bases, capturing bastions, and killing numerous rebels. However, by the end of the year military and LTTE fighting had displaced 450,000 persons. Some locals even claimed that the

\(^{18}\) DeVotta, p. 167  
\(^{19}\) DeVotta, p. 167  
\(^{20}\) Wickramasinghe, p. 60  
\(^{21}\) Wickramasinghe, p. 60
government attacked densely populated areas with little regard for the well-being of non-combatants.\textsuperscript{22} In addition, the campaign against the LTTE exacted heavy economic costs and increased already high-inflation levels.\textsuperscript{23} Wickramasinghe, similar to DeVotta, questioned whether or not the Sri Lankan’s recipe will achieve lasting gains or whether the human and political costs will give rise to more rebellion in the future.

Third, DeVotta in a separate piece \textit{Control Democracy, Institutional Decay and the Quest for Eelam: Explaining Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka} built on his original argument and purported that failed nation-building and institutions’ inability to address Tamil grievances prolonged the conflict. DeVotta stated, “Sri Lanka stands as a classic example of how state building can fail when one ethnonational group, the Sinhalese, attempted to build a religio, juridicio, and politico-economic society by excluding minorities.”\textsuperscript{24} Furthermore, he noted that ethnic discrimination delegitimized institutions in the eyes of the Tamils. The more widespread the phenomenon became within the state, the more Tamils mobilized in opposition against the Sinhalese.\textsuperscript{25}

DeVotta noted in the past 50 years that the Sinhalese excluded Tamils from educational opportunities, allocated a majority of public funds to their own people, and settled in areas considered Tamil homelands, all of which sewed distrust of the government.\textsuperscript{26} DeVotta stated that the Sinhalese revised state textbooks and rewrote history to promote nationalism in schools as well as amended laws in order to negate minority rights. Even though the governing People’s Alliance in 1998 made some efforts to accommodate minority grievances, discrimination

\textsuperscript{22} Wickramasinghe, p. 60
\textsuperscript{23} Wickramasinghe, pp. 63-64
\textsuperscript{24} Devotta, p. 55
\textsuperscript{25} Devotta, p..57
\textsuperscript{26} Devotta, p. 63
remained widespread. DeVotta suggested that promoting ethnic accommodation and restructuring institutions are necessary to mitigate the conflict.

Finally, the *International Crisis Group* (ICG) executed several studies of the massive international human rights violations that Colombo committed in the final five months of the conflict. The ICG alleged that Colombo intentionally shelled civilians and forced non-combatants to relocate to non-fire zones. Moreover, the ICG wrote that armed forces intentionally shelled hospitals and fired into areas of humanitarian operations. The government also exacerbated death tolls and human suffering by limiting food supplies and medical services to the civilian population. The ICG argued that such violations occurred due to an indifferent international community, which ignored the atrocities in exchange for the defeat of the LTTE. The ICG even contended that the international community encouraged the heavy-handed response against the Tamil Tigers.

*Intelligence, Outside Aid to LTTE and SLG*

Neil Smith in *Understanding the Defeat of the Tamil Tigers* argued that the defection of key LTTE personnel, significant reductions in LTTE external funding, and Chinese support to Sri Lanka’s armed forces cumulatively weakened and hurt the LTTE’s ability to continue the conflict. First, Smith purported that a significant shift in the Sri Lankan balance of power occurred in 2004 when senior LTTE commander Vinayagamoorthi Muralitharan, also known as Colonel Karuna, defected from the LTTE due to a disagreement with Prabhakaran. The loss of

---

27 DeVotta, pp. 55-59
28 ICG, pp. 1-26
29 ICG, pp. 1-26
30 ICG, pp. 1-26
31 Smith, pp. 40-44
Karuna not only deprived the LTTE of an experienced commander but, in exchange for amnesty, Karuna also provided the government with intelligence on the Tamil Tigers and guidance on how best to defeat it. Furthermore, Karuna, backed by the government, created his own Tamil political party in the eastern part of the country that opened the door for greater Tamil cooperation with the government and provided an alternative to Prabhakaran’s harsh rule. This eroded some of the LTTE’s legitimacy with the Tamil population in the East.

Second, Smith noted that the LTTE’s loss of income hurt its ability to sustain campaigns. The LTTE throughout the war had largely relied on expatriate support and smuggling to fund on-going operations. The group developed vast networks in several Western countries that provided unnumbered millions annually. However, the United States (US) in 1997 declared the LTTE a terrorist organization due to its suicide campaigns and bombings against civilians and, after the 11 September 2001 attacks, elevated its status to an international terrorist organization. As a result, several nations started cracking down on the LTTE’s funding networks.

During the same time period, significant economic, military, and political support from China enhanced the Sri Lankan’s capabilities. In 2005, Beijing provided $1 billion in military and financial aid annually, which enabled Colombo to attain the military superiority it needed to defeat the LTTE. In turn, the army grew by 70 percent. Sri Lanka invested in professional army education, purchased state of the art weapons, and formed elite counter-guerilla teams.

---

32 Smith, pp. 40-44
33 Smith, pp. 40-44
34 Smith, pp. 40-44
35 Smith, pp. 40-44
36 Smith, pp. 40-44
Moreover, China blocked resolutions at the UN that sought to punish the SLG for human rights abuses.

**Military Capabilities**

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe in *Strategic Analysis of Sri Lankan Military’s Counterinsurgency Operations* argued that the Sri Lankan’s victory was due to the transformation of the military. According to Desilva, the transformation started in November 2005 with the election of President Rajapaksa who appointed Gotabaya Rajapaksa as Defense Minister.\(^{37}\) Gotabaya restructured the military by appointing experienced commanders, purchasing new weapons, and fervently increasing recruitment and training agendas.\(^{38}\) He also standardized the Special Infantry Operations Teams that were sent into jungles to fight the LTTE. DeSilva argued that these cumulative changes prepared the military to counter the many challenges of fighting the insurgency.

**EXAMINING THE CASES: ANALYSIS OF THE PARADIGM THROUGHOUT CAMPAIGN PERIODS**

In this section, I will apply Manwaring’s six components to each of the campaign periods in order to compare and contrast Colombo’s COIN efforts and capabilities throughout the insurgency.

**1983 to 1990:**

This period provides a baseline in which to compare the SLG’s response in the following campaigns.

**Local Government Legitimacy**

---

\(^{37}\) DeSilva-Ranasinghe, pp.1-8  
\(^{38}\) Ibid
During the first campaign period from 1983 to 1990, the SLG failed to secure the most important objective of any COIN operation—to ensure that the local government is one, viewed as legitimate by the populace and two, maintains, protects, and enhances its right to govern. First, the Sinhalese-dominated SLG continued its ethnocentric and racist policies toward the Tamils—the root cause of the outbreak of violence in 1983—which further abetted Tamil support for the LTTE. For example, the Sinhalese continued to largely exclude Tamils from government. Throughout the 1980s, the Sinhalese held approximately 80 percent of seats in Parliament. Since the Sinhalese politicians were devoid of any patron-client ties to the Tamils, they disregarded Tamil political, economic, and social grievances and, instead, pandered to Sinhalese demands. In turn, politicians granted Sinhalese citizens greater access to education and job opportunities, which increased their social and economic mobility. Meanwhile, the Tamils, who, prior to the 1983 riots, owned 60 percent of wholesale trade and 80 percent of retail trade in Sri Lanka, faced increasing marginalization and struggled to obtain work.

In addition, the SLG pursued Sinhalese resettlement plans, which furthered aroused bitterness and hatred among the Tamil community. The Tamils saw this plan as an attempt to dilute the concentration of Tamils in the North and East and further increase Sinhalese dominance throughout the country. In January 1985, SLG President J.R. Jayawardene stated in a National Assembly meeting that, “Sri Lanka is one land, belonging to all its citizens…[that]…consists of 75% Sinhalese and 25% other races…[and that the government]…would settle Sri Lankans in this proportion throughout the land.” In April that

39 DeVotta, “Control Democracy,” p. 66
40 DeVotta, p. 63 and Gunaratne, p. 18
41 O’Ballance, p.48
year, the government relocated some 200,000 Sinhalese to Tamil land and provided them with agricultural and military training, based on the Israeli kibbutz pattern, as the Sinhalese would be working and living in “hostile” Tamil territory.\(^\text{42}\)

In another instance, Colombo, in response to the May 1985 Anuradhapura Massacre,\(^\text{43}\) seized Tamil land between Vavuniya and Killinochchi.\(^\text{44}\) The SLG allowed Sinhalese settlers to take over the land and move into vacated Tamil homes, leaving the former owners homeless refuges. Jayawardene illustrated the government’s blatant disregard for the Tamils when he told the \textit{Daily Telegraph} that year, “I am not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people….Now we can’t think of them. Not about their lives or their opinions of us.”\(^\text{45}\)

The Tamil community even lost faith in Colombo’s ability to provide security to innocent citizens, further driving them into the arms of the LTTE who championed themselves as the bulwark against the Sinhalese. While the Tamils viewed Sinhalese law enforcement in the 1950s as impartial arbiters in conflicts, particularly when ethnicity was a factor, they now saw them as part of the “Sinhalese vanguard designed to subjugate the Tamils.”\(^\text{46}\) For example, Colombo, through its security apparatus, failed to contain Sinhalese “Tamil hunters” who sought to exact revenge for the LTTE attack against Sinhalese soldiers in July 1983. That month, “hunters” seized 10 Tamil youths at the main railway station in Colombo and burnt nine of them to death in front of a watching crowd.\(^\text{47}\) Sinhalese men also raped Tamil women and torched Tamil homes

\(^{42}\) O’Ballance, p.48
\(^{43}\) In the May 1985 Anuradhapura Massacre the LTTE killed over 100 Sinhalese in response to the purported death of some 70 Tamils by government security forces days earlier.
\(^{44}\) O’Ballance, p. 49 and Merril, 90
\(^{45}\) DeVotta, p. 65
\(^{46}\) DeVotta, p. 66
\(^{47}\) O’Ballance, p. 24
and businesses. By the end of the year, some 600 Tamils were killed by either Sinhalese or policemen and over 79,000 pushed out of their homes in the South.\(^{48}\)

During this period, reporting also suggests that, at times, the Sinhalese were even displeased with their own government. After President Jayawardene and Indian Prime Minister Ghandi signed the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord (ISLA)\(^{49}\) in July 1987, the Sinhalese community protested and rioted for months. Sinhalese were shocked and horrified that Colombo granted concessions to the Tamils and allowed Indian troops to enter the country. Government troops and police forces flooded the streets of Colombo and other major cities, using tear gas as well as armored cars to disperse angry mobs. The riots caused considerable damage as protestors set vehicles on fire, cut power lines, and disrupted transportation by blocking roads with burning tires.\(^{50}\) Some even went on hunger strikes. Then President of the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress G. Ranatunge, who claimed to represent 60% of the Sinhalese vote, strongly condemned the accord.\(^{51}\)

**Organization of Unity of Effort**

In the early years of the insurgency, there was a notable lack of unity of command and direction of effort among the SLG and the armed forces to coordinate little, if any, COIN programs. The government responded to the LTTE threat with military means and largely did not fold in political elements to help resolve the myriad of Tamil grievances that sparked the

---

\(^{48}\) Nieto, p. 579  
\(^{49}\) The Sri Lankan army on May 26, 1987, launched Operation Liberation against the LTTE in Jaffna Peninsula. The Indian government swayed by their own domestic Tamil constituency opposed the offensive and sent relief supplies the LTTE. In turn, the LTTE was able to defend itself against the army. India eventually called for a cease-fire to end the stalemate. The peace accord called for devolution of power in the Tamil East and West, the LTTE to lay down their arms, Sri Lankan forces to return to barracks and positions prior to the start of their 1987 offensive against the LTTE in the North, and Indian troops to enter Sri Lanka to keep the peace.  
\(^{50}\) O’Ballance, p. 94 and The LA Times  
\(^{51}\) O’Ballance, p. 94
insurgency. From 1986 to 1989 the only permanent apparatus in which Colombo discussed the LTTE and how to combat the insurgency was the National Security Council (NSC), which met once a week and as events dictated. During the meetings, SLG officials discussed how to counter the threat with military and security measures. According to then Director of Intelligence Merril Gunaratne, “The preference for this lopsided strategy in effect meant that the NSC hardly had the…desire to grasp the totality of the problem. The ethnic question being a multidimensional one, its resolution required the formulation of a coherent all embracing plan which would require…political and diplomatic, in addition to military strategies.”

Merril also commented that “the absence of such a total comprehensive plan was due to the failure of the government at the time to establish or appoint a permanent and full time organization or body which could have brought under one umbrella senior specialists or representatives of all agencies associated in battle…” In early 1985, Merril and the Director of the South Asia Desk for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a joint proposal to the President to establish a committee of representatives from all agencies to tackle the ethnic question. However, the men never received a response to their proposal. Nevertheless, Merril saw the benefit in working with a different agency as their expertise on India’s support to the Tamils helped better inform Merril’s view on how best to tackle the Tamil equation.

**External Support for the SLG**

In this period, not only did Colombo not have consistent outside aid from other governments but the support it did receive was largely insufficient to counter the Tamil Tigers.

---

52 Merril, p. 23
51 Merril, p. 23
54 Merril, p. 23
After the ISLA, Colombo saw its first major outside support when India deployed a small-size peacekeeping force to Sri Lanka to monitor the ceasefire between Colombo and the LTTE. Within a few months, however, the agreement unraveled and the LTTE refused to unarm. As a result, in fall 1987 Indian peacekeeping forces (IPKF) became involved in peace enforcement and combat operations, which the IPKF was not prepared to withstand.

When the IPKF entered Jaffna in October, in response to LTTE attacks against Indian and SLG targets, it encountered enormous setbacks early on. Indian forces were significantly under staffed at approximately 50% strength, lacked heavy equipment or weapons, and troops up until that point had seldom, if ever, engaged in urban guerilla warfare. As such, the IPKF poorly executed operations and followed “set-piece tactics” without any effort to innovate, quickly falling victim to the LTTE’s effective hit-and-run tactics. The LTTE fought doggedly; they adeptly laid landmines, employed human shields, and infiltrated behind IPKF lines, inflicting maximum casualties, damaging Indian resolve, and, in turn, bolstering its support base among the Tamil community.

Even after the IPKF employed COIN tactics, bolstered its ranks to 32,000 troops, and finally secured Jaffna a month later, the Indian forces still suffered from serious problems. For one, India lacked unity of command and unity of effort among the political and military components of the campaign as each attempted to define its mission in Sri Lanka. In addition, New Dehli and Colombo disagreed over the LTTE threat, whether to kill Prabhakaran, and how to eliminate LTTE strongholds. By June 1988, even though the IPKF increased its strength

---

55 Mehta, pp. 163-164, Fair, p. 21, O’Ballance, pp. 102-107
56 Mehta, pp. 163-164 and Fair, p. 21
57 O’Ballance, p. 99, p.106
58 Mehta, pp. 166
again to 52,000 soldiers, it was clear the LTTE had not been defeated, the leadership was still intact, and fighters had retreated to remote jungles to recuperate and prepare for future battles. By April 1989, the SLG and LTTE forged a secret agreement to oust IPKF forces from Sri Lanka and by late March 1990 troops had left.

Other than India, limited reporting suggests that the US, United Kingdom (UK), Israel, Pakistan, and China sent limited support to the SLG. Concerned about alleged human rights abuses and poor discipline within the Sri Lankan armed forces, President Ronald Regan in 1987 pledged a mere $160,000, refused to supply arms, and encouraged Jayawardene to find a non-military solution to the Tamil problem. A private UK security firm in 1982 and Israel in 1984 both purportedly sent security experts to train intelligence-gathering units and paramilitary police groups on COIN tactics. Sri Lanka also allegedly received minor covert military aid from Pakistan and China, both of whom did not want to overtly acknowledge their support to Colombo for fear of provoking their mutual adversary, India.

**Ability to Reduce Outside Aid to the Insurgent**

Third, the SLG failed to separate the LTTE from its safehaven and external material, political, and diplomatic support, which significantly bolstered LTTE capabilities and helped transform the group into a lethal guerilla movement. One of the most important factors in this campaign period was India’s safehaven and material support to the LTTE, which provided the

---

59 O’balance, p. 118 and Merril, p. 34
60 The SLG wanted the IPKF to leave as they saw Indian troops as a potential threat to Sri Lankan sovereignty and were concerned India might try to seize the country. The LTTE also transformed from an ally of India’s into its foe, accusing New Delhi of arming non-LTTE Tamil groups, failing to release LTTE detainees as promised, and failing to stop Sinhalese colonization of Tamil areas.
61 O’Ballance, p. 90 and p. 38 and Mehta, p. 166
62 O’Ballance, pp. 37-38 and Mehta
63 O’Ballance, pp. 37-38
group with breathing room to build its international network. In August 1983, India officially began assisting the LTTE due to domestic and geopolitical compulsions.\textsuperscript{64} Then Indian Premier Indira Ghandi ordered India’s clandestine intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) to train LTTE cadre in India.

In turn, by 1984, LTTE training camps in Tamil Nadu numbered around 32 and, by mid-1987, India had provided over 20,000 insurgents with sanctuary, money, training, and weapons.\textsuperscript{65} Even when SLG forces entered Jaffna in 1987 and cut off LTTE lines of control, India undermined Colombo’s efforts by sending a flotilla of boats with some $3.2 million worth of fuel, food, and medical supplies to the peninsula—what then SLG Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa called the “Trojan Horse.”\textsuperscript{66} Direct Indian support and safehaven to the LTTE largely ceased with the LTTE-IPKF conflict but, by that time, it was too late. The LTTE adroitly leveraged the years of assistance to help develop a burgeoning clandestine global network to acquire money and supplies and to disseminate propaganda statements.

Moreover, neither Colombo nor the international community combated the Tamil Diaspora, which nurtured an unnumbered exorbitant amount of funds and quickly became the economic backbone for the LTTE campaign. Following the onset of hostilities in 1983, some 100,000 Tamil refugees fled to Tamil Nadu and, by 1984, the number reached 200,000.\textsuperscript{67} After

\textsuperscript{64} In 1983, in the eyes of many Indian hardliners, Sri Lankan since 1977 had stepped out of the non-aligned movement and became an ally of the West. Sri Lanka also started developing good relations with China and Pakistan—both enemies of India. In addition, Tamil Nadu residents, who were largely comprised of ethnic Tamils or Tamils who had fled from Sri Lanka pressured the government to support the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka.

\textsuperscript{65} Gunaratna (1998), p. 8, Fair, p. 35, Nieto, 579

\textsuperscript{66} O’Ballance, pp. 80-86

\textsuperscript{67} Gunaratna (1998), p. 3
the 1987 riots, another 450,000 to 500,000 Tamil refugees fled to 50 nations and with it the international Tamil Diaspora was born.68

The LTTE leveraged the Diaspora and created a sophisticated network to coordinate fundraising campaigns from Europe to the Middle East where representatives socialized Tamils into providing a tithe each month. In the US, one person alone pledged as much as $100,000 at a time and, over a decade, allegedly gave as a much as $4 million.69 The group also leveraged the Diaspora to disseminate propaganda in order to raise funds, denigrate Colombo, and internationalize the plight of the Tamils. According to Sri Lanka expert Rohan Gunaratna, “Very few in the [Sri Lanka] national security apparatus at that time realized the importance of monitoring activities of Tamil insurgents overseas, including the vibrant Tamil Diaspora-insurgent link.”70

In turn, the LTTE used this money to augment their weapons cache. In this period, the LTTE mainly procured munitions and SAMs from Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan.71 After India withdrew its support to the LTTE, the Tigers leveraged the financial resources to bolster its indigenous weapons production and developed sophisticated short-range missiles by 1990.72 The group also increasingly launched brazen attacks against SLG military camps and weapons depots, acquiring significant quantities of long-range artillery.73

The LTTE also used funds to develop a highly clandestine shipping network to transport supplies from around the world to Sri Lanka. In 1984, Prabhakaran purportedly purchased the

68 Gunaratna (1998), p. 4 and Van de Voorde, p. 191
69 Chalk, p. 4
70 Gunaratna (1998), p.6
72 Chalk, 6
73 Chalk, p.6
group’s first deep water vessel from Singapore and from 1985 onwards, the LTTE rapidly developed a fleet of ships. Between 1983 and 1985, authorities captured three vessels, all of which were carrying dozens of tons of armaments purchased from around the world. At the time, intelligence agencies admitted that while they were monitoring LTTE shipping activity, they could detect or prevent less than 20% of the weapon consignments from reaching Sri Lanka. By 1990 the LTTE had established transshipment points from Hong Kong to Singapore to Africa.

Intelligence

The clandestine nature of the Tamil Tigers and lack of SLG capabilities hindered intelligence collection aimed at locating, isolating, and neutralizing the LTTE leadership as well as preventing attacks, all of which helped prolong the insurgency. For example, early on the largely Sinhalese-dominated armed forces and police, due to their contempt for the Tamils, neither wanted to nor were directed to learn how to speak or write Tamil. Subsequently, this hurt intelligence collection since Sinhalese officers could not converse well, if at all, with Tamils. Tamils also refused to serve as interpreters for the army or police. The LTTE also hurt SLG intelligence collection by executing Tamils accused of spying and placing signs around their necks proclaiming them “informers.” These intimidation campaigns probably prevented Tamil informers from coming forward. Moreover, limited international intelligence cooperation aimed at tamping down on the LTTE’s global networks further abetted the Tigers’ rise.

74 Chalk, p. 6, Gunaratna, p. 13, Rotberg, pp. 32-34
75 Chalk, p. 6
76 O’Ballance, p. 29
By 1984, Sri Lankan intelligence capabilities had improved due to internal reforms and international training assistance from outside governments. This helped Sri Lankan forces uncover safe houses, weapons caches, and the location of some Tamil Tigers. Security forces rounded-up Tamil youths, held them in camps, and interrogated them to learn about insurgent capabilities. SLG forces also implemented listening devices to overhear conversations and issued large cash awards for reliable information.

However, the government also held Tamil residents liable if police found arms caches in Tamil neighborhoods. Police would send Tamils to resettlement camps if they refused to provide information. In addition, due to the paucity of intelligence, police started to conduct cordon and search operations, which required police to search every Sinhalese and Tamil house in a particular area. Residents described the practice as a “callous” and “humiliating experience.” Such actions hurt popular support for the government.

While the SLG had some minor successes extracting information from Tamils, LTTE leaders continued to live rather openly, courting the international media and radioing orders to commanders in the field. In addition, the group assassinated selective servicemen and police, stole weapons from government depots, attacked government and civilian targets, and burned state infrastructure. All in all, the LTTE continued to outmaneuver and outmatch government forces.

*Discipline and Capability of Armed Forces*

---

77 O’Ballance, p. 49  
78 Merril, p. 70  
79 Merril, p. 70
While the SLG improved the armed forces’ capabilities throughout the period, they still lacked the necessary numbers, weapons, and training in order to pose a formidable challenge to the strengthening LTTE. In 1983, the armed forces through voluntary recruitment raised a total of 16,000 soldiers, 11,000 of whom were in the combat unit. The SLG also had 2,000 air force and 3,000 navy officers. By late 1985, the SLG had more than doubled its ranks to 48,000, with 22,000 regulars and the rest reservists. National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali boasted at the time that security forces “had now achieved a ratio of 10-1 for the success of conventional forces over guerilla ones,” a number that likely was inflated for propaganda purposes as by 1987, the LTTE numbered around 3,000 to 4,000. The following year, Jayawardene announced the military had also developed a COIN force of some 10,000 men to assist the army.

Despite the rising numbers, troops were largely ill-equipped and prepared for the fight. While units had rifles and automatic weapons, they did not possess many transport vehicles, which limited their mobility. Moreover, the army did have some 40 light armored vehicles, but nothing modern. Similarly, the air force possessed mainly transport planes and helicopters but, again, no state of the art combat or COIN aircraft or gunships. Shortly after the riots began, Jayawardene publically stated that supplies had been exhausted and, in turn, he planned to purchase additional aircraft and armored vehicles.

---

80 O’Ballance, p. 28
81 O’Ballance, p. 28, p. 36
82 O’Ballance, p. 78-80
83 O’Ballance, p. 78-80 and Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism
84 O’Ballance, p. 53
85 O’Ballance, pp. 78-80
In addition, troops were used to fighting conventional wars and thus trained in conventional versus COIN tactics. In turn, soldiers suffered thousands of casualties at the hands of the LTTE who laid landmines, booby trapped buildings, fired and quickly retreated into hiding. By 1987, SLG senior military officers estimated it would take at least three years before an enlarged, re-equipped, and re-trained army could successfully counter the Tigers. This factor probably drove Jayawardene to accept the ISLA as the cease-fire and Indian troops provided SLG forces with support and breathing room to recuperate from the barrage of LTTE attacks.

Moreover, early on troops lacked discipline and would often engage in unpopular or indiscriminate tactics that drew the ire of the Tamil community. As a result, Tamils threw their support behind the LTTE instead of the government, which undermined Colombo’s fight against the insurgent group. For example, by 1984 security forces in both the Northern and Eastern provinces security forces had developed a siege mentality and would patrol streets with armored vehicles, erect strings of check-points, and impose curfews, which many viewed as military repression. At other times, soldiers revenged LTTE attacks by burning hundreds of Tamil homes, shops, and libraries as well as killing civilians. At no time did Jayawardene blame the armed forces for the loss of life and property. In fact, during a press conference he once stated, “…suppose Montgomery had been disciplined for allowing his soldiers to kill Germans,” highlighting the government’s ignorance and/or unwillingness to acknowledge the population-centric dimension of COIN operations.

---

86 O’Ballance, p. 92
87 O’Ballance, p. 44
Early on, police forces lacked the necessary tools to rout LTTE operatives and hold territory. Prior 1984, the government leaned heavily on the army in both Sinhalese and Tamil territories to control major situations of lawlessness, such as communal disturbances, as the police largely failed to swiftly and effectively bring such situations under control. However, a year later, Colombo created the Special Task Force (STF), an elite Special Forces unit that engaged in COIN and counterterrorism (CT) operations against LTTE targets. After the STF received training from the British and Israelis the paramilitary unit’s capabilities improved. They started fighting alongside the military and were in control of a strip of territory from Kiran to Potuvil along the east coast. Nevertheless, according to Merril, the government deployed the STF excessively in the North and East, and not in other areas, such as Colombo, which the LTTE continuously attacked.

1990 to 2002:

In this segment, I assess Manwaring’s elements in the second campaign period that of 1990 to 2002. The SLG’s success or non-success within each of the elements are compared against the first campaign period.

Legitimacy

As in the first campaign, Colombo failed to secure legitimacy among the Tamil community and, in fact, continued discriminatory practices against the ethnic group, which hurt the government’s ability to peel away Tamil support for the LTTE. For one, the government continued to restrict Tamil representation in government, access to education, and economic opportunities. Second, the security apparatus—in trying to route the LTTE—continued to

---

88 Merril, p. 116
hassle, inconvenience, and humiliate Tamils, which further drew their ire against the
government. For example, the SLG, in order to try to identify LTTE cadre, erected more and
more checkpoints to verify civilians’ identity. Security forces even increasingly stopped and
checked children at predominately Tamil schools.\(^{89}\) This required Tamils to repeatedly produce
IDs and incessantly submit to interrogation about their daily movements.\(^{90}\) According to the
Director of the National Peace Council, Jehan Perera, the Tamils viewed “…the Sri Lankan
Army [at the time] as an army of occupation. Most of the time it sat quietly in the corner, then
something happened and the fellow got up and went mad. There was no doubt, given the choice,
people preferred the LTTE. They [the LTTE] did not suddenly turn their guns on them [the
Tamils]…but of course, they [the Tamils] did not like to pay the LTTE taxes and would really
prefer if neither were around.”\(^{91}\)

After the government laid siege to Jaffna in 1995 and fought a bloody conventional battle
against the LTTE, Colombo did attempt to rebuild some of the infrastructure there, but
reconstruction efforts were slow going. By the end of 1995, only 70,000 of the original 470,000
residents in Jaffna remained.\(^{92}\) Many of them lived in the ruins of their tattered homes and with
little infrastructure. While some of the less damaged homes were fixed, major public buildings
such as the Jaffna library and the Post Office were still in dismal ruin four years later.\(^{93}\) In
addition, Colombo was ill-prepared to provide shelter, food, and water to the homeless who
became wandering refugees. Then Sri Lankan General Gunawardena recognized the need to win

---

\(^{89}\) Fair, p. 59  
\(^{90}\) Harris, p.37  
\(^{91}\) Harris, p. 38  
\(^{92}\) Harris, p. 38  
\(^{93}\) Harris, p. 38
hearts and minds, for example, through reconstruction efforts, but policies were not implemented to fully address the problem.

Similar to the first campaign period, even the Sinhalese, at times, were displeased with Colombo. For example, after the LTTE overran a military base in Mullaitivu in July 1996, Sinhalese civilian movements began pressuring the government for news of battlefield casualties. While the government never officially announced the number of dead, senior army sources suggested Colombo lost some 1,600 army, police, and naval personnel in that one night as well as significant weapons and munitions.\(^{94}\) In turn, several groups started protesting outside of city hall over the loss of loved ones. One woman said most people in Sri Lanka were “anaesthetized and desensitized” by the war and that “the cry of most families has been that no one cares for their suffering.”\(^{95}\) During these years the SLG, again, did not largely employ COIN tactics and broke one of Mao Tse Tung’s cardinal rules for success—that if fish [terrorists] have to be captured or killed, the entire water [population] should not be poisoned.

**Organization of Unity of Effort**

Absent a strategic and tactical COIN strategy, the SLG, military forces, and law enforcement agencies were unable to destroy the LTTE. First, Colombo continued to chase a military solution to the insurgency and largely pursued the fight with conventional versus COIN tactics. Moreover, the SLG largely failed to expand its efforts beyond the military arena and develop any political, socio-economic, or international dimension to fighting the insurgency. For example, Colombo did not offer any solid, alternative path to the Tamils, who stood in the crosshairs of the fight between the government and the LTTE. Nor did the government go to

\(^{94}\) Harris, p.38 and Associated Press, Tamils Continue Battle with Sri Lankan Troops, p.1

\(^{95}\) Harris, p. 38
great pains to alleviate the suffering of the Tamils in the North and East. Furthermore, the pace at which COIN components were being implemented was slow and inadequate to meet the growing domestic and international LTTE threat. According to Merril, Sri Lankan governments almost always acted late whenever the Tamil Tigers raised their head. They failed to take the insurgent attacks seriously at the early stages due to ignorance. Thus, there was no real effort on behalf of the national security apparatus to integrate the necessary military and non-military dimension of a COIN battle.

A lack of unity of command was even present within the various agencies executing the COIN operations. For example, the Police Rangers, under the Director General of Intelligence and Security (DGIS), stationed in North and South Colombo in the mid-1990s, were not integrated COIN organizations. According to Merril it was an “ad-hoc system lacking cohesion and unity of effort.” The crucial intelligence, investigations, and operations arms did not work together in an integrated manner. Furthermore, intelligence and investigating officers were accountable to the heads of their parent organizations, not the DGIS. In turn, the decentralized command structure and poor coordination hurt the Police Rangers’ ability to collect intelligence and coordinate operations that would successfully neutralize LTTE threats or personnel. In turn, Colombo continued to face significant attacks.

**External Support for the Government**

Early on, few outside governments provided consistent or sufficient material or diplomatic support to the SLG mainly due to continued allegations of human rights abuses and

---

96 Merril, p. 59
97 Merril, p. 59
98 Merril, p. 59
99 Merril, p. 61
all-around heavy-handed tactics used by the Sri Lankan Army. Throughout the 1990s, Sri Lanka received the bulk of its defense equipment from China and the Ukraine. Colombo procured patrol boats from Russia, Ukraine, and Israel. In particular, Israel provided fast attack craft and unmanned aerial vehicles. Colombo also imported F-7M Airguard planes from China as well as helicopter gunships from the Ukraine.

However, external support started to shift when India—who previously supported the LTTE—started to crack down on the Tamil Tigers at home and abroad. After the LTTE assassinated Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Ghandi in May 1991, New Delhi stepped up surveillance on LTTE international operations. Indian diplomats and RAW operatives aggressively lobbied and pressured the UK, for example, to disrupt persons who provided material and financial support to the LTTE. In turn, England deported former LTTE Jaffna commander Sathasivam Krishnaswamy to Switzerland and arrested others. This spurred the LTTE to shift some of its operations out of England to the Nordic countries where laws were more lax. Moreover, India started to share intelligence with Colombo. Acting on Indian information, the Sri Lankan Navy (SLN), for example, disrupted several vessels carrying arms shipments to the LTTE.

Another major watershed moment came in 1997 when the US officially designated the LTTE as a terrorist organization due to the LTTE’s suicide campaigns and attacks against civilians. While, at the time, the US downplayed media reports about increasing military

---

100 Nieto, p. 578  
101 Harris, p. 38  
102 Rotberg, p. 35  
103 Rohan, p. 17  
104 Nieto, p. 33
assistance to the SLG, the US did approve some significant weapons purchases and engaged in joint training. For example, US Green Berets and Navy SEALS trained Sri Lankan armed forces in long-range patrolling, tactical reconnaissance, and rapid-reaction air and sea attacks.\textsuperscript{105} The US also approved the sale of Kfir fighters—that had American made engines—from Israel to Sri Lanka. Following suit, the British established a Staff College to help educate Sri Lankan officers and in 1998 approved 67 licenses to export small arms, mortars, and combat aircraft to Sri Lanka.\textsuperscript{106}

After the 11 September attacks, the US upgraded the LTTE to Specially Designated Global Terrorist status, which authorized Washington and its allies to disrupt LTTE financial activities worldwide. Specifically, the US could now designate and block the assets of foreign individuals and entities that committed or posed a significant risk of committing acts of terrorism.\textsuperscript{107} In the next campaign period, these initiatives helped the West and the SLG break the backbone of LTTE support.

\textit{Ability to Reduce Outside Aid to the Insurgent}

In contrast to the first campaign period, the LTTE lost its external sanctuary in India after New Delhi withdrew from Sri Lanka in 1990. No longer did RAW provide safehaven, training, or munitions to the LTTE but, instead, increasingly cracked down on group members residing in India. Tamil Nadu-based sympathizers, however, continued to covertly send money to the LTTE. The LTTE also leveraged these Tamil sympathizers to provide safehouses and weapons prior to the LTTE’s assassination of Gandhi in 1991. In another instance, New Delhi dismissed

\textsuperscript{105} Young, pp. 185-186 and Harris, p.39
\textsuperscript{106} Harris, p. 39 and Rotberg, p. 34
\textsuperscript{107} Gayache, p. 1
then Tamil Nadu Home Secretary for warning the Tamil Tigers of anti-LTTE operations in India. Nevertheless, Tamil Nadu support did not outweigh New Delhi’s previous aid to the group.

In this campaign period, the LTTE grew its propaganda and publicity capabilities to increase global political support for the Tamils and raise money. The LTTE propagated three messages; that the Tamils were innocent victims of the Sinhalese-dominate government, that they were subjected to constant discrimination and military oppression, and that Tamils can never peacefully co-exist with the Sinhalese in one state. By May 1998, the LTTE stood up a quasi-diplomatic organization in at least 54 countries to lobby governments to support their cause and, in North Atlantic countries alone, created over 40 Sri Lankan Tamil newspapers to highlight the Tamil cause.108

The LTTE also continued to receive significant funding from its overseas network. By 1995, some 40% of the LTTE’s budget was generated overseas. After the LTTE lost Jaffna in early 1996, experts assess 60% to 90% of the Tamil Tigers war chest came from global sources.109 At the time, the LTTE received large donations, about $1 million a month,110 from Tamil sympathizers in Switzerland, Canada, Australia, the UK, US, and Scandinavian countries. The group also earned money from investing in stocks, money markets, and real estate as well as from shops, restaurants, and gas stations.

After the loss of Jaffna in 1995, the LTTE increasingly looked to its external sources to purchase munitions, none of which were in short supply. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine became even more of a major weapons supplier. In 1994, the LTTE, in one of its largest

108 Rohan, p. 5 and Chalk, p. 4
109 Rohan, p. 11 and Chalk, p. 5
110 Rotberg, p. 34
single consignments, purchased 60 tons of RDX and TNT from the Ukraine and transported it to Sri Lanka where the explosives were unloaded and transferred to several secret jungle bases.\textsuperscript{111} The LTTE used some of the explosives in the massive January 1996 truck bomb in Colombo—one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in history that killed some 80 people, including 32 foreigners, and left at least 1,400 wounded.\textsuperscript{112} Cambodia also became a major source of weapons, including Soviet-made surface-to-air-missiles that the Tigers purchased from corrupt government officials and insurgent forces.\textsuperscript{113} Most importantly, the LTTE’s maritime capabilities remained intact so the group could easily transport the weapons shipments from all over the world to Sri Lanka.

\textit{Intelligence}

Similar to the first campaign period, Colombo lacked the requisite intelligence to thwart attacks and disrupt LTTE operatives due to insufficient capabilities and resources. For example, the LTTE’s assassination of Sri Lanka President Ranasinghe Premadasa in January 1993 reflects how intelligence officers failed to uncover plots, particularly against prominent political figures, a tactic the LTTE saw as the best means to cripple the civilian government. Prior to the attack, the LTTE suicide bomber Babu befriended the President’s protection detail and valets and, in turn, gained access to the President’s schedule and movements.\textsuperscript{114} The LTTE then used this information to successfully time the attack for maximum impact. According to Merril, this protracted process of preparatory work did not arouse the suspicions of the security guards or the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Chalk, p. 7
  \item \textsuperscript{112} UNHCR
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Chalk, p. 7 and Rotberg, p.33
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Merril, p. 62
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
intelligence agencies as they were not trained in counterintelligence work. The Sri Lankan security apparatus also failed to prevent numerous assassinations against prominent politicians such as Ranhan Wijeratne and Gamini Dissanayake in 1991 and 1994, respectively, and Admiral Clancy Fernando in 1992.

Moreover, the intelligence agencies’ inability to identify the LTTE’s underground networks hurt their efforts to curtail attacks in Colombo. Merril noted that the LTTE had successfully infiltrated the city and established a number of cells which, at the time, the intelligence services believed acted independent of one another. The cells committed strikes in the district with impunity and monotonous regularity. Merril stated that if the government had collected good intelligence early on it could have aborted the growth of the movement. By 1999, he said, “intelligence [was] drying,” which would make it even more difficult to detect and render the underground cells impotent.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka’s purge of intelligence operatives from its main security and intelligence service, the State Intelligence Service (SIS), probably hurt Colombo’s ability to respond to the LTTE threat. At the time, the SIS was charged with collecting intelligence at home and abroad and between 1995 and 1996 Colombo moved over half of the department heads to new posts and dismissed several overseas chiefs of stations. For example, the government transferred the head of the department tasked with monitoring LTTE activities and the chief of the London field office to positions outside of the SIS. Sri Lankan experts at the time commented the purge in the ranks of the SIS probably hurt the intelligence service’s ability to

---

115 Merril, p. 62
116 Merrill, p. 56
117 The SIS was formed in 1984 and was formally known as the National Intelligence Bureau.
118 Davis, p. 12
thwart attacks and sever the LTTE’s international procurement and fundraising efforts.\(^{119}\) According to an anonymous Colombo source in 1996, “For any government to dismantle its intelligence service in the middle of a war is suicide.”\(^{120}\)

While the Director of Internal Intelligence—Sri Lanka’s premier intelligence unit—had trained officers and resources to collect intelligence, many of the other units did not, which collectively hurt the government’s ability to acquire clandestine information. For example, Merril noted that policemen, in particular, were hamstrung in their ability to collect intelligence. During this period, Colombo tasked policemen to monitor certain parts of neighborhoods in order to uncover, then monitor LTTE operatives or sympathizers as well as develop informants. The government believed that policemen, familiar with neighborhoods, were in a good position to pick up nuances and observe clues that intelligence officers probably could not detect.

Merril observed, however, that the policemen did not possess the necessary skills to perform such operations as they were neither trained nor experienced in this field.\(^{121}\) Specifically, the police did not have the financial, technical, or other material resources necessary for the job. In turn, policemen were constrained in their ability to execute even minor tasks such as surveillance. According to Merril, “the police are in the right environment sans resources, whilst intelligence officers enjoy an abundance of resources, but are not in the right environment to reap the benefits.”\(^{122}\)

\textit{Capability of Armed Forces}

\(^{119}\) Davis, p. 12  
\(^{120}\) Davis, p. 12  
\(^{121}\) Merril, p. 64  
\(^{122}\) Merril, p. 65
Similar to the first campaign period, the government continued to develop the armed forces, but they still lacked the resources and capabilities to successfully defeat the LTTE. By 1999, the SLA had grown to 120,000 personnel, with some 75,000 to 85,000 in active duty. In addition, the air force and navy grew to 17,000 and 15,000, respectively. The government also bolstered its police force, which stood at 50,000. At the time, the LTTE numbered around 16,000 to 17,000 members.\textsuperscript{123}

Furthermore, Colombo increased its war budget. In 1999, the government spent 37 percent of its purse fighting the insurgency. In 1997 and 1998, Colombo spent over £1 billion each year of the conflict. The government used these funds to purchase additional, more state of the art munitions and equipment—such as aircraft, patrol craft, and armored vehicles—from outside nations as well as cover the day-to-day operational expenses of the various security services. However, Colombo spent little resources rebuilding damaged infrastructure in Tamil areas or given as aid relief to those who fled the North and East where government forces clashed with the LTTE.

Despite some of these gains, the SLG lacked the necessary human capital required to both clear and hold LTTE strongholds in the North and East. For example, in 1995, some 30,000 Sri Lankan soldiers recaptured the Jaffna Peninsula in operation Jaya Sikuru, but started to lose traction there 18 months later after sustaining heavy losses at the hands of the LTTE. While the Ministry of Defense did not announce the number of dead, the losses were severe and significantly weakened the strength and morale of the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) in particular. In addition, according to Paul Harris of Jane’s Intelligence Review, as much as 20 percent, i.e.

\textsuperscript{123} Jane’s World Insurgency and Terrorism, LTTE, pp. 209-210
some 20,000 men and women had deserted the army.\textsuperscript{124} While amnesty programs brought some 5,000 soldiers back, “those returning often did so only temporarily and all the time there were more, fresh desertions—recruitment simply could not keep up.”\textsuperscript{125}

Sri Lankan Major-General Lohan Gunawardena, commander in chief of all the armed forces—army, air force, navy, and police—in the Jaffna Peninsula freely admitted in 1998 that his main problem was a lack of resources. He noted that the security forces were stretched thin and all Jaffna-based soldiers complained about the infrequency of leave. While Gunawardena from 1996 to 1999 established 14 civilian police stations to deal with normal civil enforcement in Jaffna, taking the burden off the military, he admitted that he still needed more troops. He commented that, “We want more soldiers here but we have a recruitment problem. The last army recruitment drive was disappointing. Our immediate target is now an additional 20,000 soldiers.”\textsuperscript{126} However, he acknowledged that due to the tough war situation new people were hesitant to join and, those that did, were often of low quality. Gunawardena believed at the time the government should offer better pay and benefits in order to make the army more attractive and, thus, bring in and retain more soldiers. With additional manpower he stated he could improve the state of the security and “minimize the terrorist threat.”\textsuperscript{127}

As a result, the SLG and civilians continued to face high-impact, devastating attacks. Most notably the LTTE in January 1996 bombed Colombo’s financial district which killed 100 and injured 1,500 more. The Tamils also attacked the World Trade Center in Colombo in 1997, partially destroyed the island’s most revered shrine in 1998, and demolished over half of the Sri

\textsuperscript{124} Harris and Rotberg, p. 31
\textsuperscript{125} Harris, p. 37
\textsuperscript{126} Harris, p. 37
\textsuperscript{127} Harris, p. 37
Lankan airline fleet with a suicide attack against the international airport in 2001. In 2000, the LTTE also overran the once impregnable Elephant Pass military complex—one of the most fortified military camps on the island—similar to Mullativu in 1996. The military also took hits against the LTTE but, by 2002, the war of attrition had exhausted both sides, which resulted in a ceasefire agreement that year.

2006 to 2009:

In this segment, I assess Manwaring’s elements in the last campaign period that of 2006 to 2009. The SLG’s success or non-success within each of the elements are compared against the second campaign period.

Local Government Legitimacy

In contrast to the first two campaigns, in this period, popular support for the LTTE started to rapidly decline. After former LTTE Colonel Karuna, along with some 6,000 fighters and scores of supporters, split with Prabahkaran in 2004, the LTTE continued to witness a slump of support in the East. In 2006, the LTTE in the Eastern Province started to act like a conventional army of occupation, rather than an insurgent force, and would often arrest, torture, and kill dozens of Tamil citizens who the LTTE thought might be spying for the group or who were loyal to Karuna. Moreover, in late July 2006 the LTTE closed the Mavil Oya reservoir in Trincomalee district, which cut the water supply to 30,000 residents in the east. This deprived some Tamils, Sinhalese, and Muslims of drinking water as well as water required for the vast

128 Mehta, pp. 3-4
129 DeSilva, pp. 2-3
130 Nitin, p. 40
rice paddies.\textsuperscript{131} In addition, as the war progressed and LTTE controlled areas started to shrink, the Tamil Tigers in 2008 started to increasingly target soft targets, such as trains and buses, killing hundreds of people.\textsuperscript{132} The gathering storm of anti-LTTE sentiment in the last campaign, particularly in formerly LTTE dominated areas, created an increasingly hostile environment for the group.

However, opposition to the LTTE did not necessarily translate into new support for the government due to the massive human rights violations the SLG committed against the Tamils in the last three years of the insurgency. While the SLG has vehemently denied the crimes it has committed, a body of reporting suggests that security forces killed thousands of civilians. According to the United Nations, some 7,000 civilians were killed from January to April 2009 alone.\textsuperscript{133} In the last three weeks of fighting experts estimated that military forces killed as many as 40,000 non-combatants.\textsuperscript{134} According to a young pastor who survived the final government offensive at Mullattivu, the military killed dozens of unarmed Tamils, including several senior Tiger political leaders and their families.\textsuperscript{135} The pastor commented that soldiers laughed at him and stated, “We have killed all your leaders. Now you are our slaves…. You can imagine how I \[the pastor\] feel about my country.”\textsuperscript{136} The government also purportedly sent over 10,000 Tamils, accused of supporting the LTTE, to squalid detention camps where they were held for months to years on end.\textsuperscript{137}

\textsuperscript{131} Nitin, p. 33-34
\textsuperscript{132} Bloomberg, p. 1-2
\textsuperscript{133} ICC, p. 5 “Those who compiled these internal numbers deemed them reliable to the extent they reflect actually conflict deaths but maintain it was a work in progress and incomplete.”
\textsuperscript{134} ICC, p. 1
\textsuperscript{135} Anderson, pp. 2-4
\textsuperscript{136} Anderson, pp. 2-4
\textsuperscript{137} ICC, p. 6
The military successes also led to an enormous amount of IDPs. As a result of the 2008 offensive in the North, 250,000 Tamils had been displaced and, by the end of the conflict, this number rose to 450,000. Many of these refugees flowed to overcrowded government camps, which suffered from poor sanitation and a lack of medical and food supplies. At the time, reports of government abuse of the IDPs abounded. Colombo also banned aid agencies, such as the Red Cross, UN, and ICRC, from assisting at the camps. According to a US State Department report, in 2009 Sri Lankan forces purportedly even shelled international hospitals and areas of heavy concentrations of civilians, looking for the LTTE.

While Colombo allegedly tried to avoid non-combatant casualties, engaged in reconstruction efforts, and made some political overtures to the Tamils, they were largely cosmetic against the breadth and depth of atrocities that had occurred. For example, prior to major clashes with the LTTE, the army sent out Long Range Recce Patrol (LRPR) teams to launch a series of surprise attacks to distract the LTTE while civilians escaped to government controlled territory. In addition, the government did construct and reconstruct schools as well as some homes in the North and East that had been damaged as a result of the fighting. Moreover, in March 2007 President Mahinda Rajapaksa established an All Party Representative Committee, comprised of Tamil and Sinhalese parties to discuss power sharing at the central, provincial, and local government levels and pledged to implement the 13th amendment, which provided autonomy at the regional level. However, yet again, the SLG did not fully address

---

138 Wickramasinghe, p. 60  
139 Wickramasinghe, p. 60  
140 ICC, P. 8  
141 Nitin, p. 44  
142 SLG Arc Report, p. 1
the political, education, economic, and language grievances that led to the outbreak of the insurgency.

In this period, Colombo received significant support from the Sinhalese community for their hard charging campaign against the LTTE. Those who elected Rajapaksa to power saw him as a veteran politician, with a commanding physical presence, trademark smile, and a folksy charisma—which his admirers likened to that of the late US President Ronald Regan. Once in power in 2005, he created hopes of national euphoria promising to defeat the LTTE, which resonated with the war ravaged country. As the campaign progressed and the SLG started to make gains against the Tamil Tigers, he developed even more of an up swell of support, mainly within the Sinhalese community. Sinhalese admired Rajapaksa for ending the insurgency that they reelected him to office in January 2010.

Organization of Unity of Effort

In contrast to the last two campaigns, in this period, SLG efforts against the LTTE were guided by a single strategic plan, i.e. eliminate all LTTE members at all costs mainly through COIN and conventional means. Previously, Colombo had pursued ceasefires, albeit unsuccessfully, with the LTTE as a means to reconcile differences and halt fighting. However, when President Rajapaksa came to power in November 2005, he championed a staunch anti-Ealam platform and made it his personal goal to defeat the LTTE once and for all. Furthermore, the LTTE assassination attempt against close confidant and Army General Fonseka in late April 2006, the LTTE closing of the Mavil gates in July, and the failed suicide attack against the President’s brother and Defense Secretary Gothabaya Rajapaksa in December 2006, all served as
the catalyst for Rajapaksa to abandon the pretense of the 2002 ceasefire with the LTTE and transform the army.

In the end, it was Rajapaksa’s strong political will and leadership that established, enforced, and refined the national campaign plan to defeat the group. Rajapaksa heavily relied on the military—who embraced his strategic and operational objectives—as the means to eliminate Prabhakaran, the LTTE cadre, and the threat the Tamil Tiger’s posed to the island nation. The President ensured the military had the right leadership, resources, training, and equipment it required to execute the COIN battle. In addition, Rajapaksa did pursue some, albeit insufficient, civilian efforts, such as reconstruction, education, and medical programs to try to alleviate some of the Tamil suffering. However, he took a gamble that military means could solve the problem and, at least, in the near-term he won and won big.

**External Support for the Targeted Government**

In this period, the SLG received a considerable increase in consistent external support, mainly due to the US designating the LTTE as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group. As a result, the US and its allies began disrupting and dismantling the Tamil Tigers international fundraising and procurement networks. For example, in August 2006 the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrested two LTTE sympathizers—who in 2010 were sentenced to 25 years in prison—for their efforts to acquire almost $1 million worth of high-powered weaponry for the LTTE. \(^{143}\) Specifically, the two men tried to acquire 20 SA-18 heat-seeking missiles, ten missile launchers, 500 AK-47s, and other military equipment. The men acted at the behest of LTTE leadership and planned to use the SAMs to shoot down the Sri Lankan airforce Kfir jets. In

\(^{143}\) DOJ Press Release, p. 1

45
addition to the arrests, the US also provided intelligence on LTTE ships, which helped the SLN interdict vessels carrying weapons.\footnote{Chengappa, pp. 1-2}

Moreover, in 2005 Canada outlawed the LTTE’s funding networks—one of the greatest sources of revenue for the group—which devastated the Tigers.\footnote{Bell, p. 1} The networks there alone provided some $12 million annually to the group.\footnote{Bell, p. 1} In addition, in 2006 the European Union (EU) also declared the LTTE a terrorist network, which required the 25 EU member states to freeze LTTE financial assets, prohibit the provision of remittances to the LTTE, and enforce a travel ban on LTTE officials. As a result, in an extremely short period of time the Tamil Tigers lost almost all of its overseas financial support from the West while the government and armed forces were growing stronger.

Similarly, India had labeled the LTTE as a terrorist network too and provided a range of covert political, military, diplomatic, and intelligence assistance to the SLG. After the war ended, Sri Lanka’s Health Minister Sripala DeSilva stated that they could not have defeated the LTTE without the help of India.\footnote{Mehta, p. 13} India provided critical intelligence on the LTTE’s maritime capabilities and locations of ships, which help the SLN interdict resource shipments to the Tamil Tigers.\footnote{Mehta, p. 13} In addition, the Indian High Commission established a signals intelligence detachment in Colombo that provided intelligence to the SLA on a day-to-day basis.\footnote{Mehta, p. 13}

Furthermore, China played a critical role in supplying significant economic and diplomatic support to the SLG. Beginning in 2005, China provided $1 billion annually to
Colombo.\textsuperscript{150} China’s financial aid helped the Sri Lanka armed forces grow exponentially for the 2007 to 2009 offensives against the LTTE. The Chinese also provided critical political cover at the United Nations (UN), where a large number of members had been criticizing Colombo for its human rights abuses. Since China provided aid to Colombo, Colombo also no longer had to avoid human causalities and respect human rights—stipulations tied to Western financial support—that they saw as a hindrance to defeating the LTTE. Furthermore, China blocked resolutions at the UN that sought to penalize the SLG. Absent such diplomatic coverage, Sri Lanka probably would have had a difficult time sustaining its campaign.

Lastly, the Sri Lankan army obtained weapons from a slew of nations. For example, Sri Lankan negotiators traveled across the world to buy arms. Sri Lanka bought large quantities of weapons from Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, China, Russia, Pakistan, and the US.\textsuperscript{151} Israel also provided munitions as well as high-speed boats to Colombo.

\textit{Ability to Reduce Outside Aid to the Insurgents}

In this campaign, the SLG successfully destroyed the LTTE’s internal and external aid. For one, the Sri Lankan armed forces eliminated LTTE safehavens in the East and North of the island. By April 2007, the government had captured the strategic A-5 highway in the East, which had been under LTTE control for 15 years. Forces also reduced the LTTE presence in the East to a mere 140 square kilometers of jungle land in Thoppigala.\textsuperscript{152} By June of that year, troops overran the LTTE’s base of operations in the East in Batticaloa and captured even more

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{150} Smith, p. 43  \\
\textsuperscript{151} Nitin, p. 54  \\
\textsuperscript{152} Nitin, p. 48
\end{flushleft}
camps to the north and south of the area. In less than a year, Sri Lankan forces had done the unthinkable; they had completely evicted the Tamil Tigers from the East.

Turning to the Northern LTTE redoubt, armed forces launched an offensive in 2008 against major Tiger defenses. The military pushed through rebel lines to seize the strategic Mannar Peninsula in June 2008 and, a month later, captured four additional LTTE bases—including their critical naval base Viddattaltivu. The military then proceed to capture Pooneryn, Kilinochchi, LTTE’s de-facto capital, and the Elephant pass, finally confining the LTTE to a sliver of coastal territory in Mullativu.

The SLG also dried up external financial and material support to the Tamil Tigers, which in the past helped the group sustain the insurgency. As previously discussed, Western government crackdowns on the LTTE’s overseas networks helped severely weaken the group and prevent the flow of money and weapons to the group. In addition, the SLN due to its increased capabilities had many great successes against the LTTE’s naval wing, the Sea Tigers. For example, between 2006 and 2007, the SLN destroyed 11 LTTE trawlers and six warehouse ships containing large consignments of weapons, ammunition, and equipment.153 In addition, as the war progressed, the SLN cut of LTTE’s lines of control from Tamil Nadu which meant that even more supplies, such as artillery and ammunition, were no longer available in the required quantities.154

**Intelligence**

The SLG obtained a major intelligence boon when Colonel Karuna—who oversaw the LTTE cadre and operations in the East—defected to the government in 2004. With intimate

---

153 DeSilva, p. 3
154 DeSilva, p. 3
knowledge of the population and terrain in the East as well as the inner workings of the Tamil Tigers, Karuna brought with him critical information that the SLG used to bring the LTTE to its knees. Due to the clandestine nature of intelligence, Colombo never admitted what information Karuna provided; however, he probably revealed LTTE’s order of battle, training methods and camps, strategy and tactics, location of leaders, and plots.\textsuperscript{155} The armed forces leveraged Karuna’s network of 500 to 600 loyal fighters in the East to spot LTTE militants and their sympathizers, locate hideouts and weapons caches, harass enemy supply lines, and attack isolated LTTE outposts.\textsuperscript{156}

The Sri Lankan intelligence services probably also capitalized on Karuna’s split to further sow fears of infiltration among the remaining LTTE. In fact, due to concern of spies, the LTTE could no longer heavily rely on the loyalties of Tamils in the East and, in turn, recruitment dropped. When hostilities erupted in 2006, the LTTE’s strength never grew to more than 4,000 men and many of the commanders for the East were now northern ethnic Tamils who lacked an understanding of the region’s dynamics and local terrain.\textsuperscript{157} One could assess the SLG, through covert operations, further progressed these fissures as one of the means to break the LTTE’s arm in the East.

In addition, the government also increased its own intelligence capabilities. For the first time, the army established Special Infantry Operations Teams (SIOT) who were deployed to explore and attack LTTE areas. These teams gathered valuable intelligence on LTTE strongholds, the size of enemy cadre, and defensive positions. In turn, army commanders used

\textsuperscript{155} Mehta, p. 4
\textsuperscript{156} DeSilva, p. 3 and The Guardian, \textit{Karuna’s Travails}, p. 1
\textsuperscript{157} DeSilva, p. 3
the information to better prepare for operations that inflicted maximum damage against the Tamil Tigers. The SIOT also shared intelligence with SLG’s intelligence agencies who worked together to disrupt LTTE cells throughout Sri Lanka, which drastically reduced suicide terrorism throughout this campaign period.158

**Capability of Armed Forces**

Compared to the other two campaigns, in this period, political will and skilled leaders transformed the military into a lethal fighting force capable of defeating the LTTE. After Rajapaksa was elected he immediately appointed his brother Gotabaya as Defense Secretary, who set about revolutionizing the armed forces. In a 2008 interview with Business Today, Gotabaya stated that, “The hallmarks of the new radical approach included the appointment of tried and tested commanders; leaders who were brave and had battlefield experience, purchase of new weaponry alongside an increased and fervent recruitment and training agenda.”159 To help him implement these reforms, Gotabaya appointed his closest colleague, General Sarath Fonseka, to command the army. Gotabaya gave Fonseka a free hand to re-organize and train the moribund, ineffective, and corrupt military. Together, these seasoned veterans created a dynamic team and led their country to victory.

First, the men secured the finances, personnel, and equipment they required to combat the insurgency. For example, a rise in internal defense spending led to a 40% increase in the military’s budget from 2005 to 2008.160 For example, in 2007 alone Rajapakse approved a $1.5

---

158 DeSilva, pp. 1-2
159 Seneviratne, p. 1
160 Smith, p. 43
billion defense budget, a 100% increase over the previous year’s budget.\textsuperscript{161} In addition, Colombo received billions of dollars in outside aid. The government then used this money to increase the size of the military. From 2007 to 2008, Fonseka inducted some 40,000 men into the army, raising five new divisions.\textsuperscript{162} He stated, “We now have 25,000 new bayonets pointing at the LTTE,” whose cadre had been reduced to 3,000 to 5,000 fighters.\textsuperscript{163} In 2008, he hired an additional 32,000 men to create 50 new battalions for a total of a 70% increase in the size of the army.\textsuperscript{164} Fonseka also doubled salaries to help boost morale and equipped troops with the latest weapons.

At the same time, Fonseka bolstered the airforce and the navy. For example, in 2008, Fonseka added a squadron of MIG 27 aircraft equipped with better ground and air surveillance and bunker buster bombs, which helped the airforce make more precise strikes against the LTTE.\textsuperscript{165} In addition, the navy invested in hundreds of patrol boats to compliment the fast attack craft the SLG bought from Israel. Armed with light weapons and fast boats, the SLN destroyed the LTTE’s naval capabilities and interdicted weapons and supply shipments to the Tamil Tigers.

Fonseka also revamped the infantry training doctrine to include more COIN tactics. For example, he emphasized the small unit infantry operations (SIOT) instead of the traditional platoon concept. The SIOTs operated in eight men teams and went through a basic training course. The army gave those who passed the course an additional 18 weeks of training in jungle warfare, explosives handling, medical training, and the use of signals communication to

\textsuperscript{161} Chengappa, p. 2
\textsuperscript{162} Chengappa, p. 2
\textsuperscript{163} Chengappa, p. 2
\textsuperscript{164} Smith, p. 43
\textsuperscript{165} Chengappa, p. 2
coordinate artillery and airstrikes.\textsuperscript{166} By late 2006 alone, the number of SIOT-trained soldiers had increased to some 6,000 compared to 1,500 at the start of the year.\textsuperscript{167} Fonseka deployed the SIOTs to conduct hit-and-run attacks against the LTTE. According to the General, “They [the SIOT] were very well trained soldiers who could operate independently for a limited time. When the war started, we could push them into the jungles effectively, supported by Special Forces and Commandos, which put the LTTE off-balance on the ground.”\textsuperscript{168}

These changes led to a rejuvenated Sri Lankan army that squeezed the LTTE out of the Eastern, then Northern province. Full-scale hostilities began in August 2006 when the Tamil Tigers closed the Mavil Aru gate and launched a major military offensive against government bases near the Trincomalee harbor. In turn, the Sri Lankan army launched a counter-attack and went on the offensive in the Eastern province. Fonseka extensively employed Commando and Special Forces units for attacks as well as intelligence collection operations. In addition, irregular army units frequently infiltrated LTTE controlled areas through jungle or by sea, acquired targets for air or artillery strikes, jammed Tamil communications, attacked listening posts and mortar positions and ambushed reconnaissance teams, convoys, and field commanders.\textsuperscript{169} Simultaneously, Fonseka engaged the LTTE with conventional warfare by firing massive artillery barrages against the group.

The army’s operations eventually forced the LTTE to assume a defensive posture. Without strong LTTE leadership in the East, the fighters increasingly fought like a conventional force instead of an insurgent group—a significant strategic misstep since the Tamil Tigers no

\textsuperscript{166} DeSilva, p. 2
\textsuperscript{167} DeSilva, p. 2
\textsuperscript{168} DeSilva, pp. 2-3
\textsuperscript{169} DeSilva, pp. 2-3
longer had the man power to undertake a conventional battle. In turn, the army, with increasing numbers and capabilities, drove the Tamil Tigers from zone to zone, seizing more and more LTTE dominated territory. By summer 2007, the army channeled the remaining LTTE members into the Toppigala jungles, which government forces bashed through in August. The victory in the east led to the recapture of some 6,500 km of territory and destroyed the LTTE in the region.\(^\text{170}\) Afterward, the SLAF, SLN, Sri Lankan Police, and the Civil Defense Force militia, in conjunction with Karuna’s network, held the territory, which allowed the army to focus on the looming campaign in the north.

By the time the Vanni campaign ramped up in fall 2007, the LTTE started facing increasing manpower shortages, logistical and financial problems, and more and more offensive COIN and conventional operations. As in the East, the LTTE adopted a defensive military strategy and relied on a series of strategic lines. According to Fonseka, “Earlier we had eight-men teams operating very effectively, infiltrating LTTE lines and hitting them from the flanks and rear and inflicting a lot of casualties. In the jungle they also found that our soldiers were hitting them from all directions…which they found uncomfortable. Sometimes they used bulldozers to clear jungles to create a field of fire to ensure that we didn’t have cover to hit them from the flanks or rear. So wherever there were large open areas the LTTE constructed bunds [earthen embankments] and fire positions and a lot of fire was targeted onto the area in front of the bund. The whole area in front of the bund was fully mined, a large amount of anti-personnel mines, even anti-tank mines, and so it becomes a killing ground.”

\(^\text{170}\) DeSilva, p. 3
By January 2008, the Vanni operation entered a decisive stage and, Fonseka, learning from gains in the East, employed the same strategy in the North. Fonseka’s strategy was to inflict high casualty rates against the LTTE and launch continuous operations against the group across multiple fronts to divide and conquer the Tamil Tigers. This was enabled by the SIOT and Special Forces, massive artillery firepower, and close air support. In January, Fosenka sent three divisions to Sri Lanka’s north-eastern seaboard, which forced the Tamil Tigers to stretch its resources across four fronts and applied pressure to LTTE lines of control. Fonsenka then ordered another two divisions to march from Jaffna to Kilinochichi to seal off the northern border to the Jaffna Peninsula and brought another three up from the south to serve as the last flank. All the while, the army continued to pound the LTTE and the SLN the Sea Tigers.

The LTTE tried to counter the armed forces with counterattacks and delaying tactics but, the weakened Tigers were no longer a match for the formidable army. By April 2009, Fonseka had pushed the LTTE to a sliver of territory on the coastline at Mullativu. The Tamil Tigers, led by Prabhakaran, tried to fight their way out on 17 May. The next day, not one Tiger could be found alive—everyone, including some innocent non-combatants had been killed.
SUMMARY OF MANWARING PARADIGM ACROSS CAMPAIGN PERIODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manwaring Paradigm Components</th>
<th>Legitimacy</th>
<th>External Support for SLG</th>
<th>Reduce External/Internal Support to Insurgent</th>
<th>Intelligence</th>
<th>Capable Armed Forces</th>
<th>Unity of Command</th>
<th>Manwaring Pass/Fail?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83-90</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-02</td>
<td>Red/Yellow</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-09</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Weak pass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
Red = No presence of Manwaring component
Red/Yellow = Weak presence of Manwaring component
Green = Significant presence of Manwaring component

IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

Based on the analysis of the campaigns, the Manwaring Paradigm helps explain Colombo’s success against the LTTE. In the first two periods from 1983 to 2002, the SLG was either missing one of Manwaring’s elements or the element was present, but in a weak form. In the last campaign from 2006 to 2009, all of the elements were present in a strong form except one, i.e. government legitimacy. Even though Colombo lacked popular support among the Tamil community the government, nevertheless, was able to disrupt and destroy the LTTE.

The lack of government legitimacy, however, calls into question whether or not Colombo can sustain lasting peace. In fact, after the war the army razed a massive Tamil cemetery in Kilinochichi and in its place erected a giant victory statue. Moreover, the Rajapakse government has done little to assuage Tamil anxiety of government “Sinhalization” plans for the North and East where Tamils see “soldiers everywhere.” Nor has the government yet to fully address the grievances that led to the outbreak of the insurgency. These Tamil concerns coupled with a
sense of communal humiliation after the insurgency suggests that a group, similar to the LTTE, could arise to fight the government.

Another possible outcome regarding government legitimacy is that the Sri Lankan insurgency highlights a variation of the Manwaring Paradigm. Should the government maintain peace in Sri Lanka, a regime may require little to no legitimacy from all of its citizens. This might particularly be the case if Colombo maintains a troop presence throughout the country that continuously monitors for and tamps down on any insurgent activity. However, Colombo probably would cease to be a democracy and transition to more of a possibly repressive police state.

One could also posit that the variation is due to the transition from an insurgency to a civil war in the last campaign. It is in this period that the LTTE almost fully transformed from a guerilla group to that of a conventional force. While the Sri Lankan armed forces continued to employ COIN tactics, they also used massive conventional firepower to kill as many LTTE leaders as possible. As such, the Manwaring Paradigm, that addresses insurgencies, would no longer be an applicable model. More research is required in order to validate this hypothesis.

Nevertheless, this thesis has undermined the commonly held wisdom that Colombo defeated the LTTE almost solely due to its strategy of using conventional military tactics in their most brutal form in order to rout the insurgent group. Greater unity of command, increased outside aid to Colombo, ability to reduce aid to the insurgents, better intelligence, and a more capable armed forces enabled the government to win the insurgency. This is particularly important as nations around the world have been eager to learn from what they perceive is a largely military-focused strategy that successfully eliminated an internal security threat.
Moreover, nations have been studying the Sri Lankan tactics with great interest since they perceived they did not conform to the well-known and widely practiced COIN tenants.

The analysis found herein has also highlighted the type of political, military, and intelligence support external nations can provide in order to help a local government defeat an insurgency. For example, external governments can engage in civilian, police, and legal capacity building programs. Moreover, outside nations could also provide military-to-military training in order to enhance local forces’ capabilities. Providing this type of support may help external governments avoid committing their own troops to insurgencies.

CONCLUSION

Since insurgencies almost certainly will continue to pose important domestic and foreign policy challenges for many nations in the foreseeable future it is imperative that political scientists and policymakers continue to study them in order to understand how to best counter a guerilla organization. This is a very difficult task as insurgencies are often very complex and, in turn, accurate information is limited in both breadth and depth. However, as additional knowledge is gained it should be incorporated into the aforementioned findings into order to expand analysis on this subject. The conclusions stated in the paper have provided a foundation that others can build upon.
APPENDIX

Map of Sri Lanka

171 University of Texas Library, Map of Sri Lanka, 2001 available online at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/sri_lanka_pol01.jpg
BIBLIOGRAPHY


BBC News, *Select Articles on the Insurgency*,
http://www.bbc.co.uk/search/knowledge/sri_lanka?page=2


Central Intelligence Agency, *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*,


Neil Smith, *Understanding Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers*, National Defense University Press, JFQ, issue 59, 4\textsuperscript{th} Quarter 2010, pp. 40-44


Raj Chengappa, *Getting Prabhakaran; A Rejuvenated Sri Lankan Army Tightens the Noose Around the Feared LTTE Chief and his Guerilla Force after Recapturing Territory in the East. Though the Tigers are Down, they are Still not Out*, India Today, 18 February 2008


Sumit Ganguly and David Fidler, eds., *India and Counterinsurgency: Lessons Learned*, (Routledge, New York: 2009)


UNHCR, *Sri Lanka: Information on the situation in Colombo since the 31 January 1996 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) bombing of the Central Bank in Colombo*, United Nations, 1 April 1996, [http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,4565c22538,45a51ac42,3ae6ab608,0.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic,4565c22538,45a51ac42,3ae6ab608,0.html)